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# Editorial

Following two thematic issues – one devoted to the tercentenary of Kant's birth (12, 2024) and the other to the theme of *praedestinatio* (13, 2025) – the journal is once again publishing a standard issue containing both articles selected through a bottom-up process and a section featuring notes and discussions, whilst a new thematic issue and a standard one are in preparation as well.

We are pleased to announce a new recurring feature in the 'Notes & Discussions' section of the journal ('Thematic Notes'), devoted to presenting new research. This segment is designed to showcase thematic groups of contributions, preferably from early-career scholars. Each instalment will be coordinated by one or more editors.

We envisage a regular cadence of instalments, ideally constant, with each instalment gathering at least three contributions. Individual pieces will not exceed 20,000 characters, with a maximum of six to be published per issue. We are open to collaborations. If you have a proposal (for which you might be allowed 12-18 months of preparation), please get in touch with any of the editorial staff. The launch of the new series and its characteristics have arisen in connection with a related opportunity: the organisers of the International Colloquium on Leibniz and Modern Philosophy (Rome, July 2025) approached us via the *Sodalitas Leibnitiana* (the Italian Society of Leibniz Studies) to propose publishing a selection of papers from the event. To make this a natural fit, we have envisaged two adjustments: the colloquium organisers would limit the selection to early-career participants (setting aside the keynote lectures) and present them primarily as the presentation of ongoing research rather than ordinary conference papers. On our side, we would ensure that the scope of the series extends beyond Leibniz studies alone, however distinguished that field may be.

Leibniz studies will thus inaugurate the series across the first and second issues of 2026. Subsequent instalments are already taking shape: a group of Gassendi scholars is planned, as well as a segment devoted to the history of linguistic ideas. Future issues will also make room to explore experimental forms of peer review, in collaboration with the guest editors.

*Antonio Lamarra*
*Enrico Pasini*

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SERGIO JAVIER BARRIONUEVO

# Pathology and Politics in Alcmaeon of Croton (5th Century B.C.)

ABSTRACT: In Alcmaeon of Croton's lemma, dating back to the 5th century, we encounter the use of two terms that, in other sources, are associated with the field of politics: ἰσονομία and μοναρχία. The interpretation of these terms poses the following question: Is there a 'medical use' of political terms, or conversely, is there a 'political use' of medical terms? Some scholars have debated these possibilities. In this paper, I argue that there is no 'medical use' of these terms before Alcmaeon, prompting an exploration of the intended significance behind the utilisation of these terms.

SOMMARIO: Nel lemma di Alcmeone di Crotone, risalente al V secolo, incontriamo l'uso di due termini che, in altre fonti, sono associati al campo della politica: ἰσονομία e μοναρχία. L'interpretazione di questi termini pone la seguente domanda: esiste un 'uso medico' dei termini politici o, al contrario, esiste un 'uso politico' dei termini medici? Alcuni studiosi hanno dibattuto queste possibilità. In questo articolo, sostengo che non vi sia alcun 'uso medico' di questi termini prima di Alcmeone, il che spinge a esplorare il significato intenzionale che si cela dietro l'utilizzo di questi termini.

KEYWORDS: Alcmaeon of Croton; Pathology; Politics; Medical Use; Political Use

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Within an Alcmaeon of Croton's lemma, which has been transmitted through Aëtius, we encounter a rather enigmatic terminology. This terminology, while posing a challenge in terms of interpretation, sheds light on the intellectual interests of its era. What makes this observation particularly intriguing is that it involves the application of the terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία within a medical context. The majority of subsequent sources predominantly associate these terms with the domain of politics.

In our pursuit of understanding the profound impact of this terminology within Alcmaeon's lemma,[1] we draw upon the theoretical framework of *Begriffsgeschichte*, or the history of concepts. This historiographical strand, notable for its substantial impact on continental European scholarship, equips us with a set of invaluable theoretical and methodological tools to systematically explore the historical usage of concepts and their implications.

Our central hypothesis posits that Alcmaeon's lemma presents a case of what we might term "the medical utilisation of political concepts". In essence, we propose that

1. Aëtius 5.30.1 [= 24B4 (DK); 23D30 (LM); 8B4 (TC); Fp6 (A)].

this text, within a medical context, utilises concepts typically related to politics. In other words, Alcmaeon's lemma serves as an indicator of the 'politicisation' process that permeated the fifth century. We also argue that this process of politicisation unfolds through the use of a 'conceptual metaphor'. This metaphor enables the mapping of a specific domain associated with the body onto a broader and more abstract domain associated with the *polis*.

In the following sections of this note, we will embark on a two-fold journey. First, we will provide a succinct overview of the foundational contributions of *Begriffsgeschichte* to our research. Following this, we will undertake an analysis of the instances in which the terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία manifest themselves within Alcmaeon's lemma. Through this dual approach, we aim to unravel the complexities of this intellectual juxtaposition and contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical interplay between medicine and politics.

## 2. THE METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE HISTORY OF CONCEPTS

The field of conceptual history aims to examine the nature, genesis, and role of change in the historical shaping of concepts. History of concepts seeks to objectively investigate the nature, development, and dynamic characteristics inherent in the historical evolution of concepts. Particular attention is given to the examination of social and political concepts, acknowledging their asserted universality and the plurality of their meanings.[2] According to Reinhart Koselleck, concepts can be viewed as useful indicators of political or social actions, given their ability to assimilate a wide range of meanings from the constantly changing social landscape.[3]

Koselleck's perspective posits that a word transforms into a concept when it serves as a repository for diverse interpretations originating from the specific historical context in which it is used. This transformation occurs because, in Koselleck's view, social and political concepts derive their substance from the contextual environment, allowing their significance to continuously evolve within that specific framework. As historical circumstances are introduced into words, and words accumulate diverse and sometimes overlapping interpretations, it becomes clear that they have transited to become fully developed concepts.

From a methodological perspective, this approach focuses on studying the relational structures of concepts, asserting that concepts are subject to interpretation and explanation within reciprocal relationships.[4] Unlike structuralism, proponents of the history of concepts do not seek to reduce all aspects of the 'real' to the realm of discourse. Instead, they argue that each concept derives its meaning from its historical context.[5] Elias Palti contends that this perspective leads to the postulation of an

2. Cf. Koselleck 1972b: 123-124; 2003: 61-62.
3. Koselleck 1967: 81.
4. Cf. Abellán 2007: 220.
5. Cf. Koselleck 1967.

"ineradicable residue of factuality", preventing it from being confined to linguistic solipsism and instead, allowing it to remain open to the influence of temporality.[6] Consequently, language is conceptualised in a dual capacity: as a receiver and recorder of external events, and as an assimilator and shaper of extra-linguistic content.[7]

In his seminal work on *Begriffsgeschichte*, Koselleck proposes a working hypothesis that a fundamental shift in the realm of political and social concepts occurred between 1750 and 1850. This period is deemed a *Sattelzeit* because it marks the initiation of a process of 'politicisation' of concepts.[8]

Christian Meier extends this hypothesis to the ancient world, asserting that the fifth century Athenians witnessed a comparable transformation in the entire spectrum of concepts.[9] To support his argument, Meier draws upon the ideas of Carl Schmitt,[10] who defines 'the political' as contingent upon "the degree of intensity of an association or dissociation of people".[11] Schmitt utilises the friend-enemy distinction as a 'criterion' (*Kriterium*)[12] to delineate 'political units' (*politische Einheiten*), which he further defines as entities capable of making this distinction.[13] Schmitt considers such 'political units' to be 'decisive units' (*maßgebende Einheiten*),[14] given that the act of taking a position, and thus defining who is on one side and who is on the other, ultimately results from a decision.

According to Meier, in modernity, this decision-making authority is monopolised by the state as a political entity.[15] However, this does not imply that it is the exclusive means of establishing 'political units'. This concept could be applicable to various historical communities, as 'the political' pertains to decisions regarding friend-enemy distinctions. In pre-modern societies, these 'political units' form around autocephalous entities vested with power, which can take the shape of family alliances, clans, πόλις/*civitas*, or other similar structures. This alignment allows the Schmittian criterion of 'the political' to be applied to historical societies beyond the modern era.[16]

Therefore, 'the political' does not have its own domain but rather operates as a field that intersects with various issues. Its 'politicisation' depends on the degree of association or dissociation to which it is subjected.[17] In Christian Meier's perspective, the

6. Cf. Palti 2011: 232.
7. Cf. Koselleck 2004: 30.
8. Koselleck 1972a: 304.
9. Meier 1984: 34.
10. Meier 1983: 30-31.
11. Schmitt 2015: 36: "den Intensitätsgrad einer Assoziation oder Dissoziation von Menschen" (The translation is my own).
12. *Ibid*.: 25.
13. *Ibid*.: 35.
14. *Ibid*.: 36.
15. Meier 1983: 31.
16. *Ibid*.: 31-32.
17. *Ibid*.: 32.

Schmittian concept of 'the political' is theoretically defined as a criterion, and therein lies its "analytical potential, making it exceedingly valuable in diverse contexts".[18]

The process of 'politicisation' deeply influenced the Athenian conceptual framework during the 5th century. However, the conceptualization of political phenomena does not occur through direct references; instead, most political concepts are crafted through abstract mechanisms. Consequently, the illusion of constructing a language solely from pure concepts proves inadequate. Recognizing this limitation, Blumenberg introduces metaphorology as an auxiliary discipline within conceptual history. It allows us to delve into the nuanced thoughts and actions subtly implied in metaphorical expressions.[19]

In a later iteration of his theory, Blumenberg expands the scope of metaphorology. It is not merely about comprehending metaphor's role in concept formation; rather, it offers a window into the lifeworld in which metaphors are embedded.[20] According to Blumenberg, metaphorology becomes part of a broader theory of inconceptuality, delving into the aspects of human experience that language cannot neatly encapsulate within closed semantic concepts but can still comprehend and engage with.

Conceptual history, with metaphorology as an auxiliary discipline, offers a fruitful theoretical framework for studying Alcmaeon's lemma. It reveals the use of a political metaphor within the context of the conceptual politicisation process in 5th-century Greece.

## 3. PATHOLOGY AND POLITICS IN ALCMAEON OF CROTON

A passage in the last chapter of the *Placita* attributed to Aëtius includes a set of *lemmata* on health, disease and old age.[21] The first lemma reports Alcmaeon's medical theory. This testimony does not constitute a verbatim quotation because it contains doxographical adaptations.[22] However, it is considered that some terms that are well attested

18. *Ibid*., on the other hand, rebuts the normative criticism put forth by Strauss 2015: 226. That is, the perspective that implies politics (*sic!*) is reduced to polarisation and conflict. Meier's perspective is that, for Schmitt, 'the political' serves as a criterion that establishes conflict and confrontation as an extreme possibility, not as a rule of political action.

19. Blumenberg 1960: 11, 19-21.

20. Blumenberg 2020: 104.

21. *Placita* is the epitome of a lost treatise of Theophrastus on pre-Aristotelian thought. It can be dated to the middle of the second century AD and is attributed to Aëtius. This text, reconstructed by Diels in 1879, is considered a singular source for parallel passages found in the works of Ps.-Plutarchus (*Placit*.) and Stobaeus (*Ec. Phys*.). Significantly, it predates both of these authors and was also used in 177 A.D. by Athenagoras (*Leg*. 23 [21], 22 [18], 16 [13]). Subsequently, it found application in the works of Eusebius (*PE* XIV 13.9, 14.1-6, 16.1-10, XV 22.69, 23-61), Cyril of Alexandria (*Iul*. II 46b-47b), and Pseudo-Galenus (*HPh apud* Diels 1879: 4-14). Theodoret (*Affect*. IV 31.2-3: Ἀετίου τὴν Περὶ ἀρεσκόντων ξυναγωγήν) ascribed authorship to Aëtius. For a comprehensive reconstruction of the doxographical tradition, see Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 121-290, as well as Runia 1999: 191-196. For a summary of the sources, see n. 45 below.

22. Diels 1879: 223-224; cf. Hankinson 1998: 238-252; Zhmud 2012: 357-358; Mansfeld 2013: 79.

in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* may derive from Alcmaeon or reflect its original words. Alcmaeon's lemma points to the opposition between ἰσονομία and μοναρχία. This would be one of the first instances where these terms are being contrasted with each other.[23] We have evidence of the use of these terms in political contexts dated between the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.,[24] but they are not attested in medical contexts. For this reason, many scholars consider these terms to belong to Alcmaeon himself.[25]

Prior to Alcmaeon, there is no recorded occurrence of these terms being employed in contrast. Consequently, the use of the terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία in Alcmaeon allows us to pose the following problem: does Alcmaeon make a 'medical use' of political terms or, on the contrary, does he make a 'political use' of medical terms?

The explanation of health and disease based on the ideas of equality or equilibrium and predominance or disturbance can be found in other ancient authors. In the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, we encounter passages where explanations are formulated based on the contrast of concepts like equality and dominance, as exemplified in Alcmaeon's lemma. In the early treatise *Airs Waters Places*, there is a passage in which the terms ἰσομοιρίη ('equal portion') and ἐπικρατής ('predominant') are employed to provide an explanation for the temperate climate of Asia, but it does not occur within the immediate context of health and disease.[26] In the treatise *On Regimen*, the author employs the contrast between the verbs κρατέω ('overpowering') and ἰσάζω ('being equal to each other') to elucidate the relationship between exercise and diet in the context of explaining health and disease.[27] The explanation of health and disease as forms of equilibrium and disturbance, respectively, became widespread in medical discourse.[28] However, the

23. One of the early texts where ἰσονομία and μοναρχία, as well as Alcmaeon's lemma, were contrasted with each other is the discussion of political regimes in Herodotus 3.80-83.

24. Μόναρχος: Solon fr. 9.3 (W); Alcaeus S271a5 (*SLG*) [= 306C e fr. 12 Campbell 1982], A6 (LP); ἰσονομία: Sympotic song that praise the tyrannicides Harmodious and Aristogeiton (*PMG* 893, 896), Constitutional Debate (Hdt. 3.80-82, cf. 3.142, VI.43); (Thuc. 3.62.3, 4.78.3).

25. Ostwald 1969: 99-100; Jouanna 1992: 460; Sassi 2007: 198-199; Kouloumentas 2014: 871; Laks and Most 2016: V 765 n. 1; Année 2019: 40. On the contrary, Mansfeld 2013: 93-95, contends that the use of these terms should not be attributed to Alcmaeon. Instead, he suggests that a later doxographer introduced these terms, replacing Alcmaeon's terminology with its Herodotean equivalent. For a counter-argument against Mansfeld's position, see: Kouloumentas 2014: 871 n. 9; Lebedev 2017: 247-254.

26. In Hippocr. *Aër*. 12.4 (L. II 52-56), the term ἰσομοιρίη also pertains to the political sphere, and this is the only instance of its occurrence within the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. In Thucydides 6.39 and 7.75, for instance, the term denotes having equal political participation or the same rights as others. Medical authors also employ other terms to convey the proportionate blending of opposites, such as σύμμετρος κράσις (*Aph*. V.62 [= L. IV 554-556]) or μετρίως ἔχειν (*Anon. Lond.* XIX 27-8). Mansfeld 2013: 81, contends that the employment of the phrase ἰσομοιρίη δυναστεύῃ serves to elucidate that the doctors' audience was well-acquainted with the political analogy.

27. Hippocr. *Reg*. 3.69 (L. VI 604-606).

28. This concept can be observed in the testimonies of various thinkers, including Chrysippus, Menecrates, Petron of Aegina, and Philistron, cf. Gal. *PHP* 3.2.31-33 (*CMG* V 4.1.2 ed. De Lacy = *SVF* III 471); *An. Lond*. XIX 22-9 (M). Plato and Aristotle were also acquainted

terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία, employed to conceptualise the ideas of equality or equilibrium and predominance or disturbance in a medical context, are exclusively found in Alcmaeon's lemma. Thus, this single testimony is not evidence to affirm a 'medical use' of this term.

Triebel-Schubert rejects that there was such a thing as a 'medical use' of the term ἰσονομία in the fifth century, which would have been transitional and then lead to the post-Cleisthenic 'political use' of the term.[29] For this she argues that one cannot distinguish a 'medical' and a 'political' use, because in comparison with later conceptions of health and diseases, for example, these are opposed to Alcmeon's use of ἰσονομία. Therefore, she concludes that the political sense must be at the basis of the interpretation of Alcmaeon's lemma.

The first part of the lemma transmitted by Aëtius states:

> Ἀλκμαίων· τῆς μὲν ὑγείας εἶναι συνεκτικὴν ἰσονομίαν τῶν δυνάμεων, ὑγροῦ θερμοῦ ξηροῦ ψυχροῦ πικροῦ γλυκέος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν· τὴν δ' ἐν αὐτοῖς μοναρχίαν νόσου ποιητικήν· φθοροποιὸν γὰρ ἑκατέρου μοναρχία.
> Alcmaeon: that what maintains health is the equality [*isonomia*] of the powers [*dynameis*]: wet, hot, dry, cold, bitter, sweet and the others <powers>. The rule of only one among them [*monarchy*] produces disease, because the rule of one of the two is destructive.[30]

In accordance with this testimony, the bodily organism is conceptualised as a complex interplay of elemental 'powers' (δυνάμεις).[31] These δυνάμεις, in turn, are organised into pairs of opposites, such as 'wet' and 'dry', 'cold' and 'hot', 'bitter' and 'sweet', in addition to other opposites (τὰ λοιπά). This implies that Alcmaeon did not specify the precise number of these δυνάμεις. Alcmaeon's concept of health (ὑγίεια) pertains to the relationship between opposing powers. In this context, the body remains healthy as

with such definitions, cf. Pl. *Symp*. 186d5-e2, *Resp*. 444d3-6, *Phlb*. 25e7-8, *Tim*. 81e5-82a3; Arist. *Phys*. VII 3.246b4-6, *Top*. VI 2.139b20-1, 6.145b8.

29. Cf. Triebel-Schubert 1984: 41. Ἰσονομία is a concept that assesses various forms of government rather than representing a specific form itself (Ostwald 1969: 108; Meier 1983: 283-284; Vlastos 1953: 353-354). Its primary association lies with democracies, as noted by Herodotus (3.80). It is also extended to moderate oligarchies with democratic elements, as seen in Thucydides (3.62.3-4). While some argue for an aristocratic interpretation, emphasising equality among aristocratic peers against tyranny (Raaflaub 2004: 95; Zhmud 2012: 358), this viewpoint has limited support. The term is likely origin is within the radical democracy of late sixth-century Athens, later applied secondarily to moderate oligarchies (Vlastos 1964: 10-13; Ostwald 1969: 99-106).

30. Aëtius 5.30.1 (D. 442) [= 24B4 (DK), 8B4 (TC), 23D30 (LM), Fp6 (A)]. Edition Année (2019), the translation is my own. In this translation, I have endeavoured to preserve the political nuances as suggested by Triebel-Schubert. Consequently, I have chosen to translate δυνάμεις as 'powers' instead of opting for a more neutral term such as 'capacities', and I have rendered μοναρχία as 'rule of one among them' rather than 'primacy of one' or 'pre-eminence'.

31. On the signification of term δύναμις in early Greek medical writing, see Souilhé 1919: 31-57; Jones 1946: 93-96, 1947: 9-10.

long as these powers are in a state of *equality* (ἰσονομία).[32] Conversely, disease (νόσος) occurs when one of the powers disrupts equilibrium, leading to a state of "the rule of only one" (ἐν αὐτοῖς μοναρχία). The function of this μοναρχία is elucidated with a negative attribute: φθοροποιόν ('that which causes destruction'). According to Alcmaeon, the μοναρχία pertains to 'one of the two' (ἑκατέρου). In summary, within this first part of the lemma, we can identify the following key elements: (a) a definition of 'health'; (b) the characterization of the δυνάμεις; (c) an exploration of the causes of disease.

In this passage, ἰσονομία appears as a concept representing equality as an equilibrium or balance between opposing forces, while μοναρχία refers to imbalance or disequilibrium. Similarly, the terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία are employed to clarify the relationship between the constituent parts of a body. If we accept, based on later testimony, that these terms refer to the political realm, we can recognize that their usage aligns with the framework of the 'conceptual metaphor' that asserts "the *polis* is a body".[33] This metaphor enables us to comprehend and relate to one concept by drawing upon the associations of another, facilitating a mapping between two domains within the conceptual system of the fifth century. Through this process, individuals can conceptualise the world by attributing metaphorical meanings to their social experiences. In this case, metaphor serves to identify experiences as an entity, thereby enabling reasoned analysis. Hence, it functions as an *ontological metaphor*, with the body serving as the *source domain*, referring to concrete social aspects.[34] These aspects are then drawn upon to conceptualise the *polis*, which is a more abstract *meta-domain*.[35] The bodily terms ὑγίεια and νόσος, as well as the abstract terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία, form part of the conceptual system encompassing both the body and the *polis*.

In Alcmaeon's lemma, the terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία are employed to elucidate the causes of health and disease. This clarifies that the metaphor "the *polis* is a body" was not an innovation introduced by Alcmaeon but rather constituted a part of the fifth-century conceptual landscape. Consequently, the correspondence between the bodily terms ὑγίεια and νόσος and the political terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία is meaningful within the linguistic context of the fifth century because it was an integral component of "the metaphors they lived by" during that era. We can surmise that Alcmaeon's innovation lay in employing two political terms that were already opera-

32. On the term ἰσονομία in the Greek medicine, see: MacKinney 1971: 79-88; Vlastos 1947: 156-161.

33. A 'conceptual metaphor' is defined as a cross-domain mapping within the conceptual system. This phenomenon involves understanding one idea or conceptual domain in terms of another. Cf. Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Ritchie 2013: 68-87; Mácha 2016: 98-101; Kövecses 2020: 1-21.

34. Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 25-32.

35. "In *a metaphor*, there are two domains: the target domain, which is constituted by the immediate subject matter, and the source domain, in which important metaphorical reasoning takes place and that provides the source concepts used in that reasoning". (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 265).

tional within the Greek political framework but had not been utilised in poetry.[36] In this sense, Alcmaeon would not have been the originator of this political language but rather the individual who incorporated them into the framework of the conceptual metaphor that posited "the *polis* is a body".

Conceptual systems play a central role in shaping our everyday realities. In this context, metaphor assumes a "pervasive role in everyday life, not limited to language but extending to thought and action".[37] It allows us to comprehend and experience one thing by drawing on concepts related to another, enabling us to establish connections between various domains within our conceptual system. Through this process, individuals can conceptualise the world by attributing metaphorical meanings to their social experiences.[38]

As a result, the metaphor "the *polis* is a body" not only aids us in understanding abstract concepts but also defines how individuals behave and relate to the reality they seek to understand. In this sense, medical discourse offers tools for contemplating the attributes of the *polis* in relation to those of the human body. The way in which health and disease are regarded as attributes of the body can be applied to 'equality' and 'rule of one' as attributes of the *polis*. This means that health and disease are dispositional states of the body, subject to reversal through treatment, implying their dynamic and non-permanent nature. When this mode of thinking is applied to the *polis*, it suggests that ἰσονομία and μοναρχία are also subject to change. Furthermore, the attribution of a negative value (φθοροποιόν) to μοναρχία in relation to the body allows us to infer that the author rejects this form of government.

Much of the causal language in this testimony employs terms that are associated with later concepts.[39] Nevertheless, the usage of the term ἰσονομία holds particular significance, given that it represents one of the earliest recorded instances. The definition of health as ἰσονομίαν τῶν δυνάμεων poses an issue in terms of interpretation. According to Stavros Kouloumentas, the interpretation of health as ἰσονομία can be construed as encompassing three distinct systems of equality: (1) Universal Equality: In this system, all powers are regarded as equal to each other; (2) Localised Equality:

36. In Pindar *Pyth*. 2.86-87, we can discern an early development of the tripartite classification of forms of government. This observation suggests a conceptualization of these forms dating back to the 6th century. However, it is important to note that this conceptualization is not explicitly articulated in poetic works but rather finds its expression in Greek prose from the 5th century. Cf. Vassallo 2014: 208-217.

37. Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 3.

38. Cf. *ibid*.: 3-6; Lakoff 1993.

39. The term συνεκτικήν, used to refer to the 'containing-sustaining cause', finds its origin in Stoicism (Gal. *CC* 1.1-2.4 [*CMG* Suppl. Or. II pp. 133-134 ed. Kalbfleich = 55f (LS)], Clem. *Strom*. 8.9.1-4 [= *SVF* II 346]). The term ποιητικόν (or ποιοῦν), which refers to the 'efficient cause', can be traced back to Aristotle and Theophrastus but is more commonly used in this sense among the Stoics (Arist. *Gen. corr.* I 7.324b13-4, *De an.* III 5.430a11-3; Theophr. fr. 230 FHS&G *apud* Simpl. *in Arist. Phys*. 26.11-13, fr. 320A FHS&G *apud* Them. *in Arist. De an*. 108.19-21). Cf. Frede 1987: 125-150; Sorabji 1980: 250-282; Bobzien 1999: 196-242; Mansfeld 2002: 19-68; Mansfeld 2013: 79; Leith 2014: 605.

This system posits that each power is equal to its antagonist, emphasising localised balance between opposing forces; (3) Complex Equality: In this interpretation, each power is not only equal to its antagonist but also entails a broader equilibrium between pairs of opposites. Kouloumentas advocates for the validity of interpretation (3) as it aligns most comprehensively with Alcmaeon's definition of health.[40]

In the opening section of the passage, it is assumed that the audience is already familiar with the concept of 'equality' associated with the term ἰσονομία. Alcmaeon's approach involves using this concept to illustrate the relationship among the δυνάμεις ('forces'). Thus, we can discern different levels within the conceptual domains at play here.

The 'body', serving as the source domain of the conceptual metaphor, operates as a zeroth-order domain, referring to a tangible or fundamental social experience. Conversely, the *'polis*', in this case, serving as the meta-domain, operates as a first-order domain, as it is formed through the mapping between these two domains. However, within the conceptual dynamics that emerge from employing this metaphor in language, we can identify a second-order domain. This type of domain evolves as an extension of the preceding one, relying on the way the conceptual metaphor allows us to establish the target domain as a reality and property that can be applied to other domains. In this regard, defining health as ἰσονομίαν τῶν δυνάμεων enables us to perceive the δυνάμεις through the lens of the abstract concept ἰσονομία. Yet, it also plays a crucial role in comprehending and engaging with a concrete social experience, specifically life within the polis, thereby facilitating the construction of more intricate conceptual frameworks.

Towards the end of the first part of the lemma, the author refers to μοναρχία using two phrases: ἐν αὐτοῖς μοναρχίαν and ἑκατέρου μοναρχία. The first phrase signifies "the rule of only one among them" as the cause of the disease (νόσος), while the second phrase asserts that "the rule of one of the two" is destructive (φθοροποιόν). Consequently, the first sentence does not enable us to disambiguate which of Kouloumentas' three possible interpretations of ἰσονομία is unbalanced by μοναρχία, as it does not necessarily refer to a specific pair. However, the second sentence, by specifying that it relates to "one of the two" (ἑκατέρου),[41] allows us to exclude Kouloumentas' interpretation (1) since it associates monarchy with one of the elements within the pair of opposites.

As Alcmaeon established at the beginning, the body consists of elemental 'powers' (δυνάμεις) arranged in contradictory pairs, with each pair occupying a specific *locus* in the body. This first part of the lemma also defines the properties of this *locus* as either isonomic or monarchical. The remaining question is whether the 'imbalance' or 'disequilibrium' introduced by the μοναρχία applies to the pair of elements comprising the *locus* or to all pairs of opposites. This distinction corresponds to what Kouloumentas labels 'localised equality' or 'complex equality', respectively. In Kouloumentas' account, these interpretations are presented as mutually exclusive, assuming that ἰσονομία refers to a single meaning.

40. Kouloumentas 2014: 876-878.

41. In their work Diels and Kranz 1958: I 215-216 translate the phrase ἑκατέρου μοναρχία as "the autocracy of the one opposite" (*Alleinherrschaft des einen Gegensatzes*). This interpretation is widely adopted by most translations, including Ostwald 1969: 101, Runia 1999: 249, Laks and Most 2016: V 765, and Année 2021: 141.

However, when μοναρχία is defined as a relational property, it appears to encompass two distinct processes. Consequently, the imbalance it generates manifests at two levels within the context of ἰσονομία. The first level suggests that by not specifying the number of elements subject to μοναρχία, the passage alludes to an imbalance or discord among the various *loci* of δυνάμεις constituting the body. This could be identified as the primary cause of disease. In other words, if the δύναμις deviates from the ἰσονομία that stabilises them, the body exhibits sign of disease. On the second level, the text asserts that when μοναρχία is imposed upon one of the elements within a pair (ἑκατέρου), this imbalance leads to the destruction (φθοροποιός) of one of the elements in that pair.

In this sense, Giuseppe Cambiano suggests that Alcmeon viewed ἰσονομία as establishing a negative condition. According to him, good health does not arise from or correspond to a state in which opposing elements are quantitatively balanced, but rather from a state where none of them dominates. For Cambiano, opposition and equality are interrelated. Health, when linked to ἰσονομία, emerges as a dynamic property of the body, resulting from the equality of its elements. Conversely, disease represents a static state, involving the elimination of opposites and, consequently, the absence of any possible equality.[42]

The second part of Aetius' testimony, in which the causes of the disease are explained, provides us with additional insights:

> καὶ νόσον συμπίπτειν ὡς μὲν ὑφ' οὗ ὑπερβολῇ θερμότητος ἢ ψυχρότητος· ὡς δ' ἐξ ἧς διὰ πλῆθος τροφῆς ἢ ἔνδειαν· ὡς δ' ἐν οἷς ἢ αἷμα ἢ μυελὸν ἢ ἐγκέφαλον. τὴν δὲ υγείαν τὴν σύμμετρον τῶν ποιῶν κρᾶσιν.
> The disease occurs, according to the 'what', from excess of heat or cold; according to the 'why', from abundance or lack of food; according to the 'where', it may occur in the blood, the marrow or the brain. Health, on the other hand, depends on the mixture of qualities in equal measures.[43]

As per this excerpt from the lemma, disease is influenced by three categories of causes: 'what' (ὑφ' οὗ) pertains to the agent responsible for the disease, 'why' (ἐξ ἧς) relates to the manner in which the disease is induced, and 'where' (ἐν οἷς) signifies the location of the disease. The causal language employed in this section underscores a subsequent doxographical intervention. From this causal categorization, the definition of health is also reformulated, employing terminology from a later period (κρᾶσις and συμμετρία *in lieu* of ἰσονομία). In summary, this second part of the lemma encompasses: (a) a classification of the causes of disease, and (b) a redefinition of 'health'.

In accordance with this section of the testimony, the disease does not necessarily manifest in opposing pairs. Concerning the causes of disease, namely the 'what' (agent cause) and the 'why' (material cause), they are systematically presented as contradictory pairs. In the former instance, this contradiction arises due to the qualitative nature of

42. Cf. Cambiano 1983.

43. Aëtius 5.30.1 (D. 442) [= 24B4 (DK), 8B4 (TC), 23D30 (LM), Fp6 (A)]. The Greek text is from the Année 2019 edition, and the translation is my own.

the elements, involving factors such as heat or cold. Conversely, in the latter case, the contradiction arises from the quantitative aspect of the same element, encompassing abundance or deficiency.

In this second part, the discussion on the aetiology of diseases and the definition of health becomes more philosophically precise in analysing causes. Additionally, the medical content becomes clearer. The use of prepositions such as ὑφ᾽ οὗ, ἐξ ἧς, ἐν οἷς adds conceptual precision to the passage. This practice, referred to as the "metaphysics of prepositions" by Theiler,[44] was prevalent during the first century, harking back to Aristotle and the Peripatetics.[45] There is no doubt that these phrases do not belong to Alcmaeon's language. Furthermore, the physiological determinants for disease occurrence (αἷμα, μυελός, ἐγκέφαλος) demonstrate a mastery of medical terminology.[46]

However, when considering the 'where' – signifying the physiological site of the contradiction leading to the onset of disease – no such contradictory pairs emerge. On one hand, by identifying three potential sites (blood, marrow, or brain), they cannot be neatly paired off. On the other hand, since the contradiction can potentially manifest in two or all three of these locations concurrently, inherent contradictions among them dissipate.[47] Therefore, as per the initial part of the lemma, contradiction is deemed a necessary condition for the occurrence of the disease. However, the second passage asserts that contradiction alone is insufficient; it requires an additional element: localization. Hence, the explanation of the disease's causes in this section of the lemma contradicts the aetiology established in the first part.

Finally, in the last part of the testimony, Alcmaeon defines health as follows: τὴν σύμμετρον τῶν ποιῶν κρᾶσιν ("the mixture of qualities in equal measures"). This definition of health appears to be a reformulation of the definition proposed in the first part, which was ἰσονομίαν τῶν δυνάμεων ("the equality of powers"). In this reformulation, distinct terms are employed to describe the identical conceptual domain outlined in the initial definition. Specifically, συμμετρία is associated with the realm of ἰσονομία, while ποιός pertains to that of δύναμις. In this reformulation, the terms συμμετρία and κρᾶσις hold significant importance. We have testimonies from Aristotle,[48] as well as some accounts about Chrysippus, that refer to definitions of health in terms of συμμετρία,[49] which can be considered parallel passages to this lemma. Additionally,

44. Theiler 1930: 19ff. Cf. Runia 1986: 171-174.

45. Arist. *Metaph.* Z 7.1032a16-20.

46. αἷμα: Hippocr. *Aër.* 10 (L. II 42-50), *Mochl.* 36 (L. IV 378-380), Arist. *Part. anim.* 666b29, cf. Gal. *PHP* 5.573 (*CMG* V 4.1.2 ed. De Lacy); μυελός: Gal. *UP* 8.4, Hippocr. *Coac.* 499 (L. V 698), Diocl. fr. 141; ἐγκέφαλος: Hippocr. *VC* 2 (L. III 188-192), Erasistr. fr. 289 (Garofalo), Arist. *Part. anim.* 652a24, *Anon. Lond.* 21.34, Hippocr. *Morb. Sacr.* 13-14 (L. VI 384-388).

47. Aristotle defines contradiction as a form of opposition where two elements always have differing truth values. Cf. Arist. *Cat.* 13a38-b2, 13b33-35, *Metaph.* 1052a-1059a.

48. Arist. *Phys.* VII 3.246b4-6: τὰς μὲν γὰρ τοῦ σώματος, οἷον ὑγίειαν καὶ εὐεξίαν, ἐν κράσει καὶ συμμετρίᾳ θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν τίθεμεν; *Top.* VI 6.145b8: τοιοῦτος δὲ καὶ ὁ τῆς ὑγιείας ὁρισμός, εἴπερ συμμετρία θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν ἐστιν; VI 2.139b20-21: ἡ ὑγίεια συμμετρία θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν.

49. Chrys. *apud* Gal. *PHP* 5.2.31 (*CMG* V 4.1.2 ed. De Lacy = *SVF* III 471): […] λέγεται δὲ εἶναι σώματος νόσος ἡ ἀσυμμετρία τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ, θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ, ξηροῦ καὶ ὑγροῦ᾽. καὶ

the term κρᾶσις is crucial, as it plays a key role in pre-Socratic cosmologies and theories of the soul,[50] Hippocratic humoral theory,[51] and the theory of the mixture of primary elements in Stoics,[52] Peripatetics[53] and Galen.[54]

However, these two formulations are distinct, each presenting unique perspectives on health. The first conceptualises it as a phenomenon of binary equivalence among bodily constituents, while the second portrays it as a harmonious blend of qualities. Nonetheless, Magali Année argues that the lemma embodies an elusive and polymorphous conception of ἰσονομία, conveying the notion of 'civic equality' resulting from a process of 'mediation'. So, this concept of ἰσονομία allows for both definitions to coexist without contradiction. This is because any attempt to achieve 'equality' inherently involves mixing and proportion, which in itself represents a form of 'mediation'.[55]

Triebel-Schubert argues that there exists a kind of terminological parallel between the first and second parts of the lemma, where ὑπερβολή ('excess') corresponds to μοναρχία, while κρᾶσις and συμμετρία correspond to ἰσονομία. She also suggests that Alcmaeon introduced this association between συμμετρία and κρᾶσις as a novelty. In the rest of the Presocratic testimonies, the term συμμετρία appears to be applied only to pairs of opposites. Additionally, the notion of κρᾶσις as a balanced and symmetrical mixture of forces, apart from Alcmaeon, emerges only in the works of Aristotle and his successors.[56]

The term κρᾶσις poses certain lexicographical challenges that need to be addressed. Stephanus lists several meanings for the term κρᾶσις: originally, it referred to

μετ᾽ ὀλίγα, ἡ δ᾽ ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑγίεια εὐκρασία τις καὶ συμμετρία τῶν διειρημένων; 5.3.14 (= *SVF* III 472) ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ σώματος ἀκριβῶς αὐτὰ διωρίσατο (*scil.* Chrysippus) τὴν μὲν ὑγίειαν ἐν τῇ τῶν στοιχείων συμμετρίᾳ θέμενος.

50. Parm. frr. 8.55-61, 9, 12, 16 (DK); Emp. frr. 8, 17, 21, 26 (DK); Anaxag. frr. 4, 12, 16, 17 (DK). Cf. Sassi 2015.

51. Hippocr. *De nat. hom*. 4.3-7 (L. VI 40) Ὑγιαίνει μὲν οὖν μάλιστα, ὁκόταν μετρίως ἔχῃ ταῦτα τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα κρήσιος καὶ δυνάμιος καὶ τοῦ πλήθεος, καὶ μάλιστα μεμιγμένα ᾖ· ἀλγέει δὲ ὁκόταν τι τουτέων ἔλασσον ἢ πλέον ᾖ ἢ χωρισθῇ ἐν τῷ σώματι καὶ μὴ κεκρημένον ᾖ τοῖσι ξύμπασιν.

52. Zeno *apud* Stob. *Ecl*. I 17.3 152.19 Wachsmuth (= *SVF* I 102); Cleanth. *apud* Stob. *Ecl*. I 17.3 p. 153.7 Wachsmuth (= *SVF* I 497); Chrys. *apud* Stob. *Ecl*. I 17.4 153.24 Wachsmuth (= *SVF* II 471); Diog. Laert. VII 151 (= *SVF* II 479); Gal. *In Hipp. Nat. Hom. comm.* 19.4 (*CMG* V 9.1 ed. Mewaldt = *SVF* II 463); *De elem. sec. Hipp.* 136.15 (*CMG* V 1.2 ed. De Lacy = *SVF* II 465); Plut. *De comm. not.* 1077e, 1078b (= *SVF* II 465) and 1078e (= *SVF* II 480); Alex. Aphr. *Mixt*. 219.16 Bruns (= *SVF* II 466), 216.1 Bruns (= *SVF* II 470), 221.16 Bruns (= *SVF* II 474), 226.34 Bruns (= *SVF* II 475), 213.2 Bruns (= *SVF* II 481); *Quaest*. II 12 57.9 Bruns (= *SVF* II 476); *Mant*. 139.30 Bruns (= *SVF* II 477); Simpl. *In Phys*. 530.9 Diels (= *SVF* II 467); Them. *In Phys*. IV 1 p. 256 Spengel (= *SVF* II 468); Plot. *Enn*. II 7.1 p. 127 Müller (= *SVF* II 478).

53. Alex. Aphr. *Mixt*. chaps. XIII-XV.

54. Gal. *De temp*. 13.23, 14.26, 17.19, 17.20-21, 32.17-19, 34.5-12, 52.5-21, 60.9 ff., 64.14-18, 83.1-24, 104.1-3 (ed. Helmreich); *In Hipp. Nat. Hom. comm*. 13.5-9, 16.15-16, 21.15-18, 46.31-32 (*CMG* V 1.9 ed. Mewaldt); *De elem. sec. Hipp*. 138.1114 (*CMG* V 1.2 ed. De Lacy); *De usu part*. pp. I 18.25ff. (ed. Helmreich). Cf. Boudon-Millot 2011.

55. Année 2019: 44.

56. Cf. Triebel-Schubert 1984: 44.

the mixture of wine and water and later specifically denoted the ratio of water to be added to wine. It was also used to describe the mixture employed for preparing drugs and coloured pigments. This evolution in meaning led to the term representing a kind of 'chemical mixture', where the constituent elements are fused to create a unified whole.[57] In this sense, Passow emphasises that the term signifies the intimate combination of different substances, causing them to lose their individual nature and form a new substance together.[58] Chantraine, on the other hand, interprets the term as "to mix in a certain balance", highlighting the balanced aspect as its central characteristic.[59] In this lexicographical context, Triebel-Schubert argues that κρᾶσις is better translated as 'composition' (*Verbindung*) rather than 'mixture' (*Mischung*). This term holds paramount significance in ancient medicine, and its precise lexicographical definition is crucial in understanding the underlying process. The concept of κρᾶσις, denoting a "balanced chemical mixture", enables its application to various substances that blend together to create a new compound. In this context, health can be perceived, under this reformulation, as the compound arising from a harmonious mixture of *dynameis*.[60]

The process of reconstructing Aëtius' *Placita* text poses certain challenges that may explain the difficulty in establishing coherence between both parts of the lemma. Année's edition follows the *Lesetext* established by Runia, who relies primarily on Pseudo-Plutarch's testimony for reconstructing *Placita*.[61] The Arabic translation of Pseudo-Plutarch's *Placita*, made by Qustā Ibn Lūqā around the ninth century,[62] diverges from the Greek version's manuscript tradition.[63] According to Mansfeld and Runia, this text introduces new textual evidence that has not been fully incorporated into the research on the doxographical tradition.[64] The Arabic text assigns the additional name-label "Herophilus" to the second part of this lemma. Daiber supposes that the name-label

57. Stephanus 1822: *s.v.* κρᾶσις.

58. Passow 1831: *s.v.* κρᾶσις, "bey der κρᾶσις verschiedene Stoffe so innig verbinden, dass sie ihre eigne Natur verlieren, und zusammen einen neuen Stoff bilden".

59. Chantraine 2002: *s.v.* κρᾶσις, "mélanger dans un certain équilibre". Schwabe 1980: 31 concurs with Chantraine's interpretation.

60. For an in-depth exploration of the concept of κρᾶσις within the context of the medical-philosophical discourse, refer to the works of Mirrone 2017, 2021, and 2023.

61. Runia 1999: 248. The sources used for the reconstruction of Aëtius' *Placita* include Ps.-Plutarchus, Stobaeus, and Theodoret. Ps.-Plutarchus's version is likely an Epitome derived from Aëtius. It possesses a manuscript tradition of a Greek archetype, an Arabic version derived from a Greek source that is more comprehensive than the manuscript archetype, and an indirect tradition. Stobaeus' version, on the other hand, appears to have not been excerpted from Ps.-Plutarchus, but much of its material aligns precisely with it and provides more extensive content than what we find in Ps.-Plutarchus. Theodoret's version is an excerpt from Aëtius, and it is the sole source that attributes the work to him, although he does not cite materials from Book 5. Runia 1999 excludes the statement ἐγγίνεσθαι δὲ τούτοις ποτὲ κἀκ τῶν ἔξωθεν αἰτιῶν, ὑδάτων ποιῶν ἢ χώρας ἢ κόπων ἢ ἀνάγκης ἢ τούτοις παραπλησίων, which was included by Diels-Kranz and Laks-Most based on Stobaeus' testimony.

62. Badawī 1954.

63. Daiber 1980: 166ff.

64. Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 153-154.

may have resulted from the intrusion of a marginal note (*Randnotiz*) or some other form of confusion into the text.[65] Given the significant number of variations in the text of Ps.-Plutarchus and the other testimonies at this point, Runia finds it highly probable that the concluding portion of the manuscript was nearly illegible. For this reason, in his reading of the text, he does not include the name-label "Herophilus", even though he acknowledges that there may be valid reasons to accept it.[66] However, Leith supports the attribution to Herophilus for several reasons.[67] Firstly, he notes parallels between this passage and references to Herophilus in Galen. He believes that the parallel between both sources, each independent of the other, supports their authenticity. Secondly, there is a discrepancy in the views on causality presented in both parts of the lemma. Lastly, the passage contains content that aligns more closely with the Peripatetic school, making it more likely to be connected to Herophilus rather than Alcmaeon.[68] Runia and Mansfeld find these arguments persuasive. Therefore, in the new edition of *Placita*, Mansfeld and Runia adopt Qustā Ibn Lūqā's *lectio* and affirm the authenticity of the name-label "Herophilus".[69]

While Runia does not include the name "Herophilus" in his reading of text, he believes that accepting the inclusion of this name-label in this part of the lemma helps resolve the issue of the dual explanation of the causes of health and disease, as they would pertain to two distinct *doxai*.[70] This viewpoint aligns with Leith's second argument. In their analysis of the sources used to reconstruct Aëtius' text, Mansfeld and Runia argue that if we accept the text of Ps.-Plutarchus as provided by the Greek manuscript tradition, there would be grounds to reject the reading of the Arabic translation. This is because Herophilus is known to have rejected the concept of causality.[71] However, they also note that, according to Galen's testimonies, while Herophilus expressed doubts about any causal explanation, he would have admitted the provisional nature of causal explanations.[72] In line with this perspective, Leith suggests that attributing this section of the lemma to Herophilus is consistent.[73] This is because the

65. Daiber 1980: 518. Conversely Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 157 considers "this is surely somewhat precipitate".

66. Runia 1999: 249-250. However, it is noteworthy that in his critical apparatus to this fragment, Année 2020: 140 does not list the Arabic translation by Qustā Ibn Lūqā among the manuscripts.

67. Leith 2014: 603-606.

68. Cf. Runia 1986: 171-174.

69. Mansfeld and Runia 2020: 2050-2051.

70. Runia 1999: 250.

71. Gal. *CP* 16.200 [= T59a (von Staden)]: [...] *manifestum est quoniam omnino non est causa*.

72. Mansfeld and Runia 1997: 157. Sources: Gal. *CP* 16.197-205 [= T59a (von Staden)]; *De comp. med.* 3.1 (12.619 K) [T59b (von Staden)]. Cf. von Staden 1989: 136-137.

73. Leith 2014: 602-607.

provisional causes that Galen quoted from Herophilus[74] align with the causes presented in this part of the lemma.[75]

Despite Leith's arguments and their acceptance by Runia and Mansfeld, we do not consider them conclusive in proving the attribution of this second part to Herophilus. The parallelism between Herophilus' quote in Galenus and the lemma passage does not necessarily imply authorship or originality on the part of Herophilus. This parallel could be an echo of these doctrines in Herophilus; in fact, there are parallel testimonies to this conception attributed to Chrysippus and other ancient authors.[76] Similar testimonies exist in other members of the Alexandrian medical school, such as Erasistratus, who also views overeating as a cause of disease.[77]

Although the two sides present different terminology and notions of health and causation, this does not necessarily imply a contradiction between them, as Runia and Mansfeld suggest. Conceiving health as both a binary equivalence and an equal mixture is not contradictory; rather, these notions complement each other. Similarly, the difference between the notion of causation established in the first part for health and that established for disease in the second part, while different, is not contradictory either. In both cases, health and disease are conceived in terms of a 'just proportion' between the components.

Furthermore, the entire lemma is permeated with terminology coined later, except for the use of the terms ἰσονομία and μοναρχία. However, this does not necessarily mean that the entire passage, despite being attributed to Alcmaeon, actually belongs to him. The incorporation of later terminology only indicates doxographical mediation in the testimony. Therefore, inferring a closer connection to Herophilus than to Alcmaeon is, at best, relative.

## 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the realm of medical discourse, Alcmaeon adeptly employs geometrical-political terminology to elucidate various pathological phenomena. Delving into the theoretical-methodological framework of *Begriffsgeschichte*, it becomes evident that this utilisation of political terminology serves as a significant indicator of what Meier, following Ko-

74. Gal. *CP* 16.198 [= T59a (von Staden)]: *causa vero, utrum sit vel non, natura quidem non est invenibile, existimatione autem puto infrigidari, estuari, cibo et potibus repleri*.

75. Aëtius 5.30.1 [= 24B4 (DK), 8B4 (TC), 23D30 (LM), Fp6 (A)]: […] θερμότητος ἢ ψυχρότητος […]

76. Chrys. *apud* Gal. *PHP* 5.2.31 (*CMG* V 4.1.2 ed. De Lacy = *SVF* III 471): […] λέγεται δὲ εἶναι σώματος νόσος ἡ ἀσυμμετρία τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ, θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ, ξηροῦ καὶ ὑγροῦ'. καὶ μετ' ὀλίγα, ἡ δ' ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑγίεια εὐκρασία τις καὶ συμμετρία τῶν διειρημένων; *PHP* 5.3.14 (*CMG* V 4.1.2 ed. De Lacy = *SVF* III 472): ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ σώματος ἀκριβῶς αὐτὰ διωρίσατο [*scil.* Chrysippus] τὴν μὲν ὑγίειαν ἐν τῇ τῶν στοιχείων συμμετρίᾳ θέμενος. Cf. Arist. *Phys*. VII 3.246b4-6 τὰς μὲν γὰρ τοῦ σώματος, οἷον ὑγίειαν καὶ εὐεξίαν, ἐν κράσει καὶ συμμετρίᾳ θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν τίθεμεν; *Top*. VI 6.145b8 τοιοῦτος δὲ καὶ ὁ τῆς ὑγιείας ὁρισμός, εἴπερ συμμετρία θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν ἐστιν; VI 2.139b20-21: ἡ ὑγίεια συμμετρία θερμῶν καὶ ψυχρῶν.

77. Erasistr. fr. 168 (Garofalo): Ἐρασίστρατος τὰς νόσους διὰ πλῆθος τροφῆς καὶ ἀπεψίας καὶ φθοράν. Cf. Erasistr. frr. 60 and 162 (Garofalo).

selleck, terms the 'politicisation of concepts' (*Politisierung der Begriffe*), a phenomenon that gained momentum around the 5th century B.C. The infusion of geometrical terms with political connotations and their subsequent application in the field of medicine offer crucial insights into the transformative processes that reshaped the organisational and conceptual landscape of the polis during the transitional period between the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.During this pivotal era, the *polis* underwent profound changes, although not exclusively defined as 'democratic' at the time. Instead, these changes delineated a complex network of political concepts, which later became integral components of the broader conceptual framework that allowed for contemplation of the δημοκρατία, or democracy. Alcmaeon's innovative use of these geometrical-political terms within the medical domain reflects the permeation of political discourse into diverse spheres of ancient society. It underscores the interconnectedness of political and intellectual developments, showcasing how the evolving political landscape significantly influenced the language and thought processes of scholars and intellectuals like Alcmaeon.

In essence, Alcmaeon's employment of these politicised terms in the medical context serves as a testament to the intricate interplay between politics and intellectual pursuits in ancient Greece. It illuminates the subtle ways in which the evolving political vocabulary contributed to shaping not only the discourse surrounding medicine but also the broader understanding of democracy, paving the way for the conceptual universe of political thought that would characterise subsequent centuries.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

A = Année, M., 2019. *Alcméon de Crotone. Fragments. Traité scientifique en prose ou poème médical?*, Paris, Vrin.

BS = Boeri, M. and Salles, R. 2014. *Los filósofos estoicos, Ontología, lógica, física y ontología*, Santiago de Chile, Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado.

DK = Diels, H. and Kranz, W. 1958. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vols., Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.

FHS&G = Fortenbaugh, W. W., Huby, P. M., Sharples, R. W. and Gutas, D. 1993. *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for His Life, Writings, Thought and Influence*, 2 vols., Leiden & Boston, Brill.

Garofalo = Garofalo, I. 1988. *Erasistrati Fragmenta*, Pisa, Giardini.

L. = Littré, E. 1839-1861. Œuvres complétes d'Hippocrate, 10 vols., Paris, J.-B. Baillière.

LM = Laks, A. and Most, G. 2016. *Early Greek Philosophy*, 9 vols., Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

LP = Lobel, E. and Page, D. L. 1963. *Poetarum lesbiorum fragmenta*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

LS = Long, A. A. and Sedley, D. N. 1987-1989. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

M = Manetti, D. 2022. *Anonymus Londiniensis: De Medicina*, Berlin, Teubner.
*PMG* = Page, D. L. 1962. *Poetae Melici Graeci*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
*SLG* = Page, D. L. 1974. *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
*SVF* = Armin, H. von 1903-1905. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, Stuttgart, Teubner.
TC = Timpanaro Cardini, M. 2010. *Pitagorici antichi. Testimonianze e frammenti*, Milano, Bompiani.
von Staden = Staden, H. von 1989. *Herophilus: The Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
W = West, M. L. 1998. *Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

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# Physics and Civil Science in Leibniz's Writings

## Notes on a Shared Vocabulary

ABSTRACT: The article aims to provide a basic glossary of the lexical intersections between physics and politics in Leibniz's writings and to offer an interpretative framework for understanding these intersections. The leading idea is that linguistic and lexicographical analysis discloses a structural relationship – manifesting at times as symmetry, at others as radical continuity – between the domains of physics and politics, and, consequently, between corporeal and civil structures and their respective operative models. Taking all elements into account, including the metaphors frequently employed by Leibniz, it is proposed that – to some extent – one may legitimately speak of an analogical mode of thinking underlying Leibniz's approach to these two spheres. Furthermore, it is argued that this way of thinking is perfectly consistent with Leibniz's metaphysical assumptions, global view of the universe, and method of inquiry.
SOMMARIO: L'articolo si propone di fornire un glossario di base delle intersezioni lessicali tra fisica e politica negli scritti di Leibniz e di offrire un quadro interpretativo per la comprensione di tali intersezioni. L'idea guida è che l'analisi linguistica e lessicografica riveli una relazione strutturale – che si manifesta a volte come simmetria, a volte come radicale continuità – tra i domini della fisica e della politica e, di conseguenza, tra le strutture corporee e civili e i rispettivi modelli operativi. Tenendo conto di tutti gli elementi, e considerate anche le metafore frequentemente impiegate da Leibniz, si propone che – in una certa misura – si possa legittimamente parlare di un modo di pensare analogico alla base dell'approccio di Leibniz a queste due sfere. Inoltre, si sostiene che questo modo di pensare sia perfettamente coerente con i presupposti metafisici di Leibniz, la sua visione globale dell'universo e il suo metodo di indagine.
KEYWORDS: Systems; Structures; Biology; Dynamics; Civil Science

### 1. INTRODUCTION[1]

Leibniz's texts confront us not only with an immense body of bibliographical references, but also with the stratified linguistic and conceptual habits of a profoundly erudite author. His use of language – particularly within the domain of natural theology – is undoubtedly the result of the intersection and overlap of various philosophical traditions, most notably Epicureanism, Stoicism, Roman natural law theory, scholastic Aristotelianism, Platonism, and both Renaissance and Early Modern Encyclopedism. Systematically disentangling these traditions and evaluating, case by case, the extent of their

1. All translation, where not otherwise specified, are my own.


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influence on Leibniz's modes of expression would far exceed the scope of a single article and would require a dedicated study. What is certain, however, is that despite these well-documented influences, it would be an interpretative misstep to attribute to Leibniz a naïve or unreflective use of language and terminology, lacking any autonomous intention, particularly in those domains that were regarded as pivotal in the 17th century. As we shall see, there are numerous passages – beginning with his earliest writings – in which Leibniz demonstrates full awareness of the semantic resonances and lexical interrelations between two special domains: physics and civil science.[2] At the outset, his biography – which has already proven capable of shedding light on the theoretical cores of his thought[3] – urges us to take into account that his initial engagement with the question of physical motion was shaped by his training as a jurist. Leibniz himself recalls that, at the time when Erich Mauritius presented him with Huygens' rules of collision, his mind was occupied by "very different concerns regarding jurisprudence".[4]

While Leibniz scholarship has produced thoughtful studies showcasing the original continuity and coherence between metaphysics, ontology, and dynamics, on the one hand,[5] and metaphysics, ontology, and politics, on the other,[6] there has been no study thus far exploring the possibility to envisage a structural continuity and coherence – which lays the groundwork for cautiously speaking of an analogy – between physics and civil science based on this shared onto-metaphysical framework.

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

In the interest of clarity, I shall begin by briefly outlining the theoretical framework in which the following analysis is grounded. This framework encompasses mainly two relevant and complementary speculative floors, which accounts, respectively, for the aspect of continuity/coherence and for the possibility of an analogy between physics and civil science: 1. the first ('higher' and more general) floor is defined by the onto-epistemological consequences of Leibniz's metaphysical assumptions; 2. the second (lower) floor arises from a more 'analytical' consideration of the matter at hand. Here follows a brief explanation:

1. In Leibniz's view of the universe, nothing is unrelated. Everything is bound and constituted by complex relations, interactions, and mediations. The existence of a God who ordered the world based on criteria of logical and moral perfection, which in turn require simplicity and intelligibility, constitutes the basic assumption underlying the

2. One of the very few existing studies devoted to this issue is Michel Fichant's introduction to the 1678 edition of *De corporum concursu* he edited, cf. Fichant 1994: 32-43. Other, less explicit, references to the subject can be found – to the best of my knowledge – in some insightful studies by Leroy Loemker and Francesco Piro; cf. Loemker 1961: 323-338, Piro 2003.

3. Cf., in this regard, Maria Rosa Antognazza's monumental work (Antognazza 2008).

4. *De rationibus motus*, A VI, 2, 160.

5. Cf., for example, Robinet 1984: 1-25; Châtelet 1993; Gale 1989: 95-102; Garber 1995: 270-352; Garber 2006: 270-352; Lawrenz 2010; Arthur 2018; McDonough 2022.

6. Cf., for example, Herbrich 1959: 113-136; Schneiders 2005: 121-144; Beiderbeck and Waldhoff 2011; Luckscheiter 2013; Basso 2015: 55-67.

original continuity among all parts of creation and, therefore, all corresponding areas of knowledge (even those that might seem completely unrelated on the surface). Some sixty years ago, Leroy Loemker described Leibniz's metaphysics, ontology of minds, logic of relation, and relational/dynamical view of actions and motions as a "social interpretation of the universe".[7] It is readily apparent how the specific argument of an original continuity between the physical and civil domains can primarily be rooted in Leibniz's very early assumption of an enlightened 'regency' upheld by a wise Monarch-Architect who ordered the system of the world according to a *legem continuitatis inviolabilem*,[8] in which there are no 'leaps', and everything conforms to criteria of rationality/intelligibility, economy, and goodness. The metaphysical root of the continuity between natural and civil sciences is explicitly and effectively pointed out in a very insightful excerpt from his 1682 text *Ad constitutionem scientiae generalis*, where he states that "History" (including both natural and civil history) "is a mirror of the Divine Providence and exhibits God [as] clothed with a certain morality", both in his role as "inventor of admirable machines, in physical matters", and as "King of the Minds in this Universal Republic". In this latter capacity, "He revealed his immense goodness especially to mankind through the government of the Empires".[9] A readjusted version of this argument is then resumed in a text from a few years later, *De divisione orbis scientiarum universi* (1683-1685), where he notes:

> what is asserted to be knowledge of mixed mathematics, of the world and of the bodies involved in it, and even of human habits (*humana consuetudo*) is derived from certain inductions [drawn] from natural and civil history, […] associated with the demonstrations of higher sciences [which Leibniz also addresses as *scientiae purae* in that same text].[10]

2. On the other ('lower') speculative floor, the possibility of an analogy between the physical and the civil domain seems to be detectable in a particular and multi-layered mereology, which leads to a view of each of these domains as analysable in terms of part-system organisation and interaction. A 'system', in Leibniz's complex mereology, is composed of 'structures', as he will clearly point out in his 1688 text *Specimen inventorum de admirandis naturae Generalis arcanis*, and then again, a year later, in his *Dynamica de potentia et legibus naturae corporeae*, after carefully reflecting on the issue of the composition of bodies roughly since 1683.[11] Structures are mutually connected in the system through a common *milieu*, governed by a common basic set of laws, and

7. Loemker 1961: 335.

8. The Latin expression is found in Leibniz's letter to Guido Grandi, September 6th, 1713, GM IV, 219. In the *Allgemeine Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft und Literatur*, Braunschweig 1854: 225 we found "inevitabilem", as well as in the uncorrected transcriptions for the series A I; however, the manuscript confirms the reading "inviolabilem".

9. *Ad constitutionem scientiae generalis*, first draft, February 1682, A VI, 4A, 468.

10. *De divisione orbis scientiarum universi*, 1683-1685, A VI, 4A, 524-525.

11. Cf. *Specimen inventorum de admirandis naturae Generalis arcanis*, 1688, A VI, 4B, 1630 and *Dynamica de potentia et legibus naturae corporeae*, 1689, CFP I, 305, but also earlier texts such as: *Genera terminorum substantiae*, 1683-1685(?), A VI, 4A, 568; *Du rapport general de*

capable of various types of relations and interactions. Each of them is, then, further made of parts or organisms which conform and subordinate to the general end of the structure they belong to.[12] These parts, in turn, are held together by specific internal bonds or relations which determine the structure's level of cohesion. Thus, each structure features a unique internal organisation, specific mode of part-interaction and level of cohesion, which ultimately grants its capacity for action.[13] The resulting picture can be seen as a kind of 'federal' biology supported by a fundamental dynamic of interactions, in which structures and their parts are livened up and disposed in a certain way by internal and external relations and motions. Looking at this biological-dynamical view of part-system organisation, one is easily reminded of Leibniz's view of the Empire and Europe.[14] In this light, the reference – in his *Discours de metaphysique* – to the need of recognising "the wisdom of God in the details of the mechanical structure of certain particular bodies"[15] can perhaps be regarded as open to more than one level of reading.

Based on this conceptual framework, my aim here is to show how a certain degree of continuity and correspondence between civil science and physics shines through Leibniz's use of language. This will require me to dwell a little longer on the theoretical implications of what I referred to as the 'lower' speculative floor. Specifically, it is necessary to clearly identify two complementary yet distinct aspects or layers of enquiry in it: one 'biological', that is, related to the sphere of the structural organisation of bodies, the other 'dynamical', that is, related to the sphere of their internal and external motions.

The latter is ultimately rooted in the Aristotelian conception of the 'kinetic' nature of change,[16] from which Leibniz derived a fundamental insight informing his naturalistic outlook: namely, that any principle of 'activity' – including the decision-making capacity of acting subjects – can be analysed in terms of movement.[17] However, this is only

*toutes choses*, 1686, A VI, 4B, 1615; *De totae cogitabilium varietatis uno obtutu complexione*, early 1685 (?), A VI, 4A, 596-597.

12. Particularly relevant to the topic are the studies of Antonio Maria Nunziante, see for example Nunziante 2019 and the collection of texts he edited in Nunziante 2011, which contains Leibniz's objections to Stahl's medical theory, followed by Stahl's replies. See also Duchesnau and Smith 2016.

13. For Leibniz's explanation of cohesion, see above all his *Animadversiones ad Cartesii Principia*, 1699, GP IV, 384-388, and his correspondence with Nicolaas Hartsoeker (which essentially went on from 1706 to 1712), esp. his letter to Hartsoeker of October 30th, 1710, GP III, 505. This correspondence is insightfully analysed in Mormino 2016.

14. This 'federal' biology perfectly matches the political view Leibniz expressed in one of his most representative political writings, written in 1677 (and therefore prior to his actual reflection on the biology of bodies): the lengthy *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, in which Leibniz defended and showed the possibility of the functioning of a political body based on a federal structure, such as the Empire, cf. A IV, 2, 54.

15. *Discours de métaphysique*, §21, A VI, 4B, 1563.

16. Cf. Aristotle's concepts of *kinesis* and *metabolé* in his *Physica*, esp. I 9, II 1, II 3, II 8, III 1, IV 3, V 1.

17. Cf., for example, *Consilium de Encyclopaedia nova conscribenda methodo inventoria*: "The fourteenth is Moral Science, that is, the Science of the Mind and its Motions; of knowing them and governing them" (A VI, 4A, 349).

part of the story. Another crucial point is that, at the beginning of his physical studies, Leibniz drew from Hobbes' *Elementa philosophiae* the idea that motion via conatus was the elementary explanatory unit of all reality, and hence of a philosophical 'grammar' – so to speak – capable of connecting the three essential elements of philosophy: *corpus*, *homo* and *civis*, that is, physics, anthropology, and politics.[18] Referring to this idea in Hobbes' philosophy, the Italian scholar Antimo Negri highlighted Hobbes' ambition to establish the conditions for "the rise of *physici civiles*", but he also pointed out that Hobbes mainly considered physics "under the species of geometry".[19] As early as 1670, Leibniz confessed to Jakob Thomasius that he felt that same need, namely – in his own words –, the need "for naturalist philosophers" capable of "exhibiting a civil science in natural science".[20] But he will essentially rework this Hobbesian idea in an original way, on the thrust of his disagreement with Hobbes on the issue of the role of geometry in physical science. Indeed, Leibniz criticised Hobbes' purely 'geometrical' foundation of physics, as it was ultimately based on a purely quantitative/mechanical view of the composition of conatuses; instead, he firmly held that the prevailing *conatus* "is not chosen with addition and subtraction",[21] for conatuses "merge rather than hindering one another".[22] According to Leibniz, a geometrical approach to physics led to Hobbes' errors in metaphysics, ontology, and, above all, moral and civil science. Geometry alone, as a 'pure' science, is inadequate to fully account for physical motion. For Leibniz, geometry is suited to describing only a rudimentary aspect of an inherently interconnected and complex reality, that is, it could only describe the trajectories of motions, and not how these trajectories "and the velocities of motions are changed by the conflict of bodies".[23] Geometry also fails to explain what causes the essential qualities of bodies, such as cohesion. Therefore, Leibniz calls for a "more sublime science",[24] a physics that incorporates elements of mechanics, chemistry, philosophy of mind, and natural law.

After discovering dynamics, then, he will clearly and finally state that geometric demonstrations based on the theoretical assumption of a "complete uniformity" are nothing but "fictions" that does not reflect the true nature of things.[25] In the physical world, everything unfolds under specific conditions. This principle had been recognised as applying to both physical and political phenomena as early as 1669.[26]

18. Cf. Hobbes's *Vita carmine expressa*, OL I, XC; see also *ibid*., LXXXIX.

19. Negri 1972: 11 (English translation of quoted excerpts is my own). See especially what Hobbes states in §§6 and 7 of chap. VI of *De Corpore*, OL I, 63-65 and EW I, 70-75.

20. Leibniz to Jakob Thomasius, December 1670, A II, 1, 119.

21. *De conatu et motu*, *sensu et* cogitatione, A VI, 2, 282.

22. *Summa hypotheseos physicae novae*, A VI, 2, 333.

23. *Consilium de Encyclopaedia nova conscribenda methodo inventoria*, A VI, 4A, 346.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Cf. *Nouveaux Essais sur l'entendement humain*, *Préface*, A VI, 6, 57. Cf. also Leibniz's letter to the Electress Sophie, October 31st, 1705, A II, 4, 343. Glimpses of this idea can already be found in the Mainz-period writings, cf. *Theoria motus abstracti*, A VI, 2, 269.

26. Cf. *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum pro eligendo Rege Polonorum*, prop. XIII, A IV, 1, 12.

Notably, this supports Leibniz's theoretical trust in non-uniform political bodies, namely the so-called *Respublicae irregulares*, such as the Holy Roman Empire, whose legitimacy and political nature he defended against both Hobbes and Pufendorf.[27]

## 2. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

We shall then see if, how and to what extent lexical and linguistic analysis supports the idea of a 'naturalised' civil science and of a 'civilised' physics, so to speak. In other words, we shall see whether each of these domains offered Leibniz meaningful insights into the exploration and understanding of the other.

As a matter of fact, a careful examination of Leibniz's writings provides noteworthy indications of both the use of physical models in civil science and of civil science in his physics. The first line of inquiry is supported by Leibniz's specific use of terms such as 'body' (*corpus*), 'perturbation' (*perturbatio*), 'concourse' (*concursus*), balance (*equilibrium*), 'potency' or 'power' (*potential/puissance*), 'stability' (*firmitas*). The second finds support in his equally distinctive use of terms and concepts such as 'public' and 'private' (*publicus-privatus*), 'civil' and 'natural' (*civilis-naturalis*), 'Republic' (*Respublica*), 'conspiration' (*conspiratio*), 'restitution' (*restitutio*), 'accommodation' (*accommodatio*).

### 2.1 Physics in Politics

The title of this paragraph echoes the title that Leibniz himself assigned to a short draft of a text he never finished: *Mechanica in politicis*, from around the Paris years.[28] In that case, the very few lines that make up the draft merely point to the practical value of mechanics in political affairs – for (metaphorically speaking) "military and economic affairs are the nerves and veins of the civil body"[29] – while politicians who ignore (or even despise) mechanics are portrayed as ill-equipped for their task. Nonetheless, the signs that Leibniz was trying to bridge these two fields at a deeper level, especially in those years, are abundant.

#### 2.1.1 Body

A preliminary and decisive question is: what is the relationship between the two uses of the word 'body' to refer both to physical and political bodies? Obviously, this question alone would require a separate article. The short and – at this point – predictable answer is that a certain 'congruence' and conformity between those two kinds of 'body' revolves around the key notion of 'aggregate'.

27. Cf. *In Severinum de Monzambano*, A IV, 1, 500-502; *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, ch. XI, A IV, 2, 59; Leibniz to Jean Gallois, December 1678, A III, 2, 574-575; Leibniz to Ezechiel von Spanheim, October 26th, 1703, A I, 22, 639.

28. *Mechanica in politicis*, 1672-1676 (?), A VI, 3, 375.

29. *Ibid.*

Indeed, civil 'bodies' (also referred to as civil "persons" whenever the element of will is involved) are defined as "aggregates of [natural] persons"[30] – albeit "in perpetuo fluxu"[31] – who unite and cooperate in pursuit of common security and happiness in a form suitable for these ends, i.e. a state form with autonomous decision-making capacity, which presupposes a certain level of corporeal unity and internal cohesion.

But, before delving into the analogy between natural and civil aggregates, it is important to briefly try and explain Leibniz's preference for the Latin expression *corpus civile* over *corpus politicum*.[32] Prior to the 17th century, the latter expression is mainly (and almost exclusively) attested in the political tradition of Tudor England and has been notoriously translated as 'body politic'.[33] In that context, the expression has been used to designate the specific theory assigning the King two bodies: "a Body natural and a Body politic".[34] This theory of the *corpus politicum* or "body politic" descends directly from the theological doctrine assigning Christ two bodies: one natural and the other "mystical", representing the entire Catholic Church united in him.[35] Indeed, beginning in the 11th century, the expression *corpus reipublicae mysticum* appears in English political literature, carrying the allegorical and ontological background associated with the term "mystical" into the political realm.[36] Although Leibniz too addressed the issue of how the Church can be said to be one mystical body, his way of conveying this notion into his political view is extremely different, rather episodic, and admittedly not always perspicuous. He was certainly far more influenced by the Ancient Latin and French cultural traditions than by the English one; however, the matter extends beyond this.

First of all, he was deeply aware that a comprehensive political thinking could not solely rest on the image of a Christian sovereign anymore, as one could not overlook the proliferation of religious schism,[37] nor ignore the reality of a culturally richer and more differentiated world, marked by the political consequences of the Peace of Westphalia, where federal and polycentric forms of state organisation had become fully established, and the figure of the sovereign had lost much of its symbolic and allegorical power. In short, this was a world where political union had begun to depend more and more on economic and social stability and cohesion, and Leibniz was no stranger to its mechanisms.

30. *Definitionum Juris Specimen*, 1676, A VI, 3, 627.

31. *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum pro eligendo rege Polonorum*, 1669, prop. XLII, A IV, 1, 37.

32. The expression only occurs twice in all Leibniz's texts published so far. Cf. *Sur Pellisson, Réflexions sur les différends de la religion*, July-August 1690, A IV, 4, 516; *Verthaydigung der Hohen Stande des Reichs gegen die harte Beschuldigungen eines falschgenanten Caesarei Turriani*, February-Summer 1696, A IV, 6, 205.

33. Cf. Kantorowicz 1997: esp. 449 n. 429. See also Hale 1971.

34. Plowden 1816: 212a.

35. Cf. Kantorowicz 1997: esp. 15-16, 199, 207-232.

36. *Ibid.*: 207 n. 41.

37. Indeed, having himself worked towards the reunification of European Christianity, he came to know firsthand the formidable obstacles such a pursuit involved.

But there is another, even more compelling and structural reason, which concerns the very model of rationality embraced by Leibniz. The model of the *Ecclesia* – while certainly retaining some intriguing elements – cannot be regarded as a viable political model to draw upon, as it constituted a unique kind of 'body'. Indeed, in several passages, the traditional paradigm appears to be reversed, with the unity of the Church's mystical body being explained by comparison to the unity achievable by the civil body of a *Respublica*.[38] Ultimately, laying 'scientific' basis for politics, or better yet, raising the foundations of what he calls a "Scientia Civilis",[39] required clearing the field of any 'mysterious' aspects (to which the adjective "mysticum" intrinsically refers). He was aware that the distinctive form of unity achievable by the body of the *Ecclesia* – through the Eucharistic participation of its members – was neither readily available to "civil" bodies, nor capable of serving as a model that could simply be replicated.[40]

In this light, Leibniz's view of political bodies is articulated primarily at an operational (biological-dynamical) level, and – in the majority of cases – when he speaks of the "soul" of the States he is referring metaphorically and analogically to their Constitution, i.e. to what legally/ethically and functionally binds them together.[41]

It is then time to analyse a passage that might seem misplaced in this context, given the subject of the writing where it is found – the 1685 *De schismate et fide ecclesiaque catholica* – and the theological subtext at play in it, but which is an important starting point for explicating the origin of the idea of the civil 'body', and – when compared with other texts of the same period – I believe also shows a 'functional-operational' intent:

> Indeed, the essence and perfection of natural bodies (*corpora naturalia*) consists in the union of the parts; once [the latter is] dissolved, not only the external form and beauty, but also the strength (*vis*) and life (*vita*), perish. The same is the case with societies of men (*hominum societates*), which are comparatively called bodies (*corpora*); since both the nature and the excellence of these depend on the union of the members of which they are composed.[42]

38. Cf., for example, *Reunion der Kirchen*, 1683, A IV, 3, 287-288; *De schismate et fide ecclesiaque catholica*, 1685 (?), A IV, 6, 717; *Apologia catholicae veritatis*, 1685 (?) A IV, 6, 722, 736. See also *Nova methodus discendae docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*, 1667, pt. II, §20, A VI, 1, 306.

39. Cf., for example, *Tria axiomata primaria*, 1674-1676 (?), A VI, 3, 427; Leibniz to Placcius, May 1676, A II.1, 407; *Studia ad felicitatem dirigenda*, 1678-1679 (?), A VI, 4A, 137.

40. I discussed the matter at length in Manzo 2024, arguing that, while Leibniz was undoubtedly fascinated by the power of a politico-religious option capable of establishing strong ontological and spiritual bonds among the members of a secular state, he also remained acutely aware of the intrinsic limits and ultimately utopian nature of such a model. It is important to clarify, in this regard, that the two approaches – that we might classify as 'scientific' and 'theological' – are not mutually exclusive nor do they stand in opposition in Leibniz's thought. Rather, they operate on two very different levels of analysis and perspective.

41. Leibniz, indeed, recognises that a principle of unity, understood as the cause of a certain disposition of the parts, can be identified in "that which is called Soul" or in "something that has analogy with the soul" (Leibniz to Thomas Burnett, February 2nd [12th], 1700, A I, 18, 376).

42. *De schismate et fide ecclesiaque catholica*, 1685 (?), A IV, 6, 717.

We are clearly presented here with the fact that Leibniz identifies natural bodies as a model for civil ones, and that he explicitly draws from the former the use of the term 'bodies'. It is also important to note that, in his reference to the concepts of 'vis' and 'vita', he is implicitly referring to the more comprehensive concept of 'activity'. This is also consistent with the fact that the term 'corpus' and the term 'persona' referred to civil entities are mostly interchangeable, and the preference for one over the other is to be ascribed, depending on the context, to Leibniz's intention to highlight either the organisational/functional aspect – that is, the underlying collective and cooperative mechanism – or the decisional/moral aspect, that is, a fundamental willing capacity. In both cases, essential conditions are undividedness and unity.[43] It is therefore of little use to dwell on the distinction between *corpus* and *persona* in this context. The important thing is to reflect on the increasing interest Leibniz took in the body regarded as an organic machine from the mid-1680s onwards, and to assess how this development might be relevant to the present discussion. The notion ultimately and most profoundly at stake here is that of 'individuality' as Ohad Nachtomy explained it. Nachtomy convincingly argued that Leibniz can be considered an absolute pioneer in the field of theoretical biology precisely because of a theory of "nested" individuality, in which individuality is rooted in agency and in which there are simultaneously different levels of individuality. "This model" – as he put it – "stresses activity and pluralism: it accepts simultaneous coexistence of individuals at different levels, nested one within the other".[44]

To better understand the meaning of this statement and its relevance to the relationship between natural and civil entities, we need to further consider two things:
1. Around the same year (1685) or possibly a little earlier, Leibniz composed his *Genera terminorum substantiae*, where he defined the living body as "Machina sese sustentans et sibi similem producens",[45] that is, a self-sufficient machine capable of preserving and of reproducing – which is a way of 'perpetuating' – itself. This allows us to assume the terms 'body' and 'machine' as synonyms.[46]

43. Especially enlightening on this point is Leibniz's *Verthaydigung der Hohen Stande des Reichs gegen die harte Beschuldigungen eines falschgenanten Caesarei Turriani*, February-Summer 1696, A IV, 6, 203, 205-206.

44. Nachtomy, Shavit and Smith 2002: 205.

45. *Genera terminorum substantiae*,1683-1685(?), A VI, 4A, 568.

46. Just to give a few more supporting refrences, see the various occurrences of expressions such as "machine du corps" (Leibniz to Arnauld, April 30th, 1687, A II, 2, 182; *Lettre sur l'éducation d'un Prince*, 1685-1686, A IV, 3, 552), "machina corporea" (Leibniz a De Volder, March 24th-April 3rd, 1699, A II, 3, 548); "machine corporelle" (*Système nouveau pour expliquer la nature des substances et leur communication entre elles, aussi bien que l'union de l'âme avec le corps*, 1695, GP IV, 484), "machina corporis humani" (*Novissima Sinica*, April 1697-1699, A IV, 6, 468). The general idea is also expressed in his *De corporum concursu Scheda Septima*, January 1678, A VIII, 3, 628, and in his *Animadversiones circa Assertiones aliquas* Theoriae Medicae Verae, 1709, LSC 16-51. Furthermore, ever since his 1686 *Du rapport general de toutes choses*, Leibniz supported a theory of the "organism" as a constituent of bodies fully consistent with the lexicon of the 'machine'. This will be plainly acknowledged in his *Animadversiones* to Stahl's medical theory, where he wrote: "all organism is in fact mechanism" (LSC 31).

2. In his 1697 letter to Christoph Sturm, Leibniz will undertake to lay down the difference between "natural" and "artificial" machines:

> Therein lies the true but perhaps hitherto little-known distinction between Natural and Artificial Machines: not so much that the former are held together by a Substantial Monad, or a spirit (as the ancient Stoics and jurists put it), while the latter are not; but that by the very force of their structure they are perpetual and indestructible, while these [Artificial Machines] must sooner or later lose their function (*officium*).[47]

The argument clearly revolves around two key notions: "structure" and "function", the former being the defining condition of the latter and of its durability. On close reading, this passage reveals which feature of natural bodies most attracted Leibniz's attention and, indirectly, the reason why he was interested in making a comparison with civil bodies in the first place: because, by virtue of their structural *organisation*, natural bodies are able to fulfil the purpose of self-preservation, that is, to preserve the "union of the parts", which he had previously recognised as the essential condition for life, form and excellence of civil bodies as well.

Now, in the context of the quoted excerpt, the terms "artificial" and "natural" may appear to stand in mutual opposition (with the 'civil' clearly falling within the former category). Yet, as briefly noted above, the 'civil' is not to be understood as the opposite of the 'natural'.[48] Rather, at a depeer level, the natural components constituting a civil person confer upon it a moral character by virtue of their capacity to will as one. This is how Leibniz expresses the idea in a letter to Christoph de Rojas y Spinola dated 1694: "It is necessary that, as in a State or Republic (*Civitate aut Republica*), the multitude come together (*coire*) in a single body, connected as if by a single Spirit, and thus form, as it were, a moral person".[49] This way of thinking "as if" tells us that the natural and the artificial – and, more specifically, the natural and the civil – are far from being opposed or irreconcilable domains; rather, they occupy opposite ends of the same "chain of being", and can thus be situated within a common "series", allowing for meaningful correspondences to emerge. The origin of this line of reasoning lies, once again, in the realm of natural theology, which makes possible a two-way passage between nature and artifice. As Leibniz wrote to Johann Andreas Schmidt in 1697: "nature is nothing other than the Art of God".[50] In that same letter, he further noted that this God assumes, as it were, an "ethical-political" character in ordering "the ends of natural things".[51] It thus seems legitimate to infer that, for Leibniz, natural entities and their operations follow a distinctly 'civil' *ratio*.

47. Leibniz to Johann Christoph Sturm, July 5th, 1697, A II, 3, 341.

48. Cf. *supra*, nn. 30, 31.

49. Leibniz to Christoph de Rojas y Spinola, A I, 10, 159.

50. Leibniz to Johann Andreas Schmidt, August 27th (September 6th) 1697, A I, 14, 460. The idea had been previously expressed in his *Protogaea*: "Nature is nothing but a kind of great art" (*Protogaea,* after 1693, first ed. 1749; CW 26, modif.).

51. *Ibid.*

This, of course, does not resolve the difficulties related to the *ontological* nature of bodies as aggregates, but it was precisely in the moment of greatest uncertainty – beginning in the mid-1680s – that Leibniz glimpsed a more reliable and tangible field of enquiry, and attempted to direct his reflection toward aspects of the issue that might be called 'biological', or, better yet, 'organical'. A particularly bright example of this is found in a 1687 letter to Arnauld: Leibniz is arguing that aggregates can only attain to a kind of accidental – that is, non-substantial – unity. Yet he immediately adds that it is nonetheless a form of 'unity', which may admit of degrees. He then goes on to outline a sort of hierarchy of aggregates, based on the degree of internal relationality among their constituent elements.

> I remain convinced that there are degrees of accidental unity, that a regulated society has more unity than a confused crowd, and that an organised body or a machine has more unity than a society, i.e. it is more appropriate to conceive of them as one, because there are more relations between the ingredients.[52]

It is precisely because of this 'disproportion' and difference in degree of organisation between "a body or a machine" and a "society" that one can meaningfully speak of 'analogy', and it also what makes such an analogy fruitful and capable of yielding valuable insights. Indeed, according to Leibniz, the very possibility of an analogical method of inquiry rests upon the existence of observable diversity.[53] To this end, it is especially important to perceive the differences in the degree of possession of a given quality and then search for a 'quantitative' explanation. In Leibniz's thought, the possibility of an analogical method is structurally grounded in the idea that there is a "series, an order, a progression" in which all things are gradually connected, for nature makes no 'leaps'.[54] From this, it follows that the scientist's ultimate goal lies in tracing natural phenomena back to the same series and finding their order of succession. At that point, it will be possible to compare neighbouring 'members' of a continuous sequence, as well as arbitrarily distant 'members' or 'moments' of the series. Being composed of a number of living bodies, civil entities inherit – *mutatis mutandis* – the same fundamental purpose, namely self-preservation, which in the case of States requires a form of internal organisation capable of ensuring both the security and the common happiness of their members.[55] Accordingly, Leibniz maintains that whenever a civil body fails to guarantee either of these two conditions "it is soon dissolved".[56]

### 2.1.2 Perturbation

The second of the terms listed is 'perturbation'. With regard to this term, a preliminary clarification is in order. Its Latin form, *perturbatio*, originated within the cultural context

52. Leibniz to Arnauld, April 30th, 1687, A II, 2, 190.

53. See *De vita beata*, February-Autumn 1676 (?), *De la Sagesse*, A VI, 3, 673.

54. Leibniz to Thévenot, August 24th,1691, A I, 7, 176. Cf. also *Nouveaux Essais* IV, 16 §12, A IV, 6, 471, 473. On this matter, see Duchesneau 1993: esp. 37.

55. Cf. *Elementa juris naturalis* $12_2$, A VI, I, 446; Leibniz to Mentet Kettwig, November 7th, 1695, A II, 3, 106-107.

56. *Elementa juris naturalis* $12_2$, A VI, I, 446.

of Roman Stoicism. In that context, the term was used with at least three distinct senses:
1. To indicate physical phenomena (mainly atmospheric) resulting in a disruption, understood as a change of state.
2. To indicate actions and initiatives that modify a certain consolidated political setting.
3. In a moral context, referring to the 'status' or 'motus' *animi* (the states or movements of the soul, that is, affections). It is in this sense that *perturbatio animi*, starting from Cicero, later became a classical theme. This latter sense is the one in which the term 'perturbatio' is most frequently employed in the Roman Stoic tradition.

Leibniz is undoubtedly an heir to this tradition and consistently uses this term in all three of these senses, but with some significant developments around the mid-1680s, which reveal the originality of his thinking on the subject.

We can now turn to examine some of the occurrences of the term 'perturbatio' (as well as of the verb 'perturbare') in its various forms throughout Leibniz's writings. The earliest occurrence dates from 1670, in the context of a juridical text, where Leibniz observes that "entirely new laws with no relation to Roman law cannot be conveniently established without the greatest disturbance (*perturbatio*) of things".[57]

He then goes on, in his most comprehensive political work, the *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, to make the following observation:

> If our state were well constituted (*si bene constituta esset nostra Respublica*) […] there would be no need for perilous remedies, such as I do not deny alliances to be, and out of the ordinary (*extra ordinem*). But now, in such general turmoil (*perturbatione*) of affairs, who does not perceive that, if we still have our Empire (*aliquam Rempublicam*), we owe it to alliances?[58]

A distinctive feature of Leibniz's use of this term begins to emerge here, in the context of an 'organical' analysis of the civil body, and this line of inquiry deserves to be pursued further. In his 1683-85 *Genera terminorum substantiae*, Leibniz begins to classify bodies by their degree of internal 'order', upon which depends both their efficacy and their capacity to fulfil their purpose; this classificatory scheme applies equally to natural and artificial bodies. Indeed, as noted above, every organisational or biological aspect is tightly bound to a dynamical one, and the two are impossible to separate in concrete, for any change in the structural organisation of a body necessarily entails a corresponding change in its functioning. On the basis of this criterion, bodies can be described – regardless of their ontological status – as either 'perturbed' or 'organic', with the former denoting a state of disorder and the latter, correspondingly, a state of order.[59] This distinction underscores that what is essential to a body's efficient functioning and persistence through time is the possession of an "organic" structure, which implies being well-ordered. Leibniz further maintains that only bodies of this kind are "fit to

57. Leibniz to Chapelain, first half of 1670, A II, 1, 85
58. *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, ch. XXII, A IV, 2, 101.
59. *Genera terminorum substantiae,* 1683-1685, A VI, 4A, 567.

compose a machine".[60] The key notion at stake here is therefore that of 'order': disordered bodies are not fit to compose a working and enduring machine. This, in turn, helps to shed light – also retrospectively – on the use of the term in political contexts.

In 1695, in a mature text on law, *Initium institutionum juris perpetui*, in discussing justice and happiness and the alignment between external and internal states, Leibniz returns to the term *perturbatio* in a manner fully compliant with its classical usage (for example, Ciceronian), and – unlike the texts of the 1680s – it is now set in a context that shows a marked physical-dynamical subtext:

> Furthermore, it is the goal of those who pursue justice to extend happiness as far as possible. Since happiness entails a state of enduring joy, they will strive to promote as much joy as possible and ensure its continuity, while actively eliminating potential sources of disturbance (*perturbare*). Therefore, one must seek to increase the number of those who can be made happy, within the limits where they do not hinder each other: this means that propagation (*propagatio*) and preservation (*conservatio*) must be promoted.[61]

Finally, in a seminal text from 1697, the term ends up showing a marked physical connotation in the context of a clear parallel between the moral/civil sphere and the physical one (where 'physics' must be understood as encompassing the rudimentary chemistry of the time):

> As for afflictions, especially those experienced by good people, we must believe that these lead to their greater good, a truth that holds not only in theological terms but also in natural terms. Just as a seed sown in the earth suffers before bearing fruit. In general, it can be said that although afflictions are temporary evils, in fact, they are good because they serve as shortcuts to greater perfection. Similarly, in physics, liquids that ferment slowly are also slower to settle, while those where there is a stronger disturbance (*perturbatio*) settle more readily, expelling impurities with greater force.[62]

The importance of this passage will be highlighted and fully disclosed in the following paragraph.

### 2.1.3 Concourse

According to Leibniz, the physical laws of concourse should be regarded as highly useful in 'civil science'. He acknowledged this principle in 1669, in his *Doctrina conditionum*, where he wrote: "parts are defined in concourse", and then immediately added: "this matter implies a sort of physical principle drawn from the nature of motion".[63]

Several years later, during the very period in which he was intensively working on the physical laws of concourse, he authored his main political work, the *Caesarinus*

60. *Ibid.*
61. *Initium institutionum juris perpetui*, 1695, Mollat I, 2-3.
62. *De Rerum originatione radicali*, 1697, GP VII, 302-308.
63. *Specimina juris* (*Doctrina conditionum*), 1669, A VI, 1, 392.

*Fürstenerius*. Its specific aim was to define the relationships among multiple sovereignties and competing powers within a unified political structure.[64]

Here, the term "concourse" is only hinted at, while the emphasis falls on a 'biological' understanding of the political body. However, an implicit idea of concourse among the parts in a civil context is clearly discernible. The term itself is explicitly mentioned in another text from the summer of that same year, where Leibniz returns to the issue of the *Jus legationis* of princes and of the authority to be accorded to their envoys. In this regard, he argues that, "in the event of concourse", those who "perform the same acts (*actus*)" – are differentiated solely by their "rank of honor" or dignity.[65] Thereafter, a distinctly physical vocabulary – and, in particular, the term "concurrence" – appears in the text *De libero territorio*, where it is stated that to hold dominion over a territory (*obtinere*) means that "one cannot be readily or ordinarily expelled [from it] either by tumultuous force (*tumultuaria vis*) or with the sudden concurrence (*concursus*) of persons from neighbouring places".[66] Here, the reference to a sudden expulsion ties in with the passage quoted at the end of the previous paragraph – which is chronologically subsequent – where it is stated that in physics, when a "perturbation" occurs in liquids, impurities – that is, bodies with a different configuration and extraneous to that structure – are expelled "with greater force".

### 2.1.4 Balance

"Anyone who has taught men how to construct a balance has certainly bestowed upon them a greater art than that legendary science of gilding". This is what Leibniz wrote in an early legal text, the *Commentatiuncula de Judice Controversiarum*.[67]

The symbol of equilibrium *par excellence* is undoubtedly the double-pan balance. This mechanical tool, this 'machine', serves the purpose (or has the 'function') of weighing – which is not simply 'counting', as Leibniz repeatedly points out. In this strive to follow the stream of his thoughts, one can quite easily infer that the mechanism of the balance must have appeared to him as standing in a profound analogy with the organisation and dynamic functioning of things in the physical, moral, and civil realms.

> [T]here must also be [...] a natural jurisprudence, from which one learns demonstratively how to estimate the degrees of proof. For many probable arguments taken together sometimes yield moral certainty, and sometimes they don't. A method is therefore required to determine when this is the case. It is often rightly said that reasons should not be counted, but weighed; however, no one has yet given us this balance that should serve to weigh the strength of reasons.[68]

64. In the *Entretien de Philarète et d'Ariste*, Leibniz openly states that his *Fürstenerius* reconciled "the plurality of sovereignties with the unity of the Republic of the Empire (*Republique de l'Empire*)" (*Entretien de Philarète et d'Ariste*, October 1677, second edition, 1682, A IV, 2, 291).
65. *Quaestio*, Summer 1677, A IV, 2, 273. See esp. previous drafts.
66. *De libero territorio*, 1682, A IV, 2, 395.
67. *Commentatiuncula de Judice Controversiarum*, 1669-1671, §60, A VI, 1, 556.
68. Leibniz to Thomas Burnett, February 1697, GP III, 193-194.

A balance of reasons is essentially the model upon which practical sciences should be constructed to fully mirror the balance inherent in every existing thing, and it is obvious that those sciences would be more reliable if this balance had been crafted. Reflecting on this model, the first thing that comes to Leibniz's mind is that, on a basic physical level, the balance, as a 'machine', would not fulfil its function if its parts were not 'organised' and disposed in a certain way, according to a certain order. Following this insight, he started to devise a possible way of building such a balance, precisely on the model of the double-pan scale:

> And just as it is necessary to ensure that each weight is properly applied, not exceeding [the capacity of the balance], that none of them were adulterated with any other metals, ensuring they are neither heavier nor lighter than they should be, and also that the balance has arms equidistant, equally weighted pans, etc., so in this balance of reasons attention must be paid to propositions as to weights, to balance as to connection, not leaving any of the weights or propositions unexamined. Just as the load (*gravitas*) of the weights must be assessed, so must the truth of propositions. The method for evaluating the truth of propositions mirrors that for determining the load of the weights: as the latter is assessed based on their materials, so each proposition should be examined as thoroughly as the main premise. Just as no weight should be overlooked or added erroneously, so must one be careful not to overlook any burden or advantage pertaining to the thing under evaluation; or, in other words, that the same thing is not weighed twice. The structure of the balance corresponds to the connection between propositions; indeed, just as one pan must not be lighter than the other, if one of the two premises is weaker than the other, the conclusion must follow the weaker one; as the arms must be joined together by a yoke, so nothing follows from particular propositions alone, because they are *sand without lime*; as the arms must be equidistant from the yoke, so must be the positioning of the propositions, with the middle term standing at an equal distance from the higher and the lower [...].[69]

Beyond the logical subtext at work in this passage, it is easy to see here that the balance itself presents a certain organisational model that ideally and metaphorically meets the need for equity and proportionality in relations between the parties. The analogy between the physical and civil domains is unmistakable in this context.[70] But there is more: in its functioning, the machine shows that balance between the parts is achieved only through the 'concurrence' of their forces, which in this case are the weights, that is, when at least two forces are brought into comparison. Moreover, in this comparison, the balance serves as a means that both 'connects' and balances the weights, by virtue of the specific physical features that make this possible. In this view, balance between the parts is always 'dynamic', never static. Now, according to Leibniz, this dynamic balance reflects the operational logic of the universe, and it is possible to show that

69. *Commentatiuncula de Judice Controversiarum*, 1669-1671, §65, A VI, 1, 557 (italics mine).

70. On the theme of 'equilibrium' and European balance in Leibniz's thought, see Basso 2005: esp. 36, but also the now classic Robinet 1993. For an in-depth analysis of the occurrences and meanings that the metaphor of the balance takes on in Leibniz's writings, see Marras 2010: 129-149.

it is compliant with two other fundamental principles of his physics: the rejection of absolute rest and a need for 'proportionality'. Both these principles find strong parallels in the civil realm.

The reflection on the principle of absolute rest resonates throughout Leibniz's writings on physics, as he derived several paradoxes from it. The idea that there can be a *summa quies* implies that bodies within the same system are not structurally and mutually connected by the environment; this leads to some absurd consequences, such as that a body might possess an invariable 'perpetual' motion, as well as that there is no proportionality between the magnitude and force of a moving body and the effects produced by its motion. These criticisms are frequently directed against Descartes. [71]

With regard to the idea of a 'perpetual' motion, Leibniz believes that his discovery of the law of equivalence between cause and effect is sufficient to prove its absurdity, and he is likewise convinced that he has refuted Descartes' laws of motion and impact through his *dynamica*.[72] But how does this bear upon Leibniz's political view? In the political domain, traces of this criticism can be recognised in the outright rejection, in 1712, of Saint-Pierre's project to make peace in Europe "perpetuelle". In this regard, Leibniz commented:

> I have seen something of the project of M. de St Pierre, for maintaining a perpetual peace in Europe. I am reminded of a device in a cemetery, with the words: *Pax perpetua*; for the dead do not fight any longer: but the living are of another humor.[73]

Every time the issue is raised, his arguments to dismiss the possibility of perpetual peace all appeal to experience, nature, and systemic rationality. Following this trail, the idea of "perpetual peace" can be easily seen as the political translation of *summa quies* and the related idea of a perpetual motion.

As for the other principle – the principle of proportionality –, it must be noted that it is found in Leibniz's juridical and political writings as early as the *Nova methodus*, where it is stated that "equity or equality" is "the relationship or proportion between two or more".[74] Yet, in 1667, when this statement was made, Leibniz had neither formulated the physical law of equivalence between cause and effect, nor even begun to reflect on the principles of motion that would lead to the formulation of his two early physical theories. This means that this reference to proportion had predominantly mathematical roots. Nonetheless, as I shall argue in Section 2.2.1, Leibniz would very soon (in 1671) identify a convergence between physics and politics grounded in the notion of proportionality, and, in this light, it is more than reasonable to suppose that

71. In his *Hypothesis physica nova*, Leibniz wrote that from Descartes' account of the property of bodies and laws of collision it would follow that "if a body in motion were to strike another at rest, the former would perforate the latter entirely without any refraction, even if the striking body were the size of a grain of sand and the struck body a thousand leagues thick" (*Hypothesis physica nova*, 1671, A VI, 2, 229).

72. The issue is brought up in several places, but it is more clearly explained in Leibniz's letter to Claudio Filippo Grimaldi, mid-January-early February 1697, A I, 13, 424.

73. Leibniz to De Grimarest, June 4th, 1712, Dutens V, 65; Eng. trans. in R 183.

74. *Nova methodus discendae docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*, 1667, pt. II, A VI, 1, 343-344.

he came to regard the discovery of the law of physical 'equivalence' as the final and supreme post-hoc validation of the legal principle of "equality or equity". I shall return briefly to this point in Section 2.2.5, in the context of an analysis of Leibniz's use of the term 'restitution'.

### 2.1.5 Potency/Power

What does potency/power mean according to Leibniz's vocabulary? Properly speaking, it is a physical quantity, and in his 1689 *Phoranomus seu de potentia et legibus naturae* Leibniz explains the criterion by which it is to be evaluated: "potency (*potentia*) must be evaluated by means of the effect it produces, not by the way it operates".[75] This means that "potentia" is assessed retrospectively, based on the effects it generates, and is closely related to a capacity for production.

Now, 'potentia' in itself is a multifaceted term with a great semantic scope, which lexically connects the physical and the civil domain. Obviously, in a context where action is considered in terms of motion, any explanation of physical interactions may have politically relevant echoes. However, this does not necessarily imply that this parallel is openly recognised or effectively cast in allegorical terms. Therefore, it is worth highlighting the way Leibniz expresses himself in a text from a few years earlier, titled *Dialogue entre un Politique et un Ecclesiastique*:

> A prince vested with that great authority which God has put into his hands should not be considered as a man, but as a powerful creature akin to a mountain or an ocean, whose extraordinary movements can bring about strange effects in the alteration of the order of things. Do you not see that he can set armies and peoples in motion with the slightest blink of an eye? That mountains are levelled and the course of rivers changed when he makes marks on a sheet with a little black liquid?[76]

As early as 1679, the notion of potency/power is employed in defining Descartes' God in a specific relation to action and its effects:

> Descartes's God, or perfect being, is not a God like the one we imagine or hope for [...]. Rather, Descartes's God is something approaching the God of Spinoza, namely, the principle of things and a certain supreme power (*puissance*) or primitive nature that puts everything into motion (*action*) and does everything that can be done.[77]

In that same year, in the prospectus for the classification of sciences that was to serve as a draft guide to the redaction of an encyclopedia, the term "potentia" was specifically evoked in the definition of Mechanics. Indeed, the latter was defined as the "science of action and passion", or alternatively as the "science of potency (*potentia*) and motion".[78] A few years later, he would then revise this definition in a way that seems to present me-

75. *Phoranomus seu de potentia et legibus* naturae, 1689, *Dialoghi*, 718.

76. *Dialogue entre un Politique et un Ecclesiastique*, Second Draft, 1679-1681, *Dialoghi*, 292, 294.

77. Letter to unknown addressee, 1679, A II, 1, 777-779; Eng. trans. in AG 242.

78. *Consilium de Encyclopaedia nova conscribenda methodo inventoria*, June 15th (25th), 1679, A VI, 4A, 346.

chanical science as consisting of two distinct parts: "one concerning the potency to act or move (*potentia agendi seu movendi*), the other concerning the power to suffer or resist (*potentia patiendi seu resistendi*), or [which is the same] concerning the stability/solidity of bodies (*firmitas corporum*)".[79] It seems, then, that a structural intertwining is established here between the second type of 'potentia' (the capacity to suffer and resist) and the stability (*firmitas*) of bodies. In this light, it seems reasonable to assert that a certain degree of potency/power to endure and oppose disaggregation corresponds to a certain degree of stability and unity in the body. Many years later, this same correlation seems to be operating in the background of Leibniz's analysis of the Spanish Empire, which is regarded as a territorially fragmented, heterogeneous, and thus unstable entity. In that context, he maintains that only the permanence of a united 'puissance' through the figure of a single ruler made it possible to hold some degree of unity and stability in the body.

> Even though there was no real union among the countries to form a civil body or State (*corps civil ou Estat*), there was always the personal union of the same ruler, and consequently that the same prince succeeded over all territories, in order to keep the power united (*pour conserver la puissance unie*).[80]

In other words, the only bond, the only internal 'lime' in the body of the Spanish monarchy allowing it to remain formally united and thus capable of opposing disaggregating forces, was a hereditary continuity. This was, of course, a weak and exterior bond, as the Monarch's puissance could not flow through the scattered limbs of that body, thereby leaving it virtually powerless.[81]

In the majority of cases, in the political context, 'potency' or 'power' is referred to as 'puissance', while in the physical context as 'potentia', but the concept is inevitably the same. Reinforcing this idea, in the last quoted passage, the term 'puissance' is associated with the idea of the 'body'.

### 2.1.6 Stability

At last, we turn to a term that has already surfaced in our discussion of potency: "firmitas". First and foremost, Leibniz is keen to emphasise that "solidity (*firmitas*) cannot be explained except through the consideration of the system".[82] Indeed, each body "has its own system", in which it is embedded.[83]

The term, which holds a strong physical root, is found rather early in a legal context, where Leibniz addresses the subject of the "construction of a system" of laws.

> In this system we must consider both the material and the form or the order. The laws themselves constitute the MATTER of the system; with regard to these, it

79. *Demonstrationes Novae De Resistentia Solidorum*, March/April 1683-end of June 1684, A VIII, 3, 221.

80. *Lettre écrite d'Amsterdam*, 1701, A IV, 9, 197.

81. Particularly revealing, on this subject, are the following writings: *Conspectus Brevis Juris Austriaci in Successionem Hispanicam*, 1700, A IV, 8, 164-184, *Inquirenda ut desiderata ratione juris Austriaci in Successionem Hispanicam*, 1700, A IV, 8, 133-134.

82. *Specimen inventorum de admirandis naturae Generalis arcanis*, 1688 (?), A VI, 4B, 1627.

83. *Ibid.*, 630.

> should be observed that the stones with which we build a building must be cut in such a way that they can be conveniently and firmly (*firmiter*) joined together – so that, consequently, there is no empty space between them – and, in coordinating the laws, that they do not conflict with each other and leave no business (*negotium*) in doubt.[84]

About a year earlier, the term had appeared in his above-mentioned political text – the *Caesarinus Fürstenerius* – where Leibniz argues that, because the body of the Empire lacks a firm (*firma*) capacity for self-preservation (owing to the absence of a strong internal bond), external help is needed to ensure security:

> Quite accurately, a very learned person wrote: "Since the bond of our State is too loose (*laxum est*), so that we cannot ground it with sufficient confidence on the solid (*firma*) capacity for preservation of the Empire, we must resort to the backup plan of ensuring security with the help of foreigners".[85]

Several years later, once again in a political context, the term is employed in an even more explicit and unequivocal manner:

> To delve more into detail, the Emperor, the King of Spain, Sweden, Bavaria, Franconia, Brunswick, Hesse, and their associates will lay the foundations of a close and inviolable trust, which will be cemented by the generous zeal of the Prince of Orange and the States General, the only ones capable of imparting unity and movement to this great body of Allies. [...] It is therefore necessary to examine how great the danger is, and, to this end, first to compare the forces so as to demonstrate that the competition is uneven. [...] The slightest disorder can dislocate a body made up of so many pieces, even when its largest ones remain firm (*fermes*).[86]

At this point, it is necessary to suspend the discussion, even though the argument is not yet complete, because the theme of *firmitas* is inextricably linked to that of *conspiratio* – the conspiring motion of parts in the same system toward a common end – which will be analysed at length below, in Section 2.2.4.

## 2.2 Politics in Physics

The second part of the analysis begins here and focuses on the various 'civil' terms and their respective uses in Leibniz's writings on physics. Owing to the biographical factors already discussed – namely, Leibniz's legal education – a considerable number of the textual references examined in this section are drawn from his earliest writings. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate to infer from some of the entries that follow (particularly the first three) the existence of stable or fully developed concepts within Leibniz's philosophical system. Apparent inconsistencies or peculiarities can thus be explained by recognising the provisional nature of certain concepts, which must be un-

84. *De legum interpretatione, rationibus, applicatione, systemate*, Summer-Winter 1678-1679 (?), A VI, 4C, 2791.

85. *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, ch. XXII, A IV, 2, 101.

86. *Raisons touchant la guèrre ou l'accommodement avec la France*, 1684, A IV, 2, 519, 559-560, 566.

derstood in light of the evolution of Leibniz's views on physical laws and motion. Nevertheless, these early instances are crucial for understanding how Leibniz consciously and repeatedly articulated lexical and conceptual resonances between the physical and the civil domains. In doing so, he revealed an underlying approach that – despite all subsequent specific shifts in perspective – remained central to his conception of the relations and the motions at work in the system of the universe.

### 2.2.1 Public and Private

The use of categories such as 'public' and 'private' applied to physical motion is documented in some of Leibniz's most significant writings on physics from the Mainz period, including an appendix in 1690.[87]

"It should be known" – Leibniz states in 1671 – "that, in the world, there exist two types of motion: some are pure or private, while others are public or influenced by the system".[88] The distinction he sought to establish is that between 'pure' and 'concrete' motions, and, in the remainder of the text, he explains in detail what exactly this distinction amounts to by identifying seven key differences that also clarify the sense of that peculiar use of the terms 'public' and 'private' in a physical context. Particularly relevant for the purpose of this analysis are three:

1. The first and most important difference can be summarised as the difference between being isolated and being in a mutual relation. 'Private' motion refers to the motion of bodies "considered in a vacuum or in a medium at rest", while 'public' motion describes the motion of bodies immersed in a shared environment or "medium". The importance of this medium lies in the fact that it does not simply oppose motion, "it [also] contributes significantly to it, by moving itself or by transmitting it", that is, by 'assisting' bodies. In 'private' motion – i.e. when bodies are regarded as moving in a vacuum – the moment they encounter an obstacle, "they do not regain their impetus (*impetum non resumunt*), even when the obstacle is removed".[89] In 'public' motion, when a body that had previously encountered an obstacle is suddenly freed from it, its strength increases because "the system seizes the opportunity to restore itself". Consequently, Leibniz observes that "bodies considered as moving according to public motion will always seek a way to avoid obstacles", whereas

> [bodies regarded as] moving according to private motion are compelled to move solely by the composition of forces and do not deviate from a predetermined trajectory. Thus, if two bodies concur in opposite directions along the same line with equal

87. Cf. *Demonstratio legum Reflexionis et Refractionis*, A VI, 2, 310; Leibniz to Jakob Thomasius, early May 1671, A II, 1, 155; *Leges Reflexionis et Refractionis demonstratae*, 1671, A VI, 2, 314-315; *Propositiones quaedam physicae*, A VI, 3, 19; *Conséquence de l'Hypothèse générale publiée il y a quelque temps, pour expliquer le phénomène de l'attachement dans le vide, ou dans une place dont l'air a été tire*, A VIII, 1, 427; *De impulsu eccentrico*, *scheda 2a*, LH XXXV, 11, 14 Bl. 3-4.

88. *Leges Reflexionis et Refractionis demonstratae*, 1671, A VI, 2, 314.

89. *Ibid.*

> speed by private motion, they will eventually come to a stop [after impact]. However, if they concur by the rules of public motion, they will push each other backward.[90]

2. The second relevant difference amounts to the fact that "in public motions, the size of bodies is very important, whereas in private motions it does not matter".[91]
3. The last one can be seen as a synthesis of the previous ones:

> in the pure [i.e. private] state of nature [...] everything is brute, determined by the composition of conatuses; in a systematic state everything seems to be crafted by a certain intelligence. This state seems to require remarkable reasons for the laws of harmony, wisdom, and justice, whence everything conspires for the use of all, everything is accommodated.[92]

Let us now analyse them in order. The first difference points to a natural tendency towards cooperation underlying the action of the parts in a 'public' system. This cooperation is made possible by the active role played by a common *milieu*, which on the one side hinders, on the other complements and helps the action or motion of the parts, and can be identified – based on this use of a civil vocabulary – with the State.

The second difference emphasises the importance of observing 'proportional' relations in a public or – one might now also say – 'political' system. In this extremely brief formulation, the concept is expressed in a very rudimentary manner, with proportion seemingly related only to size. However, in that same year's *Hypothesis physica nova*, Leibniz resorted to arguments that refer to the physical laws of refraction in support of the need to observe proportional relations.[93]

From the third difference, in this early formulation, it becomes fully evident that the 'public' – synonymous with 'systematic' – is characterised by cooperative relations, utility, proportion, and compromise (positively understood as mutual 'accommodation').[94] On the other hand, the 'private' – synonymous with 'natural' – is characterised by geometrical necessity.

It is worth mentioning that the last quoted excerpt features two key terms that will be examined in greater detail below: *conspiratio* and *accommodatio*. Before turning to them, one final remark about this distinction between 'public' and 'private' is in order. In its earliest occurrence, this distinction serves as part of the explanation of the fundamental laws of optics. In short, Leibniz uses the 'public-private' division to explain the difference between reflection and refraction, stating that reflection only occurs in 'public' motion, that is, within an actively (co)operating common environment. On the other end, refraction follows the laws of 'private' motion, and thus bodies moved according to private motion are not reflected but only refracted.[95]

90. *Ibid.*, 315.
91. *Ibid.*
92. *Ibid.*
93. Cf. *supra*, n. 74.
94. On Leibniz's use of the word 'accomodation', cf. *infra*, §2.2.6.
95. A VI, 2, 314.

It is crucial to note that, in that same year, he had begun to address the theme of authentic glory, arguing that minds – functioning as mirrors – can attain such glory only through mutual recognition, which requires a mechanism analogous to the composite reflection of light:

> the larger the number of the mirrors, that is, the minds that recognise our good, the greater the light will be, since the mirrors not only combine [their light with] the light in the eye, but also with each other. The gathered splendor constitutes glory.[96]

This, along with providing a first insight into how the elements of a *scientia de mente* can lay the ground for the foundations of jurisprudence, ethics and politics, confirms the fact that Leibniz saw an 'elementary' congruence between the functioning of the physical universe and the functioning of civil societies and human relations.

### 2.2.2 Civil and Natural

In 1669, Leibniz had already begun to address the issue of the relationship between the motion of bodies and the conditions under which bodies are considered. The roots of his use of a civil vocabulary in physics can be traced back to that year. A passage relevant to the current analysis is found in his *De rationibus motus*, where it is stated: "bodies considered in their prime and natural state have no ramifications, no cohesion, no continuity".[97] At this point, it is easily recognised that this definition of the 'natural' state must be closely linked to his later definition of 'private' motion, in the sense that the rules of 'private' motion hold for bodies considered in the so-called 'natural' state. In light of this, and considering that the term "private" is consistently paired with "public" in a binary opposition, one may already conclude that Leibniz's use of 'natural' to refer to certain conditions of bodily motion always entails an implicit reference to the 'civil'.[98] To fully confirm this thesis, it will ultimately be necessary to provide textual evidence showing that Leibniz consistently employs the adjective 'civil' in conjunction with, and in contrast to 'natural' in the context of his analysis of physical motion. Before doing so, however, it is worth examining two further brief excerpts, respectively from Leibniz's letter to Hermann Conring of January 1670 and from the 1671 *Theoria motus abstracti*.

The first one shows, in a particularly explanatory manner, how and in what sense the 'political' sphere is regarded as 'public'. The second one unequivocally confirms that the civil sphere remained an active point of reference in Leibniz's reflections on the principles of motion.

In his letter to Conring, Leibniz draws the following distinction between ethics and politics:

> [Ethics] is about commutative justice, [Politics] is about distributive justice. The former [i.e. Ethics] treats human beings as separate individuals in the natural

96. *Elementa juris naturalis* $12_4$, A VI, 1, 464.

97. *De Rationibus motus*, A VI, 2, 161.

98. It is extremely important to bear in mind that 'opposition' in this context, is to be intended as the 'distinction' between the first and last term of the same series, and not as any kind of 'contradiction'.

> state (that is, outside the community, *extra civitatem*), while the latter [i.e. Politics] brings them together in a community (*in civitatem*). The former gives rise to natural law in the strictest sense, whereas the latter gives rise to a nomothetic science with many consequences. The former is mostly about particular justice, while the latter addresses universal justice.[99]

In short, the difference between Ethics and Politics comes down to the difference between private and public, natural and civil law, between a state in which men are considered as separate (*extra civitatem*) and a state in which they are considered as conjoined, united within a common context. Ethics operates only within a limited scope, whereas Politics, being a complex nomothetic discipline, possesses a broader, universal scope.

Indeed, less than a year later, in the opening section of his *Theoria motus abstracti* – which features the section *fundamenta praedemonstrabilia* (the universal foundations of motion) – Leibniz notes:

> *there is nothing without a reason*. The consequences of this principle are that as little as possible should be changed, that the mean is to be chosen between contraries, that whatever is added to one thing need not even be subtracted from another, and many other things that are important in civil science as well.[100]

Finally, in the text of the *Hypothesis physica nova* or *Theoria motus concreti* (where bodies are considered as immersed in a common medium, the ether, and connected by it), he explicitly establishes the association between 'abstract motion' and 'state of nature', and between 'concrete motion' and 'civil state', as follows:

> [i]n the free or natural state, any quantity can be easily moved by any minimal quantity. However, in the current systematic and, as it were, civil state, [nothing is moved] except sensibly proportional quantities by proportional quantities.[101]

Proportionality and relationality are, thus, the essential characters of a 'civil' or 'public' state of bodies, where their motion is observed and studied under 'concrete' or 'systematic' conditions. In this state, bodies are considered to act and move within a common *milieu*, and as interconnected by it.

This – in addition to supporting the reading proposed at the end of Section 2.1.4 concerning 'balance' – demonstrates, above all, that for Leibniz 'civil', 'public', 'concrete', and 'systematic' are essentially synonymous terms, and that each of them frequently carries an underlying political subtext.

### 2.2.3 Civil State and Republic

Let us now consider Leibniz's use of the term *Respublica*. Indeed, as well as using expressions such as "pure or natural state" and "systematic or civil state", he also employed the term "Respublica" to refer to the physical world. In an early letter to Jakob Thomasius – partially quoted above – one can read:

99. Leibniz to Hermann Conring, January 13th (23rd), 1670, A II, 1, 47.
100. *Theoria motus abstracti*, *fund. 24*, A VI, 2, 268; Eng. trans. in L 142.
101. *Hypothesis physica nova*, A VI, 2, 227.

> There is a need for naturalist philosophers who not only introduce geometry into the field of physical sciences (for geometry lacks final causes), but who also make a civil science apparent in nature. Indeed, the world itself is a kind of great republic (*respublica*).[102]

Some twenty years later, in the 1689 *Phoranomus*, Leibniz revived this terminology and took it a step further by explicitly linking the "systematic or civil state" to a "Republic of bodies".[103] The passage in itself contains a rejection of his early distinction between 'abstract' and 'concrete' motion, as it was mostly based on an erroneous (Cartesian) conception of the body, but the conceptual validity of the association 'private'-'natural'/'public'-'civil' (referred to the motion of bodies) remains undisputed.[104] This terminology is adopted twice in that text, thereby indicating that it is not casual or merely rhetorical nor unworthy of consideration.[105]

This latest development of Leibniz's reflection on the "civil state" of bodies, where the latter becomes associated with the term "Respublica", proves that his view of physical interactions continues to be permeated by references to the civil sphere.

The other terms analysed below will further reveal the civil roots of three fundamental motions in Leibnizian physics: 'conspiration', 'restitution', and 'accommodation'.

### 2.2.4 Conspiration

The dynamic of 'conspiration' is largely responsible for the cohesion (*firmitas*) of bodies in Leibniz's physics. One of the earliest occurrences of the term in a physical context – already mentioned – is found in his 1671 *Leges Reflexionis et Refractionis demonstratae*, where it is stated that, "in a systematic state [...], everything conspires for the use of all".[106]

Leibniz's general idea, which remained mostly unchanged over the decades, is that the level of stability and cohesion – that is, the level of internal 'organisation' – of both the 'system' as a whole and its individual 'parts' or 'structures' depends, to varying degrees at different stages of his thought, on their level of internal 'conspiration'. The importance of 'conspiration' becomes fully apparent when considering that it is one of the very few ideas that remain a constant throughout Leibniz's thought, dating back to 1669 or even earlier. Consequently, it is particularly noteworthy that this concept is systematically employed across writings on physical, moral, legal, and political matters.

102. Leibniz to Jakob Thomasius, December 1670, A II, 1, 119.

103. *Phoranomus seu de potentia et legibus naturae*, *Dialoghi*, 874.

104. The general topic of the distinction between an 'abstract' and a 'concrete' level of investigation in Leibniz's mature physics remains somewhat challenging. For an informed recap of the main positions on the subject and sensible interpretative hypothesis, see Costa 2016. It is also worth emphasising here that one of the most relevant suggestions has been made by François Duchesneau, who argued that – in the abstract-concrete division reiterated by Leibniz in his *Dynamica de potentia* – one can see a persistence of the epistemological model of Hobbes' *De Corpore* (see Duchesneau 2017). A thorough examination of how the evolution of Leibniz's thought toward overcoming the abstract-concrete dichotomy affects and shapes the analogy between physical science and civil science must necessarily be left to future inquiry.

105. See *Phoranomus*, *Dialoghi*, 782.

106. Cf., *supra*, n. 93.

In the available texts, the earliest, still rudimentary reference to conspiration is found in a 1664 writing, the *Specimen quaestionum philosophicarum ex iure collectarum*, where Leibniz metaphorically refers to the improbability of "so many heads [of lawmen] conspiring with the heart against themselves", to explain why in legal writings the head is normally considered superior to the heart.[107] Likewise, in his 1667 *Dedicatio introductiva* to the *Nova methodus discendae docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*, it is stated: "nothing is impossible to the conspiring minds of the Princes; and yet, they need a kind of Guide and like an Instigator".[108]

These early and rudimentary uses of 'conspiration' are consistent with his later use of the term and highlight an important aspect of the matter: the origin of the idea of 'conspiration' lies within the civil/moral sphere, and – from the very beginning – the term is used as a synonym for cooperation. As subsequent uses will confirm, conspiration allows many to act as a unified whole when there is a common goal to be achieved and conspired towards. The feature of conspiration is to operate from within the parts to produce their unity, which serves as a prerequisite for action. However, for a *motus cospirans* to be initiated or triggered, the parts must be assigned a distinct end or purpose. Therefore, they need something or someone that acts as a leading and binding principle (a "Guide" or an "Instigator").

Two later occurrences of the term 'conspiration', in 1669, support this reading: the first one is found in the political writing *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum pro eligendo Rege Polonorum*, written in February of that year; the other one is in the *Computatio linearum navigationum*, a physical writing where the exact Latin expression "motus conspirans" makes its first appearance.

In the first text, when discussing the marriage agreements devised by Sigismund I of Poland and the Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg, it is said that, "for a truly marvellous disposition of destinies", the two houses "are brought together through a covenant [aimed] at [generating] conspiring marriages, as [if] two channels of equity were finally united in the same person's riverbed", namely in the person of the Duke of Neuburg.[109] In the *Computatio linearum navigationum*, likely written only a few months later, the expression "motus conspirans" is employed to explain the rotational mechanism of vehicle wheels. In Leibniz's account, it is the *motus conspirans* of the parts that enables them to act as one by facilitating the activation and rotation of the wheels.[110]

A few years later, in January 1670 (in the already mentioned letter to Hermann Conring), "conspiratio" is once again used in a political context, serving as a synonym for political cooperation.[111] In terms of its occurrence, then, from 1664 to 1670, there is only one explicit mention of the concept in a physical writing, while there are at least four in a political context.

107. *Specimen quaestionum philosophicarum ex iure collectarum*, December 3rd (13th), 1664, A VI, 1, 82.

108. *Nova methodus discendae docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*, A VI, 1, 263.

109. *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum pro eligendo Rege Polonorum*, A IV, 1, 66.

110. A VIII, 1, 55-56.

111. Leibniz to Hermann Conring, January 13th (23rd), 1670, A II, 1, 46.

The evidence suggests that, in the development of Leibniz's physical thought, this concept was progressively adapted, used, and explored to echo, within the physical domain, a principle of civil science. Indeed, when conceived as a form of physical motion, conspiration retains those same characteristics, namely of being an 'internal' motion (it is also referred to as "motus intestinus"),[112] of being oriented towards cooperation, and hence of being the cause of stability and cohesion.

After all, it was precisely the weakness of the internal bond – which was ultimately a failure of *conspiratio* – that caused the Empire's lack of *firmitas*, as Leibniz recognised in his *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*.[113]

Notably, during the years 1670-71, while working on his two theories of motion, and consequently on a countless number of preparatory writings, the concept of conspiration received clear and full formalisation.[114] In a way, the dynamic of 'conspiration' could be seen as Leibniz's response to Bisterfeld's notion of 'sympathy'. Unlike 'sympathy', conspiration or *motus conspirans* occurs exclusively among coherent (*cohaerentes*) parts, those parts that are in mutual contact, thus fitting seamlessly into a rational physical perspective and into a model of mechanical causality.[115]

In Leibniz's perspective, conspiring motions serve as the binding force (the "glue") that holds bodies together and makes them appear at rest, although absolute rest does not, strictly speaking, exist. Conversely, "fluidity" arises from "a variously irregular, coarse external motion that disrupts [the] internal motion [of bodies]".[116]

This conspiring or internal motion underwent a number of developments that cannot be examined in detail here. What is generally worth highlighting is that, from the end of his stay in Paris up to the correspondence with Hartsoeker (towards the end of his life), Leibniz reflected on the role of conspiration in relation to collision. In this respect, the *motus conspirans* also exhibited a 'defensive' character. Indeed, "[it] must be such as to resist separation"[117] and external penetration. Thus, in addition to its unifying function, it also serves a 'defensive' purpose by opposing the pressure exerted by the surrounding environment.[118]

When considering the entire evolution of the concept of conspiring motion, its political ascendance is further reinforced, as it mirrors classic political dualities: in-

112. Cf., for example, Leibniz's letter to the Duke of Hannover, 1671, A II, 1, 172, his letter to Henry Oldenburg, October 1671, A II, 1, 271, and above all his *Animadversiones ad Cartesii Principia*, 1691, GP IV, 388.

113. Cf. *supra*, n. 86.

114. Cf. *Hypothesis physica nova*, A VI, 2, 345-347.

115. Cf. Leibniz to Arnauld, November 1671, A II, 1, 278-279; *Specimen inventorum de admirandis naturae Generalis arcanis*, 1688 (?), A VI, 4B, 1627; *Dynamica de potentia et legibus naturae corporeae*, 1689, CFP I, 436 (also in GM VI, 400); *Animadversiones ad Cartesii Principia*, 1699, GP IV, 384-388.

116. Leibniz to Henry Oldenburg, October 1671, A II, 1, 271.

117. *De firmitate, vi elastica, explosione, attraction*, A VI, 4C, 2079.

118. The defensive character of the *motus conspirans* is highlighted in many texts, cf., for example, Leibniz's 1677 letter to Honoré Fabri, A II, 1, 452; the above mentioned *De firmitate, vi elastica, explosione, attraction*, A VI, 4C, 2079; the lenghty *Animadversiones ad Cartesii Principia*, GP IV, 384-388, and finally his letter to Hartsoeker of October 30th, 1710, GP III, 505.

side-outside, cooperation-defence, prevention of internal disruption- resistance against external attacks.

### 2.2.5 Restitution

The second dynamic motion that needs to be highlighted is that of 'restitution'. As briefly mentioned at the end of Section 2.1.4, right from the outset, Leibniz held a strong belief that one of the main duties of the State was to ensure regularity in the administration of justice, which is essentially aimed at preserving the capacity for action of each and everyone. Regularity and 'equality' (*equitas*) in justice involve the systematic "restitution" of wrongs, that is, granting "the harmony or congruence" between "right" and "obligation".[119] When he expressed this view, in 1667, his knowledge of physics was still quite limited, as already noted. At that stage, he understood the principle of restitution in accordance with the mathematical laws of equivalence and proportion.[120] However, even then, Leibniz observed that, through this 'restitutive' function of the State, one can avoid engaging in a "deadly war", that is, a physically destructive conflict against "those who have harmed me".[121]

Not long afterward, he came to recognise restitution at work in physics, through the phenomenon of elastic collision, and developed a physical explanation for restitution based on the concept of 'elasticity' in the theoretical framework of his hypothesis of concrete motion. In that context, he presented the idea that bodies immersed in the ether – the common environment permeating the space between them – can undergo elastic deformation and rebound, thus avoiding 'destruction'. In that condition, bodies can "restitute" themselves, along with the whole system.[122]

It is important to emphasise that Leibniz substantially revised his account of the dynamic of rebound at least twice throughout his life:
1) the dominant view in the Mainz period was that rebound was the result of the interaction between matter and ether;[123]
2) after Paris – and precisely from 1677-78 to the second half of the '80s – he engaged to show that rebound was due to a *vis elastica* inherent in bodies,[124] explaining in a later text – his 1695 *Specimen dynamicum* – how exactly bodies can rebound right before making contact.[125]

119. *Nova methodus discendae docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*, pt. II, A VI, 1, 343-344.

120. *Ibid*.

121. "Equity requires that I do not wage a mortal war against the one who has harmed me, but rather seek restitution" (*ibid*.).

122. Cf. the above mentioned *Leges Reflexionis et Refractionis Demonstratae*, 1671, A VI, 2, 314. See also Leibniz's letter to Günther Christoph Schelhammer of February-March 1681, A III, 3, 356, in which the use of 'restitution' in physical context is particularly recurrent.

123. For a detailed account of Leibniz's view of elasticity in the Mainz period, cf. Breger 1984.

124. Cf. *Corpora impulsa agunt a seipsis*; A VIII, 3, 20-21; Leibniz to Arnauld, September 1687, A II, 2, 232; *Principia Logico-Metaphysica*, A VI, 4B, 1647.

125. Cf. GM VI, 248-249.

The importance of this change lies in the fact that the latter solution seems to successfully translate Leibniz's ambition at radically eliminating destructive conflict from the picture. Furthermore, from 1676 onwards, the discovery of a law of conservation of "vis" or "potentia"[126] – understood as the power to act – retrospectively provided a stronger physical foundation for the early idea that the function of the State lies in its capacity to compensate and preserve, thereby safeguarding the lives of its subjects in analogy with the physical-dynamical order. Indeed, if the parts were to destroy one another, the very possibility of equity – which is grounded in the principle of restitution – would fail. A dispute can only be equitably resolved if each of the parties remains an identifiable agent.

In this light, Leibniz's remark in the *Phoranomus* – that from a law of equality between cause and effect derives a "scientia vitae utilissima" – may be understood as carrying a deeper significance.[127]

### 2.2.6 Accommodation

It is, at last, the moment to focus – although very briefly – on the dynamic of accommodation, which enters Leibniz's writings through the gate of law.

The first occurrence of the term is found in his bachelor's dissertation, the 1665 *Disputatio juridica de conditionibus*.[128] In Roman law, the term 'accommodatio' was commonly used to refer to 'adaptation', and there are several examples of its usage in the works of Cicero.[129] Leibniz heavily drew from Roman law codes and texts, making them significant sources for his legal thought.

After this early usage, he began to apply the term to divine action, which ordered the physical world according to a principle of mutual 'adaptation', utility, and compatibility of things. The very first passage in which the term appears to be used in this sense has already been quoted above. [130] The other, very explicative, passage is from Leibniz's 1707 *Antibarbarus physicus*, where it is stated: "God (the common, ultimate and efficient cause of things) accommodates (*accommodare*) everything to his ends through intermediate means operating spontaneously (*per media spontanea*)".[131] However, long

126. The evolution of the idea of a conservative *vis* or *potentia* can be observed roughly in this textual progression: *De Arcanis motus, et Mechanica ad puram Geometriam reducenda*, A VIII, 2, 133-138; *Meditatio de principio individui*, A VI, 3, 490; *De motu et materia*, A VI, 3, 493; *De corporum concursu*, *Scheda Octava*, A VIII, 3, 636-637; *De permutatione potentiarum deque motuum compositione*, A VII, 3, 480-487; *Phoranomus seu de potentia et legibus naturae*, *Dialoghi*, 718-719; *Dynamica de potentia et legibus naturae corporeae*, CFP I, 14-21; 556-588 (also in GM VI, 287-292; 435-464).

127. *Phoranomus seu de potentia et legibus naturae*, *Dialoghi*, 698.

128. A VI, 1, 109.

129. Cf., for example, Cicero's *De oratore*, 2, 250. On this point, see also Krebs and Schmalz 1905: 70.

130. Cf. *supra*, n. 93.

131. *Antibarbarus physicus*, GP VII, 344. See also Leibniz to Bossuet, April 8th (18th), 1692, A II, 2, 516-517.

before 1707, this principle of adaptation – which has legal roots – was already frequently employed, not only in politics[132] but also in physics. For example, in designing an instrument for calculating longitude, he thus describes wings which, like sails, must be well adapted for receiving air: "pinnas velorum instar aeri recipiendo accommodates".[133]

In a text on acoustics from the mid-1680s, one can read:

> The air continues to retain the vibrations received from the previous impressions of the same string, and a certain perturbation follows from this. [...] However, [...] since the stronger string, which produces the present vibration, prevails over the residual vibrations of the previous one, and since the vibrations of the strings are always uniform and of the same duration, it follows that the air gradually adapts itself (*accommodare*) to the string, so that the vibrations of the air get soon in tune with the vibrations of the string; if this did not happen, the sound would not propagate but would soon be destroyed due to the perturbation.[134]

These two excerpts seem sufficient to show the great utility and indispensable value of accommodation among the parts in the physical domain to prevent their mutual destruction.

## 3. CONCLUDING REMARK

This paper has sought to uncover the subtle yet firm interconnection, in Leibniz's writings, between physics and civil science, highly reflected in an informed and deliberate use of terms shared by both domains, which indicates a degree of structural comparability between the functioning of the physical universe and the organisation of human societies. This might seem to place Leibniz in continuity with the earlier naturalistic conception of the political body – a conception drastically overturned by the modern notion of 'political representation' and by the Hobbesian understanding of the political body as an 'artifice', mostly detached from any natural condition and arising from the subjects' alienation of a portion of their natural right. However, not only would such a conclusion be reductive, but would also misrepresent the overall aim of this article.

What proves more fruitful in Leibniz's thought is the way in which the early modern notion of 'legality' underlying the physical order serves as a driving force for uncovering general dynamic, relational and informational processes, as well as for identifying "guarantors of truth":[135] principles of equilibrium and guarantee, together with reliable predictive tools that make progress in the unfolding of the series possible.[136]

132. Cf. *Raisons touchant la guèrre ou l'accommodement avec la France*, A IV, 2, 503-573.

133. *De longitudinibus inveniendis*, end of 1668-beginning of 1669, A VIII, 1, 35.

134. *Cogitationes novæ quomodo formetur sonus et per aerem propagetur atque in organo auditus exprimatur*, February 1682-first half of 1685, A VIII, 3, 127-128.

135. Leibniz to Thévenot, August 24th, 1691, A I, 7, 176.

136. "Il est tout à fait remarquable que ce soit dans ce contexte d'opposition entre l'état de nature abstrait et l'état civil concret que Leibniz ait été amené à faire usage pour la première fois et pour son prope compte du syntagme *Lex Naturae* pour désigner les énoncés exprimant la légalité propre à la physique des corps bruts" (Fichant 1998: 248). For a more detailed account,

Lastly, this lexical reconstruction was itself justified and somehow called for by the large amount of new materials made available by the work of the *Akademie Ausgabe* in the almost thirty years since Michel Fichant first detected and highlighted the use of a juridical vocabulary in Leibniz's early theories of motion in the *Introduction* to his 1994 edition of the *De corporum concursu*.[137]

**ABBREVIATIONS**

A = G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt & Leipzig & Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1923-.

AG = G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, ed. by R. Ariew and D. Garber, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1989.

CFP = G. W. Leibniz, *Dynamica de potentia et legibus naturae corporeae tentamen scientiae novae,* 2 vols., ed. A. Costa, M. Fichant et E. Pasini, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 2003.

CW = G. W. Leibniz, *Protogaea*, ed. by C. Cohen and A. Wakefield, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Dialoghi = G. W. Leibniz, *Dialoghi filosofici e scientifici*, a cura di F. Piro, in collaborazione con G. Mormino e E. Pasini, Milano, Bompiani, 2007.

EW = *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*, ed. by William B. Molesworth, 11 vols., London, John Bohn, 1839-1845.

GM = *Leibnizens mathematische Schriften*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Halle, H. W. Schmidt, 1858-1863.

GP = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-90; reprint, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978.

L = G. W. Leibniz*, Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. by L. E. Loemker, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1969$^2$.

LSC = F. Duchesnau and J. E. H. Smith, *The Leibniz-Stahl Controversy*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2016.

OL = *Thomæ Hobbes Malmesburiensis Opera philosophica, quae latine scripsit, omnia in unum corpus nunc primum collecta studio et labore Gulielmi Molesworth*, 5 vols., London, John Bohn, 1839-1845.

R = G. W. Leibniz, *Leibniz: Political Writings*, ed. by P. Riley, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972.

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see the chapter Fichant devoted to the notions of 'law' and 'system' in Leibniz's physics, as well as to the idea of intelligibility in the wake of Kepler's and Galileo's legacy (*ibid*.: 245-266).

137. Cf. *supra*, n. 2.

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# Alle origini dell'archeologia filosofica

## Christoph August Heumann e Thomas Burnet come fonti di Kant

**ABSTRACT:** The expression "philosophical archaeology", which appears in the *Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik*, is a *hapax* within Kant's *corpus*. While it undoubtedly shares certain features with the "archaeology of nature" that Kant develops in the context of natural inquiry, the origin of the expression remains unclear. Kant identifies philosophical archaeology with the "philosophical history of philosophy", an expression he borrows from the systematic introduction to the *Acta philosophorum* by Christoph August Heumann, whose overall historical-philosophical perspective Kant also shares. In Heumann's work, within a chapter on the origin of philosophy, there appears a reference to Thomas Burnet's *Archaeologiae philosophicae*; an author whom Kant, moreover, cites repeatedly elsewhere. This paper aims to argue that Burnet is likely to be the actual source of Kant's concept of philosophical archaeology. Beyond Heumann's citation, there are many affinities between the two 'archaeologies': the investigation into the origins and the progress of philosophy, the emphasis on the ruins of the past and finally the practical orientation that characterizes the emergence of philosophy. This latter aspect may reinforce an interpretation of Kantian philosophical archaeology and the *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* that emphasises the notions of *need of reason* and practical-dogmatic metaphysics.

**SOMMARIO:** La locuzione "archeologia filosofica", presente nei *Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik*, è un *hapax* nell'opera di Kant. Sicuramente l'archeologia filosofica presenta degli elementi in comune con l'"archeologia della natura" sviluppata da Kant nell'ambito dell'indagine naturale; tuttavia, non è chiaro da dove Kant tragga questa espressione. Kant identifica l'archeologia filosofica con la "storia filosofica della filosofia", espressione mutuata dall'introduzione sistematica agli *Acta philosophorum* di Christoph August Heumann, con i quali condivide l'impostazione storico-filosofica di fondo. Nel testo di Heumann, in un capitolo sull'origine della filosofia, figura una citazione delle *Archaeologiae philosophicae* di Thomas Burnet; autore peraltro citato da Kant, altrove, a più riprese. Il presente contributo vuole sostenere che probabilmente è proprio Burnet a costituire la fonte dell'archeologia filosofica kantiana. Al di là della citazione di Heumann, sono molte le affinità tra le due 'archeologie': l'indagine sulle origini e il progresso della filosofia, l'enfasi sulle macerie del passato ed infine l'orientamento pratico che contraddistingue il sorgere della filosofia. Quest'ultimo elemento può rafforzare una lettura dell'archeologia filosofica kantiana e della *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* che metta al centro le nozioni di *bisogno della ragione* e di metafisica pratico-dogmatica.

**KEYWORDS:** Philosophical Archaeology; Kant; Practical-dogmatic Metaphysics; Burnet; Need of Reason

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## 1. I *LOSE BLÄTTER* E LA *PREISSCHRIFT*, I PROBLEMI DELL'ARCHEOLOGIA FILOSOFICA

Kant utilizza la locuzione *philosophische Archäologie* una sola volta,[1] nel paragrafo intitolato *A proposito di una storia filosofica della filosofia* contenuto nei *Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik*.[2] L'incompiutezza dei *Lose Blätter* e l'oscurità di quelle poche righe indubitabilmente non hanno aiutato gli interpreti nel cercare di sciogliere il significato dell'archeologia filosofica; infatti, le interpretazioni in merito sono numerose e sostanzialmente discordanti.[3] Un ulteriore problema deriva forse dal fatto che la maggior parte degli studi recenti che hanno trattato la questione dell'archeologia filosofica kantiana hanno avuto uno sguardo rivolto al *futuro*, alla fortuna che questo termine ha acquisito nella filosofia contemporanea dopo la sua riscoperta da parte di Foucault. Il presente articolo, invece, vuole rispondere all'esigenza di riportare l'espressione kantiana "archeologia filosofica" al suo contesto proprio. Una ricerca sul *passato* di tale espressione, basata su un approccio storico filosofico di studio delle fonti, si rivelerebbe decisiva per orientare l'interpretazione della pagina kantiana sull'archeologia nella direzione il più possibile aderente al significato originale, liberandola da categorie che appartengono a un'altra epoca della storia della filosofia e a un altro orizzonte problematico – nel tentativo di riportarla, per così dire, 'a casa'.

Per cercare di chiarire il significato dell'archeologia filosofica occorre comprendere come tale espressione sia interna a un ragionamento complessivo intorno alla storia della filosofia. Per questa ragione, in guisa d'introduzione, è imprescindibile mettere l'archeologia filosofica in correlazione con i temi trattati all'interno della *Preisschrift*

1. Dopo la stesura di questo elaborato è stato pubblicato su *Kant-Studien* un articolo che presenta la scoperta di un nuovo autografo di Kant, in cui è presente l'espressione "*Archäologie der Philosophie*" (Burt und Walter 2025: 405). Ad ogni modo, i contenuti del nuovo foglio kantiano non invalidano a nostro parere le tesi del presente articolo, in quanto riprendono esplicitamente le tematiche già sviluppate all'interno dei *Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik*. Tale nuova scoperta rappresenta, al contrario, un ulteriore stimolo verso l'approfondimento dell'archeologia filosofica kantiana.

2. LBFM, AA XX: 341. Tutte le opere di Kant sono citate dall'edizione delle opere complete cosiddetta dell'Accademia: *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, a cura della Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, G. Reimer (poi W. de Gruyter), Berlin, 1902 e ss. Le opere sono citate in forma abbreviata con AA e il riferimento al volume in numero romano, con il riferimento di pagina invece in numero arabo. Ringrazio il Prof. Francesco Valerio Tommasi per l'attenta supervisione e la Dott.ssa Alice Ragni per i preziosi consigli nella stesura di questo testo.

3. Per quanto riguarda le interpretazioni più datate, spesso prendono le mosse da un'indagine sulle teorie kantiane sulla storia della filosofia, il che è positivo poiché l'archeologia filosofica sorge proprio per tentare di abbozzare una risposta ai problemi sollevati dalla storia della filosofia. Tuttavia, i testi che trattano la questione della storia della filosofia in Kant, si occupano dell'archeologia filosofica solo marginalmente. Su questo rimangono un riferimento i contributi di Micheli 1980 e 1988, di Givone 1972, e di Braun 1973, sulla cui scia si situano anche interpretazioni più recenti, come il testo di Di Bella 2008. La maggior parte delle ricerche degli ultimi anni hanno preso un'altra direzione, prestando maggiore attenzione all'archeologia filosofica kantiana nello specifico, curando meno la questione della storia della filosofia nelle opere di Kant, mettendo in risalto invece il rapporto tra l'archeologia di Kant e quella di Foucault (cfr. ad es. Paltrinieri 2007; McQuillan 2016; Agamben 2008).

*über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, in quanto i *Lose Blätter* rappresentano il "cantiere di lavoro" del testo incompiuto sui progressi. Quando Theodor Rink ha pubblicato la *Preisschrift* nel 1804, pochi mesi dopo la morte di Kant, non ha incluso i *Lose Blätter* nell'edizione dell'opera, che sono stati pubblicati da Reicke soltanto nel 1895.[4] Nonostante la sconnessione della vicenda editoriale, il legame tra i *Lose Blätter* e la *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* risulta illuminante, poiché i due testi se messi in relazione si chiarificano reciprocamente. In maniera appropriata il curatore Giuseppe de Flaviis li ha collocati in successione nella raccolta italiana *Scritti sul criticismo*.[5]

Kant iniziò a lavorare al bando della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Berlino nel 1793, tornando sul testo varie volte nei successivi due anni, fino al 1795. I *Lose Blätter* che esamineremo sono alcuni degli appunti preparatori scritti nel corso di quei tre anni.[6] Il bando dell'Accademia chiedeva di rispondere alla domanda: "Quali sono i reali progressi della metafisica in Germania dai tempi di Leibniz e Wolff?". Kant probabilmente non era interessato al premio, tuttavia colse l'occasione per inserirsi all'interno del vivace dibattito che seguì la pubblicazione del bando, focalizzandosi sul rapporto tra la nuova filosofia critica e la cosiddetta tradizione leibnizio-wolffiana.

Nell'apertura della *Preisschrift* Kant si chiede se sia possibile rispondere alla domanda dell'Accademia, dal momento che la metafisica non è una scienza come le altre: mentre le cosiddette 'scienze esatte' hanno già trovato i loro storici al tempo di Kant, redigere una storia della metafisica risulta più complesso poiché richiede di elencare i *progressi* compiuti da questa scienza. La metafisica si presenta come un "mare senza riva",[7] in cui mancano i riferimenti; inoltre, in quanto sistema essa è "un tutto compiuto: tutto o niente".[8] Date queste caratteristiche, come è possibile elencare i progressi della metafisica?

Kant risolve la questione legando i progressi della metafisica al raggiungimento dello scopo finale che si pone l'uomo *con* la metafisica, ossia il passaggio dal sensibile al soprasensibile. Senza questo traguardo non sarebbe possibile capire se ci stiamo avvicinando (progresso) o se ci stiamo allontanando (regresso) dai fini che ci proponiamo con la metafisica. Avendo posto un traguardo, ora è possibile elencare i tre *passi* compiuti dalla metafisica nella storia: dogmatismo, scetticismo e criticismo. Tranne l'ultimo, i primi due passi non rappresentano un vero progresso rispetto allo scopo finale della metafisica, in quanto si illudono solamente di raggiungere il soprasensibile, o di rifiu-

4. Il testo della *Preisschrift* che leggiamo non è unitario, ma è il risultato delle scelte editoriali di Rink. Del testo infatti esistono tre versioni manoscritte incompiute. Rink decise di pubblicare dal primo manoscritto la prima metà del testo, dal secondo manoscritto la seconda metà del testo, aggiungendo in appendice il terzo (che a differenza degli altri contiene solamente la parte iniziale). Cfr. PFM, AA XX: 257-258. Rispetto alla storia del testo, alle datazioni etc., sarebbe importante leggere l'introduzione alla recente edizione curata per Meiner da R. Theis (Kant 2024) e il volume collettaneo curato da A. Hahmann e B. Ludwig nel 2017.

5. Kant 1991a e Kant 1991b: tutte le citazioni in italiano delle due opere sono tratte da questa edizione.

6. Cfr. ivi: xiv-xv.

7. PFM, AA XX: 259.

8. *Ibid*.

tarlo perentoriamente, cadendo invece in un'opposizione antinomica che rende la storia della metafisica un "campo di lotte senza fine".[9]

Kant successivamente elenca tre *stadi* della metafisica, che sono tutti interni al terzo passo, ossia alla filosofia dello stesso Kant. Gli stadi della ragion pura si dividono in:

> dottrina della scienza, intesa come un sicuro progresso, dottrina del dubbio, come sospensione, e dottrina della saggezza, come passaggio allo scopo finale della metafisica: la prima conterrà pertanto una dottrina teoretico-dogmatica, la seconda una disciplina scettica, la terza una disciplina pratico-dogmatica.[10]

Al contrario dei tre passi, nei tre stadi si compie un autentico progresso, poiché per loro tramite la metafisica raggiunge il suo scopo, il soprasensibile. Il terzo stadio, quello pratico-dogmatico, rappresenta infatti il punto apicale della metafisica kantiana, la dottrina della saggezza. Quest'ultima permette finalmente di raggiungere il soprasensibile attraverso la ragion pratica, conferendogli l'assenso della fede razionale.[11]

In sintesi, il saggio incompleto di Kant non è propriamente un testo di storia della filosofia; tuttavia, innegabilmente problematizza la relazione della filosofia critica con la filosofia passata, per chiedersi al contempo quale sarà il destino della filosofia nel futuro. Questa, infatti, o seguirà la via tracciata dai tre stadi e dalla fondazione pratico-dogmatica della metafisica – la via, in ultima istanza, della filosofia kantiana – o è destinata alla ripetizione insensata.[12]

I *Lose Blätter* prendono le mosse da tali questioni, problematizzando i principali nodi tematici della *Preisschrift*, e mostrando una particolare originalità di elaborazione proprio per quanto riguarda la riflessione sulla storia della filosofia. Il paragrafo intitolato *A proposito di una storia filosofica della filosofia* è particolarmente significativo, perché è al suo interno che figura l'espressione "archeologia filosofica (*philosophische Archäologie*)".[13] In questo conciso paragrafo, Kant introduce la nozione di "storia filosofica della filosofia", ossia una storia della filosofia razionale possibile a priori, capace di enunciare i *facta* della ragione traendoli dalla natura della ragione umana "come se si trattasse di un'archeologia filosofica".[14]

## 2. L'ARCHEOLOGIA NELL'OPERA DI KANT

Come si diceva, l'espressione "*philosophische Archäologie*" figura solo una volta nel *corpus* kantiano; tuttavia, la parola "*Archäologie*" compare in numerose occasioni, e vale la pena indicare sinteticamente le diverse accezioni assunte dal termine.

9. KrV, AA IV: 7. Tutte le citazioni in italiano dell'opera sono tratte da: Kant 2022. L'opposizione tra dogmatismo e scetticismo dei primi due passi è già tematizzata varie volte nella *Kritik der reinen Vernunft,* cfr. ad es. KrV, AA III: 19, e altre. Sulla tesi per cui i passi rappresentano un progresso solamente apparente cfr. Grandjean 2017; l'introduzione di Grandjean a Kant 2012.

10. PFM, AA XX: 273.

11. Sulla metafisica pratico-dogmatica, cfr. *infra*, pp. 72-74.

12. Kant paragona lo sforzo incessante e infruttuoso dell'uomo verso la metafisica al mito di Sisifo. Cfr. PFM, AA XX: 259.

13. LBFM, AA XX: 341.

14. *Ibid*.

Kant scrive a più riprese di una "*Archäologie der Natur*", il termine si può trovare in una lettera,[15] nella *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*,[16] nella *Physische Geographie*[17] e nella *Kritik der Urteilskraft*,[18] mentre in un altro appunto manoscritto nomina una "*Archäologia religionis*".[19] Non è il caso di entrare nei dettagli del contesto in cui vengono utilizzati questi termini, per ora è sufficiente sottolineare qualche distinzione. Mentre l'*Archäologia religionis* si richiama con ogni probabilità al significato classico del termine archeologia, mutuato dal greco antico Ἀρχαιολογία;[20] l'*Archäologie der Natur* fa riferimento all'*arché*-principio-origine inteso certamente in senso cronologico come discorso sull'antichità (sull'antico stato della terra), ma a ben vedere inteso al contempo in senso metafisico e teleologico.[21] Le complicazioni teoretiche sollevate dall'archeologia si fondando sulla molteplicità di significati e la pregnanza filosofica del termine *arché*. Un testo di riferimento per l'epoca di Kant come il *Lexicon philosophicum graecum* di Goclenius sottolinea la "*homonymia*" del termine *arché*, definendolo come ciò da cui proviene il movimento, l'origine da cui scaturisce qualcosa, il fondamento, la prima radice, la causa prima della cosa: "così l'ombelico secondo Galeno è il principio dell'uomo".[22] Goclenius non limita l'*arché* alla causa efficiente, difatti definisce il termine seguendo le cause aristoteliche, partendo proprio dalla causa finale. Per interpretare l'archeologia filosofica kantiana occorre tenere a mente la complessità sollevata dalle discussioni sull'*arché* e sull'archeologia a lui contemporanee e dei secoli immediatamente precedenti.

L'archeologia della natura sorge laddove il nostro intelletto non è in grado di spiegare attraverso il meccanicismo gli esseri organizzati, l'organismo vivente in primis. Per questo Kant scrive che, nonostante sia fondata sopra congetture, l'archeologia della natura non è puramente immaginaria, anzi è uno studio che la natura stessa ci esorta a

15. *Brief 654b*, AA XIII: 600.

16. *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, AA VII: 193, 323.

17. Kant 1804: 118. Le lezioni sulla geografia fisica di Kant curate da G. Vollmer non sono incluse nelle opere complete dell'Accademia, dove figura esclusivamente la *Physische Geographie* curata da Theodor Rink.

18. KU, AA V: 419 (*Archäologen der Natur*) e 428 (*Archäologie der Natur*). Tutte le citazioni in italiano dell'opera sono tratte da: Kant 1997.

19. Kant 1898: 9-10. Questi manoscritti pubblicati da Reicke non sono inclusi nell'edizione delle opere complete dell'Accademia.

20. Il passo sull'archeologia religiosa si rifà all'opposizione kantiana tra religione razionale e religione rivelata. L'*Archäologia religionis* è definita "Alterthumslehre der Religion" e si oppone ad un "Rationalism der Religion". Infatti, nel caso della religione Kant parla di *Archäologia* mentre negli altri casi usa *Archäologie* (termine tedesco moderno). È probabile, infatti, che *Archäologia* si richiami al greco Ἀρχαιολογία, in quanto ha a che fare con le 'cose antiche' mentre non ha a che fare con (o addirittura si oppone a) il piano dei principi. Tuttavia, questo ragionamento non può andare oltre la supposizione.

21. Johann Heinrich Alsted pone per primo una distinzione tra il termine ἀρχαιολογία – letteralmente "discorso sulle cose antiche", su cose attinenti al passato, venendo da λόγον περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων – e un termine nuovo: *archelogia* - ἀρχηλογία, in quanto scienza dei principi (che Alsted pone al primo posto tra i *praecognita*). Cfr. Alsted 1612: 13-14.

22. Goclenius 1615: 43: "Sic umbilicus Galeno in homine est principium".

sviluppare. L'archeologia della natura ha a che fare con i fossili e con le macerie dell'antico stato della terra, ad essa: "appartengono le pietrificazioni come a quella [all'archeologia] dell'arte appartengono le pietre intagliate".[23] Partendo da questi prodotti della natura l'archeologo deve risalire all'antico stato della terra, cercando però la "feconda forza formatrice"[24] che agisce nella natura. La questione è particolarmente significativa per quanto riguarda il vivente e gli organismi. Ciò che interessa a Kant è comprendere come sia possibile che diversi generi di animali presentino al nostro sguardo uno schema comune: è possibile che questi organismi abbiano avuto in comune una "madre universale" intelligente, che si sia posta uno *scopo* attraverso la loro organizzazione?

La soluzione a cui perviene Kant nello sviluppo del pensiero critico è notoriamente il ricorso a cause finali attraverso il giudizio riflettente; ciò è dirimente, poiché la risposta alla domanda posta dall'archeologia della natura sfocia nel campo della teleologia. La spiegazione finalistica alla base dello studio del vivente è definita:

> una condizione soggettiva dell'uso della nostra ragione, quando essa non vuole giudicare degli oggetti in quanto semplici fenomeni, ma vuol riferirli, insieme coi loro principii, al sostrato soprasensibile, per spiegare la possibilità di certe leggi della loro unità, che non può rappresentarsi se non mediante fini (e la ragione stessa ne contiene tali, che sono soprasensibili).[25]

È proprio il ricorso alla teleologia l'elemento che consente di tracciare un legame significativo tra l'archeologia della natura e l'archeologia filosofica, come si dirà più avanti.[26]

Ora, nonostante le similitudini che vedremo tra archeologia della natura e archeologia filosofica, non è ad ogni modo chiaro da dove Kant tragga quest'ultima espressione, che non può essere letta come un semplice spostamento dell'archeologia dall'indagine naturale al campo della filosofia. La nostra ipotesi è che Kant fa riferimento all'archeologia filosofica delle *Archaeologiae philosophicae: sive doctrina antiqua de rerum originibus* di Thomas Burnet, presumibilmente attraverso la mediazione degli *Acta philosophorum*[27] editi da Christoph August Heumann. [28]

Prima di trattare nello specifico le due "archeologie" di Burnet e di Kant, vale la pena approfondire il rapporto tra Kant e Heumann. Al di là della rilevanza della menzione di Burnet negli *Acta philosophorum*, è importante far dialogare Heumann e Kant per quanto riguarda le posizioni teoriche sulla storia (filosofica) della filosofia. Nel confronto tra i due autori si può scorgere, infatti, l'intenso dibattito sulla storia della filosofia dei secoli XVII e XVIII, e l'influenza decisiva delle novità teoriche introdotte da Heumann in questo campo.

23. KU, AA V: 428.
24. Ivi: 419.
25. Ivi: 429.
26. Cfr. *infra*, pp. 69-70.
27. Ogni volta che vengono citati gli *Acta philosophorum*, che furono pubblicati in forma di rivista, ci riferiamo sempre alla *Einleitung* sistematica agli stessi, ossia il primo volume.
28. Per una biografia completa di Heumann cfr. Cassius 1768.

## 3. L'INFLUENZA DI HEUMANN SULLA STORIA DELLA FILOSOFIA DI KANT

Sebbene Kant non li menzioni mai nelle opere a stampa, ci sono diverse prove indirette della sua frequentazione con i testi di Heumann. Durante gli anni in cui Kant insegna a Königsberg vengono condotti numerosi corsi universitari basati sul *Conspectus Reipublicae Literariae sive Via ad historiam literariam* (1740) di Heumann, e ciò testimonia dunque come le sue opere circolassero nel contesto filosofico di Kant.[29] La disamina delle idee kantiane sulla storia della filosofia greca e la sua periodizzazione ci mostrano l'influenza esercitata da Heumann e dalla *querelle* sulla storia della filosofia sul filosofo critico.[30] Diversi professori a Königsberg iniziavano le loro lezioni di logica con un'introduzione storico-filosofica, e Kant decise di non discostarsi da questa consuetudine. All'interno dei materiali postumi delle lezioni kantiane sulla logica si trovano tracce inequivocabili della sua frequentazione con i testi chiave del dibattito sulla storia della filosofia di quegli anni, di cui Heumann fu indubbiamente uno dei protagonisti.[31] Inoltre, come ha evidenziato Mario Longo,[32] Kant ha derivato l'espressione "storia filosofica della filosofia" proprio da Heumann, il primo autore ad utilizzare tale formula.[33]

Gli *Acta philosophorum*, la rivista di Heumann, rappresentano la prima rivista in lingua tedesca specializzata in storia della filosofia.[34] Il carattere episodico della rivista si legava bene all'eclettismo del curatore: era frutto di una precisa scelta teorica non seguire il classico ordine cronologico delle storie della filosofia basate sulla biografia dei pensatori, sul modello delle *Vite dei filosofi* di Diogene Laerzio. Senonché, Heumann pubblicò una lunga *Einleitung* programmatica agli *Acta philosophorum* in cui vengono affrontati sistematicamente i problemi filosofici e metodologici sollevati dal concetto stesso di storia della filosofia. Ciò non deve sorprendere poiché a partire dalla fine del XVII secolo in Europa si svolse un intenso dibattito sulla storia della filosofia, che portò la disciplina ad una rinnovata consapevolezza teorica. La filosofia eclettica, in particolare con la scuola di Thomasius, ha giocato un ruolo fondamentale per la definizione teorica della storia della filosofia, predicando l'importanza di pensare da sé e di vagliare criticamente la realtà senza farsi schiacciare dall'autorità dei classici.[35] La riflessione di Heumann sulla storia della filosofia prende le mosse da questo tipo di posizione. Negli *Acta philosophorum* egli scrive, a proposito di queste tematiche:

29. Per le lezioni dell'università di Königsberg cfr. Oberhausen und Pozzo 1999. Il nome di Heumann compare molte volte nel testo, cfr. ad es. ivi: 325 (1771/1772); 332 (1772); 339 (1772/1773); 436 (1779/1780); 670 (1798/1799).

30. Kant ha tratto dagli *Acta philosophorum* la periodizzazione della filosofia greca presente nelle sue lezioni di logica (cfr. Feldmann 1936: 178). Inoltre, Kant prende da Heumann l'idea secondo cui la filosofia è nata in Grecia grazie alla libertà politica in vigore nelle *poleis* (cfr. Micheli 1980: 153).

31. Cfr. Feldmann 1936: 178.

32. Cfr. Longo 1979: 474.

33. Cfr. Geldsetzer 1968: 130.

34. Cfr. Longo 1979: 441.

35. Per ricostruire il dibattito sulla storia della filosofia di quegli anni cfr. Braun 1973; Bottin, Longo e Piaia 1979; Bottin *et. al.* 1981. Si può vedere inoltre i più recenti: Reichl 2020; Bordoli 2022.

> Alcuni ingegni sono attivi, mentre altri sono passivi. Chiamo passivi quelli che afferrano e colgono bene gli insegnamenti che i loro maestri gli hanno trasmesso, che li conservano nella memoria e sono sempre in grado di ripeterli. Ma chiamo attivi quelli che pensano da sé stessi e si sforzano di indagare la verità. Come gli ingegni attivi sono simili al fuoco, che si diffonde e pervade con violenza, così gli ingegni passivi si possono appropriatamente paragonare al terreno, che accoglie nel suo grembo il seme sparso da altri. Come un campo dà frutti buoni o cattivi a seconda che abbia ricevuto semi buoni o scarsi, così accade anche per l'ingegno passivo.[36]

Su questo punto c'è una sostanziale continuità nelle riflessioni kantiane. La distinzione tra ingegno attivo e passivo verrà ripresa da Kant, seppure con altri termini. Come è noto, Kant frequentemente polemizza con i "dotti che hanno come propria filosofia la storia della filosofia",[37] essi sono *filodossi* e non filosofi, poiché il filosofo è in grado di pensare da sé e di interrogare la ragione stessa.[38] Deve essere letta in risposta a questa tematica l'assunzione kantiana, frequentemente ripetuta, per cui la filosofia non può essere insegnata. Quando Kant torna a lavorare sulla questione dell'insegnamento della filosofia all'interno della *Logik Philippi,* mette al centro proprio la tematica del *Genio*, poiché "Filosofo è colui che possiede la capacità di filosofare. Una tale persona deve avere della genialità [*Genie*]. La genialità è uno spirito originale che dà alla luce prodotti perfetti senza imitazione",[39] come gli *ingenia activa* di Heumann.

Nelle pagine della *Einleitung* di Heumann sono presenti molti elementi che verranno sviluppati da Kant nel capitolo sulla *Storia filosofica della filosofia*. Il collegamento tra Kant e Heumann è particolarmente significativo poiché utilizzando l'espressione "philosophische Geschichte der Philosophie" Kant sta sostanzialmente traducendo un'espressione di Heumann. Come leggiamo nel *Vorbericht*, infatti, il titolo originale degli *Acta philosophorum* doveva essere proprio *Historia Philosophiae philosophica*; la rivista infatti aveva il fine di sviluppare una "descrizione storica e critica della filosofia".[40] La "Storia filosofica della filosofia" di Heumann (che Kant identifica con l'archeologia filosofica) si pone il problema delle origini della filosofia; di come essa appaia all'inizio del mondo. Una tale storia, infatti, avrebbe dovuto vagliare criticamente la filosofia

36. "Nemlich etliche ingenia sind activa, etliche aber passiva. Diejenigen nenne ich passiva, welche die von denen Lehrmeistern ihnen vorgetragenen Lehren wohl fassen und annehmen, auch im Gedächtniße behalten und allezeit wieder von sich geben können. Activa aber heisse ich diejenigen, welche selbst nachdencken und die Wahrheit zu erforschen bemühet sind. Gleichwie nun die ingenia activa dem Feuer gleich sind, welches um sich greiffet und mit Gewalt durchdringet; also lassen sich die passiva füglich mit dem Erdreiche vergleichen, welches den von andern ausgestreueten Samen in seinen Schoß aufnimmet. Wie nun ein Acker gute oder schlechte Früchte träget, nachdem er nemlich guten oder geringen Saamen bekommen hat; also verhält sichs auch mit einem ingenio passive", AcP: 579-580.

37. P, AA IV: 255. Le traduzioni del testo sono tratte da Kant 2021.

38. Sul concetto di filodossia in Kant c'è una lunga trattazione in Micheli 1980: in particolare al capitolo 2.2.1, p. 97.

39. *Logik Philippi,* AA XXIV: 321. La traduzione del passo è tratta da Kant 2000: xxix.

40. "historische und Critisirende Beschreibung der Philosophie", AcP: *Vorbericht*, a5.

"dall'inizio del mondo"[41] ai giorni nostri, esaminando approfonditamente non tanto le vite dei filosofi quanto i principi che essi utilizzavano, ragionando criticamente su di essi. Senonché, Heumann optò infine per il titolo più modesto di *Acta philosophorum*, in quanto decise di sviluppare una storia filosofica "a pezzi [*Stückweise*]", senza la completezza del sistema che la *Historia Philosophiae philosophica* richiedeva.

Heumann scrive così a proposito della storia filosofica sviluppata negli *Acta*:

> Ma da ciò risulta chiaramente che nessuno può trattare e insegnare correttamente la storia filosofica [Historiam Philosophicam] senza essere egli stesso un filosofo. Proprio per questo motivo questa storia presenta ancora così tanti difetti, perché la maggior parte di coloro che l'hanno illustrata fino ad ora sono stati più filologi che filosofi, ad esempio Vossius, Hornius, Stanlejus etc. E abbiamo in effetti buone ragioni per fare una distinzione tra storia della filosofia [Historiam Philosophiae] e storia filosofica [Historiam Philosophicam]. Perché una corretta storia della filosofia deve essere anche filosofica, cioè si deve esaminare tutto scrupolosamente, sia le verità dei fatti che quella dei dogmi. E non si deve permettere a questo riguardo che il pregiudizio comune lo impedisca, come se uno storico non fosse libero di aggiungere il proprio giudizio.[42]

Con la storia filosofica della filosofia, la filosofia indaga lo sviluppo di sé stessa attraverso principi tratti da sé stessa. Non si tratta più solamente di ricostruire una storia della filosofia oggettiva e storicamente accurata, ciò che è compito del filologo. La dimensione temporale stessa, la cronologia, perde il suo consolidato primato nell'organizzazione della storia della filosofia.[43] La novità della storia filosofica, infatti, è quella di porre come suo fondamento sia i *Principia historica* sia i *Principia philosophica*, per vagliare tanto la verità dei fatti quanto quella dei sistemi.[44]

Secondo Heumann una storia della filosofia è filosofica se in essa è presente il *giudizio* dello storico (filosofo anch'egli!). Può sembrare un'eresia per il senso comune che all'interno della storia – regno dell'oggettività – si inserisca l'elemento soggettivo del giudizio dello storico sulla verità dei *dogmi* su cui si basano i sistemi;[45] Heumann, al contrario, esorta a creare un legame virtuoso tra la filologia e la filosofia, per sviluppare

41. "vom Anfange der Welt", *ibid*.

42. "Doch hieraus erhellet freilich dieses, daß niemand die Historiam Philosophicam recht tractiren und dociren könne, ohne der da selbst ein Philosophus ist. Wie denn aus eben dieser Ursach diese Historie noch so viele Defecte hat, weil die meisten von denen, so sie bißher beschrieben haben, mehr Philologi, als Philosophi, gewesen sind, z. E. Vossius, Hornius, Stanlejus etc. Und haben wir allerdings gute Ursach, einen Unterschied zu machen inter Historiam Philosophiæ und inter Historiam Philosophicam. Denn eine rechte Historia Philosophiæ muß auch Philosophica seyn, das ist, man muß alles gründlich untersuchen, sowohl die veritatem factorum als dogmatum. Und darf man sich hierbey das gemeine Vorurtheil nicht hindern lassen, als wenn nemlich einem Historico nicht freystünde, sein judicium beizufügen", AcP: 34-35.

43. Cfr. Braun 1973: 117-118.

44. AcP: *Vorbericht*, pagina non numerata.

45. Kant sottolinea spesso come per imparare a filosofare non occorra imparare a memoria i sistemi, bensì "giudicare l'autore", cfr. WL, AA XXIV: 797.

una *Historia philosophica* che non insegni solamente ciò che hanno pensato i filosofi del passato, ma che insegni a pensare da sé, ossia a filosofare. La storia della filosofia si configura in questo modo come una raccolta di materiali su cui esercitare il giudizio critico del filosofo eclettico.

Riassumendo, nella prospettiva di Heumann la storia della filosofia non deve insegnare come si è fatto filosofia fino ad ora, ma deve prima di tutto insegnare a filosofare; perciò, deve necessariamente essere scritta da un filosofo. Il passaggio dalla storia *philosophiae* alla storia *philosophica* comporta una rivoluzione nello statuto scientifico della storia della filosofia: mentre la prima è una scienza storica, la seconda è una disciplina filosofica. Lo storico-filosofo che vuole redigerla deve vagliare tanto la verità dei fatti quanto quella dei dogmi, ossia dei principi utilizzati dai filosofi all'interno dei propri sistemi.

Come vedremo nel corso dell'articolo, Kant accoglie a piene mani gli assunti chiave delle innovazioni teoriche messe in campo da Heumann sulla storia della filosofia, ampliandone la portata rivoluzionaria nella sua trattazione della *Storia filosofica della filosofia*. Con 'storia filosofica' Kant si riferisce ad una storia razionale della filosofia, ossia possibile a priori. Per quanto riguarda la sua concezione della conoscenza storica Kant segue Wolff;[46] come il filosofo di Breslavia, infatti, Kant si premura di tenere ben separate la conoscenza empirica (in cui rientra anche la conoscenza storica) e quella razionale. La conoscenza empirica conosce le cose "come esse sono", mentre quella razionale è conoscenza del fatto che le cose "devono essere necessariamente così".[47] Stando a questa distinzione una rappresentazione storica della filosofia dovrebbe elencare come si è sviluppata la filosofia nella storia, ma la questione è più complessa, perché secondo Kant "il filosofare è un graduale sviluppo della ragione umana, e questa non può aver percorso la via empirica".[48]

Heumann sostiene che la filosofia sorge laddove sono presenti una serie di fattori storici e ambientali adeguati, che sono la condizione necessaria, ma non sufficiente, per la nascita della filosofia. I fattori storico-ambientali da soli non sono in grado di spiegare la nascita della filosofia, lo dimostra il fatto che a parità di condizioni esterne non si dà la medesima manifestazione filosofica. Per questa ragione Heumann indica il ruolo determinante dell'*ingenium*[49] nello sviluppo della filosofia.[50]

La spiegazione di Heumann, dunque, è composta da un elemento empirico e da un elemento psicologico. I Greci, oltre alla libertà politica, avevano degli ingegni adeguati alla filosofia, e furono mossi nella loro ricerca inizialmente dalla *curiosità*. In maniera similare Kant fa appello alle facoltà dell'uomo per spiegare la nascita della

46. Sulla derivazione della concezione della conoscenza storica da Wolff, cfr. n. 447 in Kant 2024: 207-208. Kant ha trattato questo tema già nella *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, distinguendo tra conoscenza *ex datis* e conoscenza *ex principiis* (KrV, AA III: 540).

47. LBFM, AA XX: 340.

48. *Ibid*.

49. Si è già sottolineato come per Kant il genio gioca un ruolo fondamentale nella filosofia e nella creazione delle idee, per approfondire cfr. Tonelli 1987.

50. Cfr. Longo 1979: 460.

filosofia, poiché quest'ultima è frutto della ragione, la quale non può essere determinata dalle condizioni esterne. La ragione è autarchica, dà a se stessa le sue leggi, si pone degli scopi e vuole raggiungerli. Come vedremo più avanti, Kant sostiene che la filosofia sorge per via del *bisogno della ragione* di avventurarsi nel soprasensibile.[51]

La "storia filosofica della filosofia" kantiana non è la storia delle opinioni dei filosofi, ma la "storia della ragione che si sviluppa per concetti";[52] al suo interno si verifica una coincidenza tra soggetto e oggetto, perché la ragione sta raccontando un passato che è il suo. Paradossalmente in questa storia non conta tanto ciò che è avvenuto, quanto "ciò che sarebbe dovuto avvenire".[53] Proprio per questa ragione, Kant può sostenere che:

> Una storia filosofica della filosofia non è essa stessa storica o empirica, bensì razionale, ossia possibile a priori. E questo perché pur enunciando dei *facta* della ragione, essa non li mutua dal racconto storico, ma li trae dalla natura della ragione umana, come se si trattasse di un'archeologia filosofica. Che cosa indusse i pensatori, tra tutti gli uomini a raziocinare intorno all'origine, lo scopo e la fine delle cose nel mondo? A muoverli fu quanto di finalistico v'è nel mondo, o solo la catena di cause ed effetti, oppure fu il fine dell'umanità stessa?[54]

In continuità ancora una volta con Heumann, solo il filosofo critico (non più l'eclettico) è in grado di redigere una storia della filosofia filosofica, ossia è in grado di guardarsi alle spalle e comprendere razionalmente (che equivale a dire, nella sua necessità) il cammino che ha compiuto la ragione nella storia. Questo cammino è proprio quello descritto dai *tre passi* della *Preisschrift*. Prima dell'epoca critica la ragione è nello stato di natura.[55] Essa è tormentata da lotte intestine tra posizioni autoescludentesi, attraverso le quali infine la ragione giunge ad autodistruggersi (scetticismo). Questo sviluppo che vediamo all'opera nella contingenza della storia è però già scritto nelle leggi della ragione, nella natura o conformazione della ragione umana. Infatti, la storia filosofica può apparire solo una volta che la critica ha esplicitato le leggi metastoriche della ragione, perché esse sono il parametro tramite cui la ragione giudica i sistemi.[56] Il filosofo critico che ha scoperto queste leggi (necessarie) può riconoscerle e vederle all'opera nella storia (contingente), proprio per questo la storia filosofica della filosofia si situa nella commistione problematica tra *a priori* e *a posteriori*, razionale ed empirico, necessario e contingente.

51. LBFM, AA XX: 340.

52. Ivi, 343. È il filosofo stesso che perde centralità all'interno della storia della filosofia. Il medesimo movimento lo vediamo in Heumann. Cfr. Catana 2019, in particolare il capitolo 2: "From persona to systema", pp. 21-64. Heumann basa la sua storia filosofica sui *sistemi filosofici*, non sulla *persona* del filosofo: "the study of past philosophical texts should not lead to a way of life guided by the example of the past philosopher, but to a detached and depersonalized intellectual activity in which philosophical systems were examined and developed" (p. 33). Allo stesso modo a Kant interessa lo sviluppo della ragione nella storia, al di là dei filosofi, che talvolta sembrano quasi degli strumenti agiti dall'Idea che li guida. Cfr. Ferrarin 2022: 53; Giordanetti 1999.

53. LBFM, AA XX: 343.

54. Ivi: 341.

55. Cfr. KrV, AA III: 491.

56. Cfr. Givone 1972: 26.

La mossa successiva di Kant, come si diceva, è l'equiparazione tra la storia filosofica della filosofia e l'"archeologia filosofica".[57] Il passaggio dei *Lose Blätter* continua con una domanda, che scaturisce dalla stessa archeologia filosofica. Quest'ultima si propone infatti di determinare quale sia il problema che ha stimolato la filosofia e ha condotto i pensatori sulla strada della ricerca, e si chiede insieme quali principi abbiano orientato tale cammino.[58] Kant, dopo aver introdotto l'espressione "archeologia filosofica", si domanda che cosa indusse i pensatori, tra tutti gli uomini, a raziocinare intorno all'origine, lo scopo e la fine delle cose nel mondo. Ossia, l'archeologia filosofica fa riferimento all'*arché* in un duplice senso: da un lato indaga i principi della ragione, dall'altro lato fa riferimento all'origine della filosofia stessa (cosa indusse i pensatori a filosofare?). Proprio questa domanda sul principio come origine suggerisce un possibile ponte con Heumann, e per suo tramite, con le *Archaeologiae philosophicae* di Thomas Burnet.

## 4. IL LEGAME CON LE *ARCHAEOLOGIAE PHILOSOPHICAE* DI THOMAS BURNET

Nel primo volume degli *Acta philosophorum,* Heumann intitola un capitolo "Dell'origine e della crescita della filosofia (*Von dem Ursprung und Wachstum der Philosophie*)". In questo capitolo si legge:

> Alcuni autori hanno già esposto in scritti pubblici i loro pensieri su questa materia [n.d.r. si riferisce all'indagine sull'origine della filosofia], mettendoli sotto gli occhi degli studiosi. Non solo Thomas Burnet ha dedicato a questo argomento l'intero 14° capitolo delle sue *Archaeologiae philosophicae*, ma tra le *Dissertationes Academicae* di Ulrich Obrecht c'è anche una speciale *de vera Philosophiae origine*, che nell'ordine è la quindicesima. Così fa anche Colbergius nell'altra dissertazione della sua *Sapientiae veterum Hebraeorum per orbem dispersae* riguardo proprio a questa materia: e quindi potrebbe sembrare che questi uomini abbiano esagerato con la fatica di questa ricerca.[59]

Per sostenere che la sua posizione in merito alla questione dell'origine della filosofia è inedita, Heumann cita diversi autori che si sono occupati prima di lui di tale problema, e il primo nell'elenco è proprio Thomas Burnet con le sue *Archaeologiae philosophicae*. Ora, sappiamo per certo che Kant conosceva Burnet, il suo nome appare diverse volte all'interno delle opere a stampa kantiane: viene citato nell'annuncio del corso di

57. LBFM, AA XX: 341.

58. Cfr. Micheli 1988: 946.

59. "Es haben von dieser Materie schon einige Autores ihre Gedancken in öffentlichen Schrifften denen Gelehrten vor Augen geleget. Wie denn nicht nur Thomas Burnet das ganze 14te Capitel seines ersten Buchs der Archæologiæ philosophicæ hierzu bestimmet hat; sondern es stehet auch unter des Ulrici Obrechti Dissertationibus Academicis eine besondere de vera Philosophiæ origine, welche in der Ordnung die funffzehnde ist. So handelt auch Colbergius in der andern Dissertation seiner Sapientiæ veterum Hebræorum per orbem dispersæ von eben dieser Materie: und also möchte es scheinen, als hätten diese Männer mit der Mühe, dieses zu untersuchen, überhoben", AcP: 48, 249.

geografia fisica del 1757,[60] una volta in *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes,*[61] una volta nella *Physische Geographie* edita da Rink.[62] In questi tre passi Kant non cita opere specifiche di Burnet, bensì si occupa di esporre (e confutare!) le sue tesi circa la storia e le origini della terra – quella che Kant chiama "archeologia della natura".[63]

Come si diceva, diversi studiosi hanno messo in evidenza il legame tra Heumann e Kant per quanto riguarda la storia filosofica della filosofia. Tuttavia, sembra che sino ad ora non sia stata invece ancora adeguatamente approfondita la strada del collegamento con Burnet per quanto riguarda nello specifico l'archeologia filosofica. La presenza dell'archeologia filosofica di Burnet all'interno degli *Acta philosophorum*, dai quali Kant ha molto probabilmente tratto l'espressione "storia filosofica della filosofia", rende legittima l'ipotesi che Kant abbia in mente proprio il testo di Burnet quando parla di un'archeologia filosofica; il foglio sulla storia filosofica della filosofia, infatti, identifica quest'ultima proprio con l'archeologia filosofica.

In effetti, all'interno dell'opera di Burnet si possono scovare diverse similitudini con i ragionamenti kantiani sull'archeologia filosofica e sulla storia della filosofia in generale. Nelle *Archaeologiae* Burnet vanta di aver composto una "historiam quandam Philosophicam" focalizzata sui "dogmata"[64] degli antichi sistemi, in particolare quelli relativi all'origine delle cose (*rerum origines*). Per questo motivo Braun sostiene che Burnet rappresenta un anticipatore delle tendenze innovatrici del XVIII secolo sulla storia della filosofia;[65] gli autori tedeschi del '700, inoltre, citano spesso Burnet per quanto riguarda questioni storico filosofiche.[66]

Le premesse metodologiche della storia filosofica di Burnet sono trattate all'interno della *Praefatio ad Lectorem*:

> Nella storia letteraria, nulla è più importante o utile che esporre l'ingegno di ogni popolo, le opinioni filosofiche di ciascuno e i progressi conseguiti nelle scien-

60. "Entwurf und Ankündigung eines Collegii der physischen Geographie nebst dem Anhange einer kurzen Betrachtung über die Frage: Ob die Westwinde in unsern Gegenden darum feucht seien, weil sie über ein großes Meer streichen", AA II: 8.

61. AA II: 127.

62. *Physische Geographie*, AA IX: 301.

63. Si veda in particolare *ibid*. Nella pagina citata Kant rifiuta la tesi proposta da Burnet sulle origini della terra. Quando Kant fa l'esempio di ciò che non può fare un'archeologia della natura nella *Kritik der Urteilskraft* sta utilizzando i medesimi termini con cui nella *Physische Geographie* ha descritto e confutato le tesi di Burnet sull'antico stato della terra. Queste corrispondenze possono condurre all'ipotesi per cui quando Kant parla dell'archeologia della natura si sta confrontando anche con le tesi di Burnet.

64. AP: cap. I, p. 3.

65. Cfr. Braun 1973: 75.

66. Segnaliamo un'importante citazione di Johann Jakob Brucker, autore conosciuto da Kant che ha mutuato dalla sua *Historia critica philosophiae* l'interpretazione di Platone che leggiamo nella *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (cfr. Serck-Hanssen and Emilsson 2010). Brucker 1723: *Praefatio,* c. (a)3. Brucker cita il passo delle *Archaeologiae philosophicae* di Burnet sull'importanza per la storia filosofica dell'indagine sui semi e i progressi della conoscenza umana, piuttosto che sulla vita dei filosofi, le condizioni storiche o altri fattori di questo genere.

> ze. Le altre cose che solitamente costituiscono la storia letteraria, quali le vite dei filosofi, le loro origini, morti, lodi, viaggi, azioni buone o cattive, e cose di questo genere, completano e adornano la materia: tuttavia sono di minore importanza quando ci proponiamo di indagare i semi e i progressi della conoscenza umana, e la guida e l'economia della Provvidenza in questa parte del sapere.[67]

Ancora una volta, i dati biografici non hanno un ruolo di rilievo. Lo scopo dell'archeologia è quello di esporre i *semi* e i *progressi* della conoscenza umana. Secondo Paolo Rossi, Burnet gioca un ruolo fondamentale nella storia del pensiero proprio per quanto riguarda lo sviluppo dell'idea moderna di progresso, che comporta il passaggio dalla *historia* alla storia. Per quanto riguarda il campo dell'indagine naturale infatti, l'*historia* è la descrizione e la classificazione di strutture immutabili, la storia propriamente intesa, invece, scopre la funzione del tempo nella vita della natura: lo sviluppo di questa differenza, secondo Rossi, lo dobbiamo all'opera di Thomas Burnet.[68] In sostanza, l'archeologia di Burnet si propone di indicare lo stesso progresso che va cercando Kant nella storia della metafisica, quel progresso che è alla base della domanda del bando dell'Accademia delle scienze di Berlino.

Evidentemente Burnet gioca sul termine archeologia,[69] che presenta almeno due accezioni. L'archeologia riguarda lo studio sulle origini della filosofia e lo studio delle "sententias Veterum de *rerum natura*";[70] senonché, queste antiche sentenze contengono le opinioni degli antichi sulle questioni naturali e prima di tutto sull'origine della terra, che Burnet vuole utilizzare per legittimare le teorie sull'origine della terra che aveva sviluppato all'interno della *Telluris theoria sacra*. Dunque, sono in questione sia l'origine della filosofia, sia le opinioni degli antichi filosofi sull'origine della terra.

La filosofia degli antichi si presenta ai nostri occhi sotto forma di *rovine*, conserviamo poco di quel remoto passato che sia rimasto "integrum et illaesum".[71] I sistemi del passato sono dei reperti archeologici:

> così come dalle colonne spezzate e dai marmi corrosi apprendiamo e ammiriamo l'architettonica dei Greci, allo stesso modo, a partire da un frammento piuttosto ampio di un antico filosofo, possiamo formare un giudizio secondo le leggi della simmetria sulle altre parti della sua opera e sull'intera struttura.[72]

67. AP: *Praefatio ad Lectorem*, c. A4r. "In historia autem rei literariae, nihil praestantius aut utilius, quam cujusque gentis ingenium, cujusque placita philosophica, et quid in scientiis proscecerint, exponere: Caetera, quae historiam literariam constituere solent, Qualia sunt philosophorum vitae, natales, obitus, laudes, peregrinationes, bene aut male gesta, et hujusmodi plura, complent haec quidem, ornantque materiam: sed minoris sunt momenti, cum id agimus, ut humanae cognitionis semina et progressus, et divinae Providentiae hac in parte regimen et oeconomiam, investigemus".

68. Cfr. Rossi 1971: 275.

69. Cfr. Malusa 1981: 366. Per approfondire le teorie storico filosofiche di Burnet si veda in particolare il capitolo 3: "I neoplatonici di Cambridge e la storiografia", pp. 301-404.

70. AP: *Praefatio ad Lectorem*, c. A4r-A4v.

71. Ivi: c. a1r.

72. Ivi: c. a1r-a1v: "Sed quemadmodum ex fractis columnis et exesis marmoribus, Graecorum Architectonicam discimus et admiramur: Ita ex majusculo aliquo fragmento veteris philo-

La rappresentazione del passato (e della terra e della storia umana) come cumulo di macerie e come grande rovina rappresenta nell'opera di Burnet un vero e proprio "*leit motiv* metafisico",[73] che possiamo vedere all'opera anche nella descrizione della terra postdiluviana nella *Telluris theoria sacra*.[74]

L'archeologia filosofica utilizza i frammenti degli antichi filosofi per cercare di ricavare le *leggi* che permettono di ricostruire i loro sistemi integralmente. L'archeologia non è uno studio storico volto a portare alla luce il passato per una vocazione antiquaria, solo ciò che è "memoria dignum" deve diventare l'oggetto dell'archeologia. Vengono tralasciati dalla trattazione archeologica anche gli "errori"[75] dettati da ignoranza o incuria. Dunque, questa indagine che vuole ricostruire le leggi interne ai sistemi, giudica i sistemi stessi, riconoscendone così gli errori. Burnet ci sta offrendo una ricostruzione storica profondamente filosofica.

Anche Kant rappresenta la storia della filosofia come un cumulo di macerie. I sistemi passati sono delle rovine, ma non tanto in senso storico, quanto filosofico; poiché la metafisica dogmatica è stata caratterizzata da un'opposizione tra posizioni unilaterali e parziali, riversandosi infine nello scetticismo che non lascia dietro di sé nient'altro che macerie. Proprio dalle macerie dei sistemi del passato dovrà sorgere la nuova filosofia critica, l'edificio della metafisica infatti "sarà demolito ed uno del tutto nuovo sarà costruito sulle macerie del vecchio".[76] Una presa di posizione che vuole rendere conto sia del fallimento della filosofia passata e dell'assoluta novità della critica, sia dell'inevitabilità per il pensiero filosofico di situarsi storicamente e partire dalla base del cammino che la ragione ha percorso nella storia.[77] La ragione non è incondizionata, muove da condizioni inaggirabili anche nel campo della speculazione filosofica. Ciò è ben noto per quanto riguarda le condizioni trascendentali delle nostre facoltà conoscitive;[78] tuttavia, non va trascurato il vincolo che lega la filosofia e la sua storia.[79]

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sophi, de caeteris partibus sui operis, secundum symmetriae leges, et de tota fabrica, judicium ferimus".

73. Rossi 1971: 278.

74. Per il tema della decadenza della terra attuale, cfr. Burnet 1681: 187.

75. AP: *Praefatio ad Lectorem*, c. a1r. Come vedremo, Kant ha una prospettiva molto simile per quanto riguarda la storia della filosofia: "Si dovrebbe scegliere nel giudizio sugli scritti altrui il metodo della partecipazione all'oggetto generale della ragione umana, estrarre dal tentativo ciò che riguarda l'insieme […] offrire all'autore o, meglio, al bene comune, una mano amica, e trattare gli errori come questioni secondarie. È cosa triste, per la ragione nel suo complesso, distruggere tutto" (Kant 1882: 16. Trad. mia).

76. WL, AA XXIV: 804.

77. *Brief 205,* AA X: 341.

78. Si potrebbero citare numerosi passi, cfr. ad es., Krv, AA III: 12, 75, etc.

79. L'opposizione tra dogmatismo e scetticismo, dunque la storia della metafisica in quanto sviluppo della ragione, rappresenta la condizione, quantomeno "negativa", del criticismo (cfr. Micheli 1988: 927). Ciò non toglie, ovviamente, il carattere di assoluta novità dell'impresa critica, il cui gesto fondativo non si può semplicemente dedurre dalle condizioni storico-filosofiche precedenti (cfr. ad es. P, AA IV: 261-262).

Nella *Storia della ragion pura* Kant sostiene che il passato della ragione presenta allo sguardo "taluni edifici, ma soltanto in rovina".[80] Tale storia, che è il capitolo conclusivo della *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, vuole abbozzare schematicamente un ordine razionale tra queste rovine, cercando le *leggi* che hanno presieduto alla creazione dei sistemi. Ovviamente il significato che Kant attribuisce a queste *leges* è più ampio di quello di Burnet. Per Kant si tratta di collegare le leggi della ragione scoperte dalla filosofia critica ai sistemi filosofici, che hanno sviluppato tali principi in maniera unilaterale sfociando nel dogmatismo.

Questi principi sono per Kant indipendenti da ciò che gli autori hanno effettivamente detto all'interno dei propri sistemi.[81] Come scrive Burnet, possiamo evitare di considerare gli errori, che ricadono tra gli accidenti storici. Il filosofo critico, a conoscenza dei principi della ragione, può redigere una storia filosofica della filosofia; dunque, è in grado di interpretare ciò che hanno scritto i filosofi del passato meglio di loro stessi. Per questa ragione Kant dice che la *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* è la vera apologia di Leibniz:

> Così la Critica della ragion pura potrebbe benissimo esser considerata la vera apologia di Leibniz, persino contro i suoi stessi seguaci, che tessono elogi che non lo onorano; come pure di diversi filosofi dell'antichità che, a dispetto di tutte le lodi loro indirizzate, taluni storici della filosofia accusano di ragionar solo di assurdità; trascurando quella che è la chiave di tutte le spiegazioni dei prodotti puri della ragione basate su puri concetti, vale a dire la critica della stessa ragione (in quanto fonte comune di tutti i concetti), questi storici non riescono ad indovinare ciò che quei filosofi si erano proposti, né riescono a vedere quel che essi, al di là della loro terminologia, hanno voluto dire.[82]

La filosofia è lo sviluppo della ragione nella storia, perciò l'analisi della ragione è il prerequisito e la chiave di ogni interpretazione storico-filosofica. È l'idea stessa di metafisica che si impone alla ragione umana a svilupparsi nella filosofia.[83] Il filosofo, quando guarda al passato della filosofia, deve cercare proprio quest'idea, che è a priori nella ragione. I sistemi sono articolati come un organismo naturale: per questo i principi di un sistema sono connessi tra loro architettonicamente, secondo principi finalistici, come le parti di un organismo.[84] La storia filosofica della filosofia invita a rappresentarsi la storia della filosofia *come se* questa non fosse altro che la ragione stessa che si sviluppa teleologicamente. Kant cerca una collaborazione produttiva tra teleologia e storia per

80. KrV, AA III: 550.

81. Cfr. Giordanetti 1999.

82. *Über eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll,* AA VIII: 250-251. Traduzione tratta da Kant 1991c.

83. LBFM, AA XX: 342.

84. Cfr. l'intera *Architettonica della ragion pura*: KrV, AA III: 538-550. Il tema dell'organismo è presente sia nell'*archeologia della natura* sia nell'*archeologia filosofica*. Mentre la prima si occupa dell'origine degli organismi viventi (anche la Terra va considerata come un grande organismo) la seconda indaga lo sviluppo della ragione come se fosse un organismo.

conferire senso alla storia della filosofia. Accostando la storia della filosofia all'idea d'una metafisica Kant sta cercando al suo interno uno sviluppo necessario, che sia valido euristicamente come principio soggettivo.

Per questa ragione l'idea supera ciò che è effettivamente contenuto all'interno dei sistemi reali, infatti le scienze "vanno definite e determinate non secondo la descrizione che ne dà il loro creatore, sibbene secondo l'idea che, dall'unità naturale delle parti che egli ha messe insieme, si trova fondata nella ragione stessa".[85] Il creatore, e spesso anche i suoi più tardi seguaci, "sbagliano intorno a un'idea, che essi non hanno chiarita a se stessi, e quindi non possono determinare il contenuto speciale, l'articolazione (unità sistematica) e i limiti della scienza".[86]

Nei *Lose Blätter* Kant pone l'idea di metafisica come condizione della storia filosofica:

> Se per la storia della filosofia sia possibile tracciare a priori uno schema col quale le epoche, le opinioni dei filosofi, tratte dalle informazioni a nostra disposizione, vengano a coincidere come se avessero essi stessi avuto questo schema dinanzi agli occhi, e seguendolo avessero avanzato nella loro conoscenza.
> Sì! A patto però che l'idea d'una metafisica s'imponga inevitabilmente alla ragione umana e questa senta il bisogno di svilupparla.[87]

Lo storico della filosofia, con la nuova consapevolezza data dalla filosofia critica, deve sviluppare i germi dell'idea che sono presenti nei sistemi, ma che i filosofi spesso non sono stati in grado di seguire coerentemente.

Tornando a Burnet, l'archeologia è tale sia perché riguarda il mondo arcaico sia perché è un'indagine sulle origini della filosofia, condotta a partire da quei "monumenti"[88] che sono gli antichi sistemi. Vi sono numerose analogie con Kant; tuttavia, per quest'ultimo, l'archeologia filosofica riveste un significato più ampio. Essa ricostruisce il cammino storico della ragione, attraverso la conoscenza superiore della filosofia critica che è in grado di individuare i principi della ragione nelle filosofie del passato. Dobbiamo alla filosofia trascendentale, infatti, la capacità di ricondurre lo sviluppo del dogmatismo e dello scetticismo ad un uso improprio della ragione, che va oltre i suoi limiti e reagisce di conseguenza. Le varie filosofie sono comprese a partire dalle loro fonti che si trovano nella ragion pura. L'archeologo kantiano parte dai sistemi in rovina e cerca al loro interno i principi della ragione: così facendo riesce a rappresentarsi uno *schema* – non si tratta di uno schema esteriore, schema è inteso con il significato tecnico che ricopre nella filosofia kantiana, come sforzo di pensare la sintesi della conoscenza (in questo caso tra a priori e a posteriori) – grazie al quale è in grado di vedere la storia della filosofia inserita in un'istanza di sviluppo finalisticamente orientato della ragione, che parte dal dogmatismo, passa per lo scetticismo e arriva al criticismo.

85. KrV, AA III: 539-540.
86. Ivi: 540.
87. LBFM, AA XX: 342.
88. AP: 4.

Nel passo del capitolo *Von dem Ursprung und Wachstum der Philosophie* in cui viene citato Burnet, Heumann specifica che quest'ultimo si è occupato del problema delle origini della filosofia nel capitolo 14 delle *Archaeologiae philosophicae*. All'interno di quel capitolo Burnet sviluppa la tesi per cui Noè, che era a contatto con i patriarchi e la loro sapienza, ha trasmesso la scienza all'umanità dopo il diluvio, e questa è arrivata fino a noi. Noè ha tramandato la sua sapienza tra i primi popoli del mondo intero, sotto forma di dottrine morali e di dottrine naturali. Successivamente, questa sapienza ha subito nel tempo un deterioramento, ma secondo Burnet si può ancora riconoscere in fondo alle antiche dottrine.[89]

I "dogmi" della sapienza noachiana si occupano delle questioni più grandi e generali della natura:

> Così parimenti questi dogmi riguardano i sommi ordini e i momenti supremi del mondo naturale: da dove ebbe inizio, con quale forma e struttura si costituì per la prima volta; quali vicende o grandi movimenti abbia subito o debba ancora subire; se debba essere dissolto o rinnovato; e quale sarà l'esito finale delle cose, la loro ultima meta. In queste questioni generali e supreme si esercitò, se non erro, la sapienza Primitiva.[90]

Secondo Burnet gli antichi si pongono le medesime domande che Kant attribuisce loro: "l) Che cosa si proponevano gli antichi con la metafisica? Di conoscere il soprasensibile".[91] L'aspetto più interessante è che, sia in Kant che in Burnet, il desiderio degli antichi pensatori di conoscere il soprasensibile era determinato da un bisogno pratico. La conoscenza del soprasensibile serviva agli uomini per formulare delle massime in grado di orientare la loro azione. La saggezza originaria secondo Burnet non si concentrava sulle piccole cose, come la sapienza dei moderni, anzi aveva una finalità pratica ed era costituita da "*praecepta moralia*".[92]

Gli uomini iniziarono a ragionare sui problemi di carattere più generale, per arrivare infine a quelli più specifici, come nella modernità, in cui la scienza si focalizza su elementi particolari scoperti per via sperimentale. Kant è d'accordo su questo punto: "stupisce che gli uomini abbiano cominciato a formulare giudizi sulle cose che oltrepassano la ragione prima che su quello che stava loro sotto gli occhi".[93] Le avventure nel regno del soprasensibile hanno fornito agli uomini le massime necessarie a condurre moralmente la vita associata. Burnet scrive che le massime della filosofia noachiana "si riferivano a ciò che era più necessario per organizzare la vita secondo i giusti principi".[94]

89. Ivi: 197.

90. Ivi: 196: "Ita pariter haec dogmata respiciunt summos ordines et momenta maxima Mundi Naturalis: unde incepit, qua forma et structura a primum coaluit: Quas vices, aut motus majores, aut jam subiit, aut olim subiturus est: an dissolvendus: an rennovandus : Et quis extremus rerum exitus et meta ultima: In his generalibus, in his maximis versata est, ni fallor, sapientia Primaeva".

91. LBFM, AA XX: 341.

92. AP: 196.

93. *Metaphysik Volkmann*, AA XXVIII: 355. Utilizziamo la traduzione di G. Micheli che si trova in appendice a Micheli 1980.

94. "spectabant quae ad vitam rite instituendam erant maxime necessaria", AP: 196.

L'archeologia filosofica di Kant individua il principio della filosofia – nel senso dell'inizio storico e nel senso metafisico – nel *bisogno della ragione* che motiva lo sviluppo della stessa. Tuttavia, occorre evitare un fraintendimento. Il bisogno di cui sta parlando il filosofo non va inteso come una mancanza della ragione, piuttosto è espressione dei *fini* che la ragione pone a se stessa.

In maniera affine rispetto a Burnet, Kant non sta parlando di semplice curiosità, quanto di un *bisogno pratico*, che è stato abusato nella storia della metafisica, e per questo motivo ha condotto al dogmatismo. Il compito dell'archeologia filosofica kantiana è interpretare correttamente questo bisogno, e mostrare le unilateralità nelle quali è caduta la filosofia seguendo la sua tensione verso il soprasensibile in maniera acritica. Il bisogno della ragione è un fatto, il quale, se non viene frainteso come nel dogmatismo, determina il *diritto*[95] della ragione di raggiungere il soprasensibile rispetto al suo uso pratico, come avviene nel terzo stadio della metafisica di cui si parla nella *Preisschrift*, la metafisica pratico-dogmatica.[96]

Vale la pena approfondire la metafisica pratico-dogmatica introdotta nella *Preisschrift*, poiché essa ha un legame diretto con il bisogno pratico della ragione dell'archeologia filosofica, ed inoltre occupa una posizione inedita all'interno dell'opera kantiana: non appartiene infatti esclusivamente né al campo della filosofia teoretica né a quello della filosofia pratica.[97] Il terzo stadio, in cui la metafisica raggiunge il suo scopo finale, appartiene alla filosofia in quanto dottrina della saggezza (*Weisheitslehre*):[98] la formula kantiana unisce l'aspetto teoretico, rappresentato dalla dottrina, a quello pratico della saggezza.

L'argomentazione della *Preisschrift* riprende il tema dei postulati, già esaminato nella *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, esaminando gli stessi oggetti, benché la metafisica pratico-dogmatica giunga a risultati inediti. Mentre la seconda critica si occupava del soprasensibile dal punto di vista morale, il terzo stadio si occupa del soprasensibile dal punto di vista della metafisica, rappresentando la riconfigurazione critica di quella che la scuola chiamava *metaphysica specialis*.[99]

Le tre idee di Dio, anima e mondo non hanno realtà oggettiva in senso teoretico, poiché non sono oggetti di un'esperienza possibile; tuttavia, argomenta Kant nella *Preisschrift*, hanno realtà oggettiva in senso *pratico*. Mentre l'argomentazione della seconda critica riguarda ancora l'esistenza dei tre oggetti soprasensibili, nel terzo stadio della metafisica è specificato che siamo noi a conferire la realtà oggettiva a questi og-

95. Cfr. *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientiren?* AA VIII: 137. Trad. it.: Kant 1991d.

96. Per approfondire la metafisica pratico-dogmatica della *Preisschrift* cfr. Römer 2023, 2024a, 2024b; Hahmann und Ludwig 2017.

97. Cfr. Caimi 2017.

98. PFM, AA XX: 261

99. Kant riduce l'ontologia al sistema dei principi dell'intelletto, sottraendole ogni rapporto con il soprasensibile. Nella *Preisschrift* Kant scrive che l'ontologia rappresenta solamente la propedeutica, il vestibolo, o l'anticamera della metafisica propriamente intesa (PFM, AA XX: 260), che è invece la scienza del progresso dal sensibile al soprasensibile. Più in generale, sulla filosofia trascendentale come impresa metafisica ma non ontologica cfr. Tommasi 2023.

getti nel rispetto pratico. La possibilità delle tre idee della ragione dipende dalla funzione che ricoprono rispetto alla possibilità del raggiungimento del sommo bene nel mondo:[100] che le idee soprasensibili abbiano realtà oggettiva, epperò pratica, significa che noi dobbiamo agire come se questi oggetti fossero oggettivamente esistenti, e come se dalle nostre azioni dipendesse realmente l'instaurazione del sommo bene nel mondo. La funzione della metafisica pratico-dogmatica è quella di affermare l'esistenza pratica delle tre idee della ragione, per illuminare e sostanziare il nostro agire:

> Ma la condizione suprema, ancorché non completa, della perfezione del mondo è la moralità degli esseri mondani razionali, che a sua volta poggia sul concetto di libertà; questi esseri a loro volta devono essere coscienti di questa libertà in quanto incondizionata spontaneità per poter essere moralmente buoni.[101]

Per questa ragione gli oggetti soprasensibili indagati nel terzo stadio della metafisica rispondono ad un bisogno pratico della ragione, ad essi dobbiamo conferire l'assenso della *fede*, in quanto libera adesione verso qualcosa che ha una diretta conseguenza rispetto alle nostre azioni e agli interessi essenziali degli esseri umani:

> per quella parte del pubblico che non ha niente a che fare con il commercio dei cereali, la previsione d'un cattivo raccolto è un semplice *opinare*, dopo una siccità persistente per tutta la primavera è per essa un *sapere*, mentre per il commerciante il cui fine è di trarre profitto da questo commercio e che è lì per questo, il fatto che il raccolto andrà male è una fede, ed egli dovrà pertanto risparmiare le sue scorte perché in questo caso deve prendere una qualche decisione sul da farsi, visto che ciò tocca le sue faccende ed i suoi affari.[102]

In conclusione, alla luce della nostra interpretazione, tornando ancora una volta alla domanda dell'archeologia filosofica formulata nei *Lose Blätter*, possiamo comprendere meglio cosa intende Kant quando si chiede: "che cosa indusse i pensatori, tra tutti gli uomini, a raziocinare intorno all'origine, lo scopo e la fine delle cose nel mondo? A muoverli fu quanto di finalistico v'è nel mondo, o solo la catena di cause ed effetti, oppure fu il fine dell'umanità stessa?".[103] La risposta alla domanda è la terza opzione: a muovere i pensatori fu il fine dell'umanità stessa, ossia il rischiaramento della ragione in quanto sviluppo culturale e morale. È la storia della ragione a dimostrare che la soluzione delle sue unilateralità si trova nella filosofia critica e, dunque, nella metafisica pratico-dogmatica. Il fine dell'umanità, e di conseguenza lo scopo finale della creazione, è il progresso morale dell'uomo e il raggiungimento del Sommo bene in quanto unione di felicità e moralità. Il bisogno della ragione la porta ad uscire dal campo della sensibilità alla ricerca di principi universali che determinino il suo agire, orientandolo verso il Sommo bene. A partire da questa esigenza pratica sorge la filosofia, per cui la medesima esigenza è la chiave di volta dell'archeologia filosofica.

100. Römer 2023: 193.
101. PFM, AA XX: 307.
102. Ivi: 298.
103. LBFM, AA XX: 341.

**ABBREVIAZIONI**

AcP = C. A. Heumann, *Acta philosophorum, das ist: Gründl.[iche] Nachrichten aus der Historia Philosophica,* Halle 1715*,* 1. Bd.
AP = T. Burnet, *Archaeologiae philosophicae: sive doctrina antiqua de rerum originibus*, Londra, Typis R.N. impensis Gualt. Kettilby 1692.
Krv = I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.
KU = I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*.
LBFM = I. Kant, *Lose Blätter zu den Fortschritten der Metaphysik*.
P = I. Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können.*
PFM = I. Kant, *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*.
WL = I. Kant, *Wiener Logik*.

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**The Origins of Philosophical Archaeology**
**Christoph August Heumann and Thomas Burnet as Kant's Sources**

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# Leibniz on Natural Piety: Toward a Conceptual Reconstruction

ABSTRACT: The paper examines key transitions in Leibniz's reflection on natural piety and the affective mechanisms underlying sensitivity to others' pleasure and pain. In particular, through a comparison between two texts – *Tit. I, De jure et iustitia* and the *Nouveaux essais* – it focuses on: a) the inclusion of natural law within the scope of gnoseology, b) the terminological shifts that signal the extension of natural piety to the entire animal genus, following Leibniz's abandonment of the Cartesian theory of the animal-machines, and c) the corresponding changes in the notion of moral personhood.
KEYWORDS: Natural Piety; Sense of Humanity; Instinct of Society; Human and Non-human Animals; Personhood

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a preliminary survey of possible pivotal factors underlying the development of Leibniz's account of natural piety. Beyond his well-known doctrines of disinterested love and charity of the wise,[1] recent scholarship argues that substantial textual evidence supports not only the reading that Leibniz recognizes both the cognitive and the affective components of 'empathy',[2] but also that he characterizes the latter as a form of natural piety.[3]

The following sections single out two main shifts of this account across two target texts, excerpted from the *Tit. I*, *De jure et iustitia* and the *Nouveaux essais* (NE):

(a) an interdisciplinary expansion, from its early formulation within the framework of pure natural law to its later integration into the innatist epistemology of the NE;

(b) a metaphysical transformation concerning the status of non-human animals, moving from the Cartesian doctrine of animal automatism to the recognition of animal souls, in line with Leibniz's mature theory of individual substances.

These two textual *loci* should be regarded as representing two fundamental stages of Leibniz's reflection on natural piety and offering a privileged perspective on the evo-

1. See at least Piro 1999; Goldenbaum 2009; Brown 2011; Horowska 2017.

2. See Phemister 2016; Kreymann 2023; Aiello 2025; see also Piro 2024 and Aiello 2022. The cognitive dimension is grounded in the principle of taking 'la place d'autruy': cf. A IV, 3, 903-904; A IV, 10, 34 and NE 92. See also Piro 2024 and Naaman-Zauderer 2008.

3. See Aiello 2025.

lution of this topic, as well as a suitable context for locating (c) the substantial revision of the moral and juridical notion of personhood Leibniz undertook as of the 1680s.

## 2. THE *TITULUS I*: *SENSUS HUMANITATIS* AND THE DIVIDE BETWEEN PERSONS AND ANIMAL-MACHINES

Besides a few earlier seminal instances connected to the definition of love,[4] Leibniz offers a more comprehensive account of a sensitivity to others' pleasure and pain in a text titled *Tit. I, De jure et iustitia* (1678-1679):

> The first is our own utility whereby we do no harm to anyone for fear of the reaction of the aggrieved, and we benefit as many as we can so that the common good redounds to our advantage. The second is the sense of humanity (*sensus humanitatis*) and virtue. For even when no danger comes to us, the evil of others displeases and touches us (*tangimur*), and the happiness of others pleases us (*delectamur*), because we see virtue followed by deserved reward. Justice and the definition of 'good man' consist in this affection of man towards man (*in hoc affectu hominis erga hominem*) […]. And because that sense of humanity […] is inherent in everyone, there arises in men the prick of conscience (*stimulus conscientiae*), which gives a feeling of dissatisfaction and being stung and lacerated within themselves (*sentiatque intus quosdam laniatus et ictus*) to those who transgress its commands: this constitutes a natural punishment.[5]

Here Leibniz contrasts different motivating principles of just action: on the one hand, personal utility leads us to avoid harming others out of fear of retaliation and to promote the common good insofar as it benefits us. On the other hand, the *sensus humanitatis* – a sensible capacity to be affected by others' states of pleasure and pain, sorrow and happiness – motivates us to act justly for the sake of others, regardless of any additional advantage to ourselves. This second and more perfect principle is accompanied by a natural mechanism of moral regulation: in fact, when the *sensus humanitatis* is weakened and fails to guide action, the 'prick of conscience' produces an experience of inner discomfort, described in quasi-physical terms as a feeling of being 'stung and lacerated'. According to Leibniz, this experience constitutes a 'natural punishment', inscribed in the impersonal level of the order of nature.[6] Two important consequences follow. First, the *stimulus conscientiae* works as a purely affective signal, alerting us that something in our deeds is wrong without specifying what is wrong. Second, this implies a *pre-reflective* conception of remorse, which precedes explicit moral cognition and differs both from the penitential tradition – where remorse anticipates contrition – and from the Cartesian account, which treats remorse as a reflective, doubt-involving passion of the soul.[7]

4. See A VI, 3, 115 and A II, 1, 280.

5. A VI, 4, 2779, my transl.

6. On the idea of 'natural punishment', see also NE 96 and GP VI, 318.

7. Cf. Descartes, AT XI, 376 and 464. It is worth noting that Leibniz uses the expression 'stimulus conscientiae' rather than 'conscientiae morsus', widely circulating in the coeval moral-philosophical context (see Chauvin 1692: 134).

Although in the *Tit. I* Leibniz proposes Ulpian's definition of natural law as "what nature taught to all animals",[8] the analyzed passage is clear in restricting to inter-human relations the natural affection implied by the *sensus humanitatis*. It is likely that at that stage Leibniz was still tied to the legal and moral definition of the person he had provided at the beginning of the 1670s, one that reflected his provisional adherence to the Cartesian doctrine of animal-machines. In the *Elementa juris naturalis* (1671), the person is defined as "whoever loves himself, or whoever is affected by pleasure or pain", while, correlatively, the beast (*brutus*) is conceived as a being that feels "neither pleasure nor pain nor sensation, any more than in a machine or in a mirror".[9] The pivotal feature of the animal-machine doctrine informing this juridical definition of the brute is the notion of external sensibility. In fact, according to the animal-machine theory, beasts only 'simulate' sensibility, since they are endowed solely with mechanical and predetermined responses to differential external stimuli. We are misled into attributing genuine inner states to them only because we cannot perceive the underlying mechanical structure of their bodies.[10] Since they lack genuine experience of pleasure and pain, non-human animals cannot genuinely count as moral recipients of human love, let alone as moral agents.

Nonetheless, Leibniz already in the *Elementa* expresses unease with the Cartesian view of the *bête-machine*, suggesting that if animals were shown to possess true sensibility, their mistreatment would constitute genuine cruelty.[11] Along with the later appeal to Ulpian's definition of natural law in the *Tit. I*, this hesitation in the *Elementa* is philosophically significant, as it foreshadows Leibniz's later metaphysical rehabilitation of animal souls without yet fully abandoning the Cartesian framework.

## 3. *NOUVEAUX ESSAIS*: THE INSTINCT OF NATURAL PIETY IN THE ANIMAL GENUS AND THE HUMAN SPECIES

In *Nouveaux essais*, book I, ch. 2,[12] Leibniz reworks at length the elements of natural piety singled out in the *Tit. I* (utility, sense of humanity, prick of conscience), transposing them into the gnoseology of virtual innatism.

Against Locke's moral conventionalism, Leibniz in this section maintains that moral principles are innate, much like arithmetic ones, yet are not always consciously accessible. On this basis, he posits a dual access to moral truths:[13] on the one hand, a rational and demonstrative access through *lumière naturelle*; on the other, an immediate practical access through instincts, i.e. non-rational inclinations that guide action

8. A VI, 4, 2778; see also A VI, 4, 2929.
9. A VI, 1, 466.
10. Cf. A VI, 1, 482.
11. Cf. *ibid*.
12. Cf. NE 88-101.
13. See Jorati 2014.

toward what is good and fitting, anticipating what reason would prescribe.[14] Instincts thus function as a 'natural program' implanted into the souls by God, producing *from below* and in a confused manner the same practical outcomes toward the good that reason would prescribe distinctly *from above*. Because of the divinely established connection between the good, the useful, and the pleasant, actions guided by instinct are accompanied by pleasure. Within this natural framework, pleasure represents a sensible mark of the good and exhibits an intrinsically superindividual structure, as it aligns with the well-being of the majority within a species; in human beings, this culminates in a higher form of happiness, grounded in a stable sense of self and fulfilled through disinterested concern for others' happiness.

This theoretical framework enables an extension of moral instincts beyond the human sphere, to the wider animal genus, which exhibits a lower level of participation in the same good and laws of nature. The very possibility of such an extension is ultimately grounded in the revision of the metaphysics of individual substances Leibniz undertook as of the end of the 1670s through the reappraisal of the substantial forms.[15] Among other consequences, this new metaphysical account led him to attribute to animals genuine indestructible souls, sensibility, and, accordingly, experiences of pleasure and pain, implying the abandonment of the Cartesian doctrine of the animal-machine. In the NE the combination of this ontological revision with the notion of instinct also enabled a more literal reintegration of animals within the scope of natural law and morality: indeed, it allows Leibniz to realign his view of morality more strongly than in *Tit. I* to Ulpian's definition of natural law. In fact, Leibniz claims that, besides the primary utilitarian and 'selfish' instincts towards the preservation of one's life and body,

> Nature instils in man and even in most of the animals an affection and gentleness towards the members of their own species […]; In addition to this general social instinct, which can be called philanthropy in man, there are more particular ones such as the affection, between male and female, the love of fathers and mothers for their offspring, which the Greeks called *storgé*, and other similar inclinations. These make up that natural law […] which the Roman jurists say that nature has taught to the animals. But in man in particular there is a certain concern for dignity and propriety which induces us to conceal things which degrade us, to value modesty, to loathe incest, to bury corpses, and not to eat men at all or beasts when they are alive. It also leads us to look after our reputations, even beyond the point where this serves our needs and beyond the end of life; to be subject to remorse and to feel those *laniatus et ictus* – those tortures and agonies – which Tacitus speaks of (following Plato), in addition to the fear, which also comes naturally enough, of a hereafter and of a supreme power.[16]

14. Leibniz defines instinct as "an inclination which an animal has – with no conception of the reason for it – towards something which is suitable to it" NE 351. See Poser 2008; Jorgensen 2016; Roinila 2019.

15. Cf. A VI, 4, 2009. See Fichant 1998: 163 ff.

16. NE 93-94.

Hence, drawing on Aquinas[17] and the zoological tradition rooted in Aristotle,[18] Leibniz emphasizes affective bonds between male and female, as well as between parents and offspring (*philostorgēia*). However, sociability instincts in the human species – what Leibniz terms 'philanthropy' – are more perfect than those found in non-human animal species in at least three respects:

1. *Interspecificity*. Human social instincts can extend beyond the boundaries of the human species, insofar as human beings are capable of feeling compassion for non-human animals in pain and to perceive the dignity of sentient living beings (and, for example, of refusing to eat living creatures). By contrast, animals appear to possess primarily intraspecific social instincts, while interspecific compassion occurs only accidentally.

2. *Reflexivity*. By virtue of possessing the idea of the self, human minds are capable of knowing themselves both as moral subjects and as moral objects. Thus, in addition to feeling their own pain and mirroring the pain of others by making them objects of compassion, human beings can also experience themselves as objects of compassion from a second-order perspective. This reflexive structure underlies *amor sui* as well as passions such as pride and concern for one's reputation.

3. *Remorse*. Unlike non-human animals, when human beings act against their natural social instincts, they (provided they are not corrupted by anti-natural customs) experience remorse in the form of a pain-like state. In the *NE*, Leibniz employs the Cartesian expression *remorse de la conscience* without endorsing the defining features of the Cartesian account. In particular, he does not place remorse at the level of reflective consciousness or associate it with the experience of doubt: remorse remains, for Leibniz, primarily an affective phenomenon, and to emphasize its quasi-physical pain-based nature he appeals to the same hendiadys 'laniatus et ictus' employed for qualifying the *conscientiae stimulus* in the *Tit. I*.

The socio-moral superiority of human spirits over animal souls hinges entirely on the possession of reflection as a higher cognitive capacity. Reflection 'overwrites' mere memory – as the capacity, shared with all substances, of retaining past impressions – and reminiscence – as the capacity, shared with animals, to revive apperceptively previous perceptions –, making possible a uniquely human form of remembering:[19] the "*souvenir*". This self-based kind of memory enables minds to recognize themselves as the same subject of perceptions experienced before. This feeling of being the same through time and the owner of memories through a "mediating bond of consciousness (*consciosité*)" underpins moral responsibility and responsiveness to punishment and reward, ultimately grounding the moral relations with God at the basis of the immortality of human souls.[20]

17. ST I-II, q. 94, a 2.
18. Aristotle, *Hist. An.* 611a and 612b-613a.
19. NE 106.
20. NE 236.

## 4. CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

In light of the texts examined in the previous sections, a number of conceptual and terminological continuities and transformations can be identified in the development of Leibniz's account of natural piety:

| *Tit. I, De jure et iustitia* (1677-1678) | *Nouveaux essais* (1703-1705) | |
|---|---|---|
| HUMAN GENUS | ANIMAL GENUS | HUMAN SPECIES |
| *Affectus hominis erga hominem* | *Affection et douceur pour ceux de leur espece* | *Instinct qui port l'homme à aimer l'homme* |
| *Sensus humanitatis* | *Instinct generale de societé* | *Instinct de l'humanité, philantropie* |
| *Tangimur alienis malis, aliena felicitate delectamur* | *affection entre le mâle et la femelle*<br><br>*amour que les peres et les meres portent à leurs enfans (storghé)* | *soin de: la dignité, la convenance, la pudeur, *la pitié* (ensevelir les cadavres), la reputation*<br><br>*repugnance de: l'inceste, de manger des hommes ou des bêtes vivantes* |
| *Stimulus conscientiae* | x | *Remors de la conscience* |
| *Laniatus et ictus* | x | *Laniatus et ictus* |

The first relevant transition in the way of dealing with natural piety concerns the disciplinary absorption of natural law within the scope of moral gnoseology. The second concerns a shift in the metaphysical status of non-human animals, which move from being conceived as machines endowed with merely external sensibility to being recognized as genuine souls. As endowed with real souls, non-human animals are reintegrated into a normative moral order as bearers of practical instincts, participating – albeit at a lower level – in the same natural order of the good governed by divine laws.

These two developments are deeply interconnected: the extension of elements of natural piety to the animal genus in the NE brings Leibniz back into alignment with his commitment to Ulpian's definition of natural law as common to all animals. This extension, however, should not be understood as attributing full moral agency to animals, but rather as recognizing in them a form of normative participation in the good grounded in instinct.

In much the same way, it does not erase the moral asymmetry between humans and animals. Rather, it relocates it within a reconfigured notion of moral personhood. Animals, though now endowed with indestructible souls, sensibility, and practical instincts, lack the reflexive identity required for moral subjecthood and immortality. They may therefore be regarded, within the animal genus, as 'proto-moral' agents, and, from the human standpoint, as moral objects, but not as moral subjects.

What ultimately changes is not merely the extension of sensibility, but the criterion of moral personhood itself: these shifts in the architecture of natural piety testify to Leibniz's mature abandonment of an early conception of the person that includes sensibility among its defining features, in favor of a reflection-based account centered on self-consciousness and personal memory.[21]

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

A = G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt & Leipzig & Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1923-.

AT = *Œuvres De Descartes*, éd. par Ch. Adam et P. Tannery, 12 vols., Paris, Cerf, 1897-1913.

GP = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-1890; repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978.

L = G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, transl. and ed. by L. E. Loemker, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1969.

NE = G. W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement humain*, A VI, 6, 39-528; Eng. transl. *New Essays on Human Understanding*, by P. Remnant and J. Bennett, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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21. On Leibniz's notion of person, see Thiel 2019.

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# Imagination, Memory, and the Thread of Meditation in Leibniz's Universal Characteristic

ABSTRACT: The paper argues that Leibniz's project of a *characteristica universalis* presupposes a theory of mental faculties. Although Leibniz does not explicitly develop a faculty psychology in this context, imagination and memory emerge as necessary for interpreting and manipulating characters. I argue that imagination mediates between signs and ideas, while the universal characteristic seeks to stabilise this relation by externalising reasoning in a system of symbolic representation, thus transforming memory into a structured, visual repository of knowledge. By situating the project within a broader account of cognition, the paper shows that the *characteristica* does not merely represent thought but reorganises it. It thereby reveals an implicit model of cognition that is constitutive of the operations of the mind, reorganising mental faculties within its framework rather than remaining merely auxiliary to them.
KEYWORDS: *characteristica universalis*; Mental Faculties; Imagination; Memory; Cognition

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In one of the descriptions of the *characteristica universalis*, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz draws its preliminary score: a language so clear and close to the things themselves, that it becomes the "picture of things", a true "inventory of knowledge", indubitable "judge of controversies", "the main instrument of reason".[1] Usually translated as a universal characteristic, it marks Leibniz's lifelong attempt to construct an artificial, philosophical language. Composed of primitive terms that would establish an *alphabetum cogitationum humanarum*, this language would allow one to instantly understand the given term conceptually and relationally.

In order to achieve this, however, several prior premises must be considered. Leibniz's project involves an attempt to correct the errors of reasoning produced by ambiguous language. In doing so, it aims to correct thought itself, making it possible to grasp the intrinsic meaning of concepts more precisely and thereby to extend the limits of human reasoning. In my view, such an ambition presupposes that, first, reasoning can in fact be modified, and second, that finite minds possess the means to bring about this modification upon themselves. This raises an important question: what capacities allow the *characteristica* to improve the mind in this way? I propose that the answer lies in the interplay of mental faculties such as imagination and memory. Although Leibniz

1. Leibniz's letter to Johann Friedrich, Duke of Hanover (1679); A III, 1, 557.

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does not explicitly emphasise these faculties in his account of the universal characteristic, they are nevertheless present throughout its functioning. Characters do not merely represent thought. In fact, they shape and transform the operations of the mind itself. This suggests that the project implicitly relies on a theory of mental faculties, even if Leibniz does not explicitly formulate one.

Recent scholarship on Leibniz's thought has approached the *characteristica* from various perspectives, with emphasis on both its role as a formal calculus and as a broader semiotic project.[2] More recent studies have further highlighted the role and importance of imagination in symbolic cognition.[3] Building on these lines of interpretation, I argue that these semiotic properties of the *characteristica* cannot be fully understood without recognising their grounding in imagination and memory.

On this basis, my argument proceeds in two steps. First, it examines the role of imagination in symbolic reasoning, arguing that it appears as a necessary mediator between characters and ideas, even as the *characteristica* seeks to regulate its function. Second, it analyses the mnemonic and epistemological functions of the system, showing how the externalisation of signs transforms memory into a structured and visual repository of knowledge. Taken together, these functions reveal that the universal characteristic does not eliminate mental faculties but rather reorganises them within its framework.

## 2. IMAGINATIVE REASONING IN LEIBNIZ

In one of the texts, outlining the scope of the universal characteristic,[4] Leibniz describes it as a

> […] science […] that teaches us the secret of fixing reasoning, and of forcing it to leave visible traces on paper in small volumes, so that it can be examined at leisure; it is this science, finally, that enables us to reason inexpensively, by putting characters in the place of things, in order to unburden the imagination.[5]

In this instance, the universal characteristic appears not only as *sensible*,[6] i.e., leaving visible traces, but it also encompasses the silent exchange of characters for things, all meant to simplify reasoning and economise the use of imagination.[7]

Although not entirely out of the ordinary, Leibniz's mention of imagination in this context raises suspicion. First of all, Leibniz, although elusive about the matter,

2. Respectively, see Burkhardt 1987; Mugnai 2018, 2020, and Dascal 1978.
3. See Pasini 1994; Oliveri 2021b; Leduc 2025.
4. A widely accepted reconstruction of Leibniz's project is given by Mugnai 2020, who presents it as a multistage project: analysis of concepts into simples, recombination into complex notions, construction of an encyclopaedic inventory of knowledge, and formulation of a general science of symbolic operations.
5. *De la methode de l'universalité* (written after 1674); A VII, 7, 78. Translated by the author.
6. *Analysis linguarum* (1678); A VI, 4, 102.
7. Cf. Dascal 1978, on the economisation of the mind.

generally views imagination as an unreliable source of knowledge.[8] Its inclusion within a mind-perfecting project such as the *characteristica,* therefore, appears somewhat paradoxical. Secondly, there is a notable absence of discussion on mental faculties by Leibniz. Even if confined to this particular passage, the problem persists throughout Leibniz's thinking of the universal characteristic, and points to the underlying relationship between the *characteristica* as a mirror of the mind and the mental faculties that constitute it.

For this line of reasoning, one of the most important premises is that the mind is already guided by certain signs. Leibniz believes that "if there were no characters, we could neither think of anything distinctly nor reason about it".[9] This suggests that characters are actually a necessary condition for thought, and without them, thinking would not proceed at all (at least not in the same way). Furthermore, characters fix our thoughts, "which are too vague and too fleeting in these matters, where the imagination would be of no help to us were it not for the use of characters".[10] However, it is not only the presence of characters that is of importance, but also their arrangement. If the characters are poorly arranged, they fail to properly represent the relationships between concepts, thus preventing reasoning from proceeding correctly, i.e., reasoning breaks down because the arrangement of characters no longer mirrors the structure of concepts.

Leibniz further emphasises the role of imagination, saying that precisely within its domain we can find signs, such as letters and characters, that respond to abstract things.[11] From this follows that characters can represent something without explicitly knowing what it is, i.e., possessing an anticipatory quality. Imagination, as the faculty in which sensory perceptions are unified with the content of understanding, mediates this relation.[12] It also enables the handling of characters as sensible objects, and allows them to be perceived, compared, or manipulated within reasoning. In this sense, it plays a central role in understanding, but also becomes burdened by the need to correctly align signs and ideas. The *characteristica* can be seen as an attempt to alleviate this burden by establishing a more systematic and reliable correspondence between signs and ideas. Instead of establishing a direct relationship,[13] the *characteristica* provides a rule-governed correspondence. Within this framework, the mediating role of imagination is not eliminated but structured and constrained, so that reasoning can proceed through the manipulation of signs even without an intuitive grasp of their content.[14]

8. In Leibniz's philosophy, imagination is treated ambiguously, encompassing the ability to reproduce images based on sensory perceptions (Leduc 2025: 6). In relation to the intellect, it is often regarded as a source of errors.

9. *Dialogus* (1677); A VI, 4, 23, L 184. Cf. *Fundamenta calculi ratiocinatoris* (1688); A VI, 4, 918.

10. Leibniz's letter to Abbé Gallois (approx. after 1678); GM I, 181. Translated by the author.

11. Leibniz's letter to Pierre Bayle; GP IV, 541. Cf. Oliveri 2021b.

12. For the definition of imagination as a unifying sense, see Leibniz's letter to Sophie Charlotte *Sur ce qui passe les sens et la matière* (1702); A VI, 5, VE 263501, L 548; *Meditationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis* (1684); A VI, 4, 585, L 292.

13. Cf. Leibniz's letter to Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1678); A II, 1, 411, L 193.

14. This relates to Leibniz's notion of *cogitationes caecae*, by which reasoning can proceed symbolically without a full intuitive grasp of the concepts involved, see *Meditationes* (1684) (A VI, 4, 585).

At the same time, Leibniz's description of the universal characteristic as "the best instrument of reason"[15] places it at the opposite end of the spectrum. This formulation presents the *characteristica* in technical rather than scientific terms.[16] The distinction, already present in Leibniz's early writings,[17] reveals a duality within the project. On the one hand, the *characteristica* functions as a kind of script or formal language, operating primarily as a calculus. On the other hand, it is also described as a science, that is, a systematic investigation into the foundations of knowledge itself.

This duality is not merely terminological but distinguishes between two levels of thought. The technical capacity allows it to function as calculus, limited to a formal system of inference, an external apparatus designed to support reasoning. This understanding acknowledges its practical utility but ultimately limits its role to that of a cognitive extension. The scientific capacity is more ambiguous. One can presume, based on Leibniz's views on scientific knowledge, that the *characteristica* is intended to be an Ariadne's thread through the sciences, helping to find pathways between different domains. Yet for it to have this function, Leibniz has to admit that the universal characteristic mirrors cognition rather than merely describes it. The latter approach is more in line with the *characteristica*'s heightened mental capacity. Not only does Leibniz deem this necessary because of the weakness of the human mind.[18] He maintains that it is precisely the characters that help guide the intellect.[19]

To this extent, the medium of signs depends on the capacity of imagination and memory. Imagination enables the handling and interpretation of signs,[20] while memory preserves their associations. In this sense, reasoning can become "mechanised" as the relation between characters is regulated by fixed procedures rather than relying on the spontaneous activity of imagination. As a result, the correspondence between signs and ideas becomes more stable and reliable. This does not eliminate the role of imagination, but restructures its use so as to reduce the risk of confusion. In this way, knowledge that would otherwise remain confused can be transformed into distinct knowledge through the regulated use of signs.[21] In this context, confused knowledge arises from the operations of imagination and memory alone, whereas distinct knowledge depends on the regulated use of signs within the *characteristica*. Accordingly, Leibniz's ideal of enhancing the natural capacities of reasoning can be tied to this refinement and support of imagination and memory through such a symbolic system as the *characteristica*.

15. *Analysis linguarum* (1678); A VI, 4, 102.
16. On the dual character of the *characteristica,* see Burkhardt 1987: 43.
17. E.g. *Dissertatio De Arte Combinatoria* (1666), DAC 2020.
18. See Gensini 1992: 109.
19. Cf. *Analysis linguarum* (1678); A VI, 4, 102.
20. On imagination and signs, see Oliveri 2021a: 298.
21. On confused and distinct knowledge, see *Meditationes* (1684); A VI, 4, 585, L 292.

## 3. MEMORY, EXTERNALISATION, AND THE REORGANISATION OF COGNITION

A further dimension emerges when the *characteristica* is situated within its encyclopaedic context. Leibniz positions it in relation to the encyclopaedia as the total storage of discovered truths. In turn, this approach allows knowledge to be accessed externally and visually. This quality, i.e., the ability to present thought as something observable, to "make clear the intimate structure of any term",[22] introduces another epistemological aspect. Leibniz intends that the structured visualisation of knowledge could enable new forms of discovery: since complex ideas are broken down into fundamental parts, any new connections become instantly visible within the structure.

To this extent, the universal characteristic is grounded in mnemonic functions – Leibniz goes on to either call it "an art of reminiscence or mnemonics",[23] or subtly hints that characters carry the mnemonic functions of preserving the relations between signs and ideas, acting as stable repositories of knowledge.[24] In turn, this capacity reflects Leibniz's description of what constitutes the art of memory. For him,

> the art of memory is to store things that need to be retained in certain places, which if we have present in our mind, or otherwise known, […], we will easily place everything in order, and we will suddenly find something by which to connect the thing to the place.[25]

In this regard, such a system of signs as the *characteristica universalis* makes information always accessible. As all conceptual relations are visible within the signs, knowledge can be stored, organised, and recalled through inspection alone.[26] Above all, this forges the signs as stable repositories of knowledge and removes the need for the repeated process of understanding or rediscovering any meaning, saving the trouble of "searching again for what has already been found".[27] As such, this ability extends the mind's operations beyond the body. The mind no longer needs to recall meanings independently, as knowledge is accessed through perception of the signs, allowing one to interact with and manipulate thought through a structured symbolic medium.

The connection between memory and the *characteristica* can be understood as follows: by using visual signs to imprint ideas so that all mental operations, including reasoning, can be performed visually through them, the *characteristica* operates as a kind of mnemonic technique. Thus, there is less need to recall the meaning of ideas independently, and reasoning proceeds through the manipulation of signs. In this sense, it also aligns with what is traditionally called mnemotechnics, the technology or the art of memory. In describing the characteristic, Leibniz always underscores that its

22. Mugnai 2018: 177.

23. *Introductio ad Encyclopaediam arcanam…*; A VI, 4, 527, D 220. This passage concerns *scientia generalis*, here treated as part of the same conceptual framework.

24. *Praefatio operis ad instaurationem scientiarum* (c. 1682); A VI, 4, A 440, D 214.

25. *De grammatica rationali et arte memoriae* (1678); A VI, 4, 71. Translated by the author.

26. Marras 2023: 109.

27. *Praefatio operis ad instaurationem scientiarum* (approx. 1682); A VI, 4, A 440, D 214.

achievement would make everything known at once.[28] Most likely, this is connected to the use of imagination, but within also lies the implication that the correct use of signs supposes the ability of immediate reminiscence– knowledge is accessed through the perception of signs. In this light, its true significance lies in its ability to mirror, reconstruct, and restructure human cognition.

In this way, the universal characteristic does not merely assist cognition but reorganises it. Imagination and memory are not eliminated but reconfigured through their interaction with symbolic systems. The manipulation of characters replaces the need for internal recall while preserving the relations between ideas in a stable and visible form. The *characteristica* thus mirrors the structure of cognition by externalising its operations, transforming mental faculties into functions distributed across a system of signs. This confirms that Leibniz's project, although not explicitly framed in terms of faculties, fundamentally involves them within its functioning.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

I have argued that Leibniz's description of a *characteristica universalis* implicitly presupposes a theory of mental faculties. Although Leibniz does not explicitly formulate such a theory, imagination and memory emerge as necessary conditions for the interpretation, manipulation, and stabilisation of characters: imagination mediates between signs and ideas, while memory preserves their relations in a structured and accessible form.

As such, the *characteristica* appears not merely as a system of symbolic notation, but as an active cognitive structure that shapes the operations of the mind. Rather than simply expressing thought, it reorganises it by externalising reasoning through visible signs, thereby transforming cognitive processes into operations that can be inspected and manipulated within this structured symbolic system.

In this sense, the universal characteristic advances the human mind. It reveals an implicit model of cognition in which a symbolic system mirrors and extends the mental architecture. The very use of characters already presupposes a departure from the ordinary correspondence between ideas and signs, thereby unburdening the imagination while simultaneously relying on the imaginative and mnemonic capacities embedded in the signs themselves. Imagination, far from being eliminated, is thus reconfigured: it remains a necessary condition for the interpretation of signs even as its mediating role is being reorganised. This tension makes clear that the *characteristica* ultimately depends on the very faculties it appears to bypass, thus allowing to identify an implicit theory of mental faculties within it.

### ABBREVIATIONS

A = G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt & Leipzig & Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1923-. Quoted by series, volume, page (Volume VI, 5 in preprint = VE).

DAC = G. W. Leibniz, *Dissertation on Combinatorial Art*, ed. by M. Mugnai, H. Van Ruler and M. Wilson, New York, Oxford University Press, 2020.

D = G. W. Leibniz, *The Art of Controversies*, éd. par M. Dascal, Dordrecht, Springer, 2008.

28. *Dissertatio De Arte Combinatoria* (1666), DAC 187.

GM = *Leibnizens mathematische Schriften*, 7 vols., hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, Berlin (later: Halle)1849-1863; repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1962.

GP = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-1890; repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978.

L = G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed. by L. Loemker, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989.

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# Le lien substantiel dans la « méditation secrète » de Leibniz

ABSTRACT: Leibniz's introduction of the concept of *vinculum substantiale* in his correspondence with Des Bosses aims to provide a conceptual foundation for the substantial character of bodies within the monadological theoretical context, and initially to account for the Eucharistic Transubstantiation. In his Latin thesis on *The Substantial Bond and the Composite Substance according to Leibniz* (1893), Blondel pays particular attention to a passage that Leibniz wrote while preparing the letter of February 15, 1712, which he calls "Leibniz's secret meditation". This article revisits this passage – rarely studied for its preparatory function – as Leibniz's ideas laboratory.
KEYWORDS: Leibniz; *vinculum substantiale*; Blondel; Des Bosses; Composite Substance

Dans sa thèse latine portant sur *Le lien substantiel et la substance composée d'après Leibniz* (1893), Maurice Blondel accorde une attention particulière à un passage que Leibniz rédige en préparant la lettre du 15 février 1712 adressée à Des Bosses, qui introduit pour la première fois le concept de lien substantiel (*vinculum substantiale*). L'élaboration par Leibniz de ce concept dans la correspondance avec le jésuite Des Bosses visait à fonder le caractère substantiel des corps, dans le contexte théorique monadologique, où la substantialité était attribuée aux simples, les composés étant réduits à des agrégats de simples, dont l'unité n'est que phénoménale. Cette innovation devait initialement permettre à Leibniz de rendre compte de la Transsubstantiation qui s'opère, selon les catholiques, lors de l'Eucharistie, par la consécration du pain et du vin, qui se changent en la substance du corps et du sang du Christ.

Blondel met l'accent sur l'idée que ce texte est une réflexion personnelle de Leibniz sur la substantialité des corps, visant moins à convaincre son correspondant qu'à élaborer pour lui-même, au sein de sa propre philosophie, le sens et la portée de ce nouveau concept. Il suggère ainsi que Leibniz a pris au sérieux, à la fin de sa vie, le retour à un réalisme substantiel des corps, même s'il ne l'a pas rendu public. C'est la raison pour laquelle cette étude préparatoire, publiée par Gerhardt en appendice de la lettre de février 1712, est appelée par Blondel « la méditation secrète de Leibniz » :

> Lorsqu'il introduisit les *Vincula* pour la première fois, Leibniz avait préparé sa lettre à Des Bosses par une méditation secrète. Or dans ce brouillon, édité récemment, il s'était préparé à la discussion, sans prendre le moindre soin d'un quelconque lecteur ; aussi c'est plus librement qu'il dévoile les défauts qui subsistent dans sa

> propre doctrine. Il n'avance plus aucune question théologique et il ne s'attache plus secrètement aux objections qu'il énonce ouvertement. Il y confesse ingénument les embarras et comme les failles de son idéalisme et ce n'est plus le rôle du théologien qu'il assume, mais uniquement celui du philosophe.[1]

Ce passage est éloquent : quand Leibniz est amené à réévaluer les conséquences auxquelles mène la conception monadologique sur la nature des corps, il s'aperçoit que ni le caractère substantiel des corps, ni l'union de l'âme et du corps ne peuvent vraiment trouver une explication dans l'harmonie préétablie des substances. Si Leibniz affirme explicitement ne pas souhaiter faire part à un public plus large des idées qu'il expose à Des Bosses et prie ce dernier de garder pour lui le contenu de ces lettres,[2] en conclure cependant qu'il s'agirait là d'une connaissance ésotérique que Leibniz réserverait à Des Bosses serait sans doute excessif. La raison du secret n'est autre que le caractère à la fois trop hypothétique et trop réformateur de la théorie qu'il est en train d'élaborer. En effet, Leibniz se trouve, dans la correspondance avec Des Bosses, non plus dans une démarche d'exposition de sa doctrine, mais dans une recherche authentique, faite d'hésitations, d'objections qu'il reçoit et qu'il s'adresse à lui-même, de remédiations. L'appendice à la lettre du 15 février 1712 n'est qu'un produit de ce laboratoire d'idées dans lequel le plongent les objections de Des Bosses.

Alors que la bibliographie sur le *vinculum substantiale* est abondante,[3] le passage ici étudié reste peu lu pour lui-même, dans sa fonction de moment préparatoire. Nous nous proposons de reprendre l'intuition de Blondel, qui met au jour la place centrale de cet écrit, sans cependant y voir un retour strict de Leibniz de l'idéalisme au réalisme, dont Richard Arthur a déjà montré les limites.[4] Nous verrons que ce texte, qui va au-delà des concessions théologiques, exprime la première mise à l'épreuve, dans le cadre monadologique, d'un principe d'unité substantielle des corps.

## 1. L'INTRODUCTION DU *VINCULUM SUBSTANTIALE*

L'alternative entre la nature phénoménale et la nature substantielle des corps est en arrière-fond de la pensée leibnizienne dès la rédaction du *Discours de métaphysique*, où apparaissent déjà des hésitations sur la nature des corps et sur l'attribution à ces derniers d'une forme substantielle.[5] Dans certains passages plus tardifs de la correspondance

1. Blondel 1995 : 607.
2. GP II, 328 ; Look and Rutherford 2007 : 82.
3. Sur l'interprétation du *vinculum* et de la question des corps chez Leibniz, on consultera notamment Robinet 1986, Look and Rutherford 2007, ainsi que Garber 2009, dont les travaux montrent que le problème engage moins un simple motif théologique qu'une difficulté structurelle de la métaphysique tardive de Leibniz.
4. Selon Arthur (2018 : 252) le *vinculum*, hypothèse hétérodoxe, n'atteste pas une hésitation sur la réalité des corps, mais construit un concept inédit de substance composée.
5. A VI, 4B, 1583 : « C'est une chose que je n'entreprends pas de déterminer, si les corps sont des substances, à parler dans la rigueur Métaphysique, ou si ce ne sont que des phénomènes véritables comme est l'arc-en-ciel […]. Mais supposant que les corps sont des substances etc. ».

avec De Volder, Leibniz semble trancher en faveur de la nature phénoménale des corps.[6] Les corps ne posséderaient pas de consistance propre, puisqu'ils ne seraient que des agrégats dont l'unité est phénoménale, leur réalité se fondant sur les seules véritables substances qui existent, qui sont les monades. Leibniz va même parfois jusqu'à considérer comme plausible l'hypothèse d'un idéalisme inspiré du platonisme, associant la réalité sensible à un songe.[7]

Dans la correspondance avec Des Bosses toutefois, il apparaît que l'attribution aux corps d'un caractère phénoménal pose deux problèmes fondamentaux, qui ne peuvent pas être résolus par l'attribution de l'unité à la monade dominante : (1) un problème théologique, à savoir l'impossibilité de justifier non seulement la transsubstantiation, mais aussi la présence réelle du Christ dans l'hostie ; (2) un problème métaphysique, qui est celui de l'union de l'âme et du corps, l'hypothèse de l'harmonie préétablie s'avérant à cet égard insuffisante, car elle se limite à rendre compte de l'accord entre l'âme et le corps, sans en expliquer l'union.[8] Si, dans la conception monadologique, l'unité du corps est assurée par la monade dominante, dans la correspondance avec Des Bosses, il s'avère que cette unité simplement phénoménale du corps sous la monade dominante ne peut devenir une union réelle que si l'on admet l'existence de « quelque chose de substantiel » qui s'ajoute aux monades. Tel est le contexte de l'introduction du concept de *vinculum substantiale* dans la lettre du 15 février 1712.[9]

L'articulation entre ces deux problèmes n'a rien d'évident. Contre Blondel, qui cherche à faire sortir le *vinculum* de l'emprise du contexte théologique dans lequel il a été élaboré, Frémont tente de montrer que « les deux problèmes sont inséparables et qu'on ne comprend réellement ce qu'est le *vinculum* qu'en le rapportant au mystère eucharistique ».[10] Il est vrai que, s'il n'y a pas de nécessité métaphysique à affirmer l'existence du *vinculum* et la substantialité des corps, l'unique raison déterminante en faveur de cette hypothèse reste la foi en la transsubstantiation, dont Leibniz assure qu'elle ne peut pas s'expliquer si on n'admet pas l'existence du lien. Mais affirmer, comme le fait Frémont, qu'on ne peut comprendre le *vinculum* qu'en le rapportant à l'eucharistie serait une conclusion excessive, dans la mesure où la transsubstantiation eucharistique, loin de fonder le *vinculum*, trouve son fondement dans son existence. Une lecture qui réduirait la question à son arrière-plan théologique conduirait à rendre la théologie fondatrice de la métaphysique, alors que, pour Leibniz, c'est la métaphysique qui doit

6. À De Volder, le 25 janvier 1705 : « […] je ne supprime pas le corps, mais je rappelle ce qu'il est, je montre en effet que la masse corporelle, dont on croit qu'elle a quelque chose d'autre que les substances simples, n'est pas une substance, mais un phénomène résultant des substances simples qui, seules, ont une unité et une réalité absolue ». A II, 4, 309 ; trad. Rey 2016 : 257.

7. A VI, 4B, 1498 : « Qu'en serait-il, si toute notre vie brève n'était qu'un long rêve ; et qu'en mourant nous nous éveillassions ? Les platoniciens semblent avoir conçu quelque chose de tel ».

8. Ce problème avait déjà fait l'objet d'un débat avec Tournemine, dans le cadre duquel Leibniz reconnaissait que l'harmonie préétablie rendait compte des phénomènes, pas de l'union de l'âme et du corps (GP IV, 595).

9. GP II, 435-436 ; Look and Rutherford 2007 : 226.

10. Frémont 1981 : 204.

assurer les conditions de possibilité des dogmes enseignés par la théologie, comme le montrait déjà sa critique du cartésianisme des réformés, dans lequel il voyait le principal obstacle à l'union des Églises protestantes.[11] Cette hypothèse n'est dès lors pas à « rejeter en dehors de la philosophie » – pour reprendre Blondel – « comme une doctrine introduite gratuitement », mais bien plutôt à intégrer à l'évolution même de la métaphysique leibnizienne et à ce que Robinet appelait la « disjonction majeure »[12] du système leibnizien concernant la nature des corps.

## 2. EXAMEN DE LA « MÉDITATION SECRÈTE » DE LEIBNIZ

Le brouillon préparatoire de la lettre du 15 février 1712 témoigne du fait que Leibniz a pensé le lien substantiel comme l'unique moyen d'intégrer à sa conception monadologique l'hypothèse de la réalité substantielle des corps. Ce lien ne serait pas l'effet de l'entendement, mais de la volonté divine. Il commence ainsi par poser le cadre monadologique, qui place la réalité des corps dans la science de vision divine, c'est-à-dire dans une perception parfaitement claire et distincte des monades et des relations intermonadiques :

> Si les corps sont des phénomènes dont nous jugeons d'après nos apparences, ils ne seront pas réels, puisqu'ils apparaissent différemment à d'autres. C'est pourquoi la réalité des corps […] semble consister en cela qu'ils sont des phénomènes de Dieu, ou objet de la science de vision.[13]

Le rapport entre réalité et substantialité demande à être éclairé : si Leibniz commence par affirmer que la perception humaine n'est capable de connaître les corps qu'en tant que simples apparences, la réduction des corps au statut de phénomènes n'en dément pas pour autant la réalité ; mais cette réalité va trouver son fondement uniquement dans la perception divine du monde : c'est pour autant que les corps sont des « phénomènes de Dieu » qu'ils sont réels. En effet, ce qui distingue les phénomènes bien fondés des simples apparences, c'est le parfait accord qui caractérise les premiers, accord que seule la vision divine perçoit de manière parfaitement claire et distincte. Il n'en reste pas moins que ce monde de phénomènes dont l'unité est assurée par la perception divine n'est qu'un songe bien réglé, qui possède la cohérence à défaut de posséder une véritable consistance. Pour le dire autrement, la réalité est un songe cohérent, mais inconsistant.

Le type d'unité qui est ici en jeu est perceptive, puisqu'elle consiste à regrouper la multiplicité des relations dans la simplicité monadique : chaque monade perçoit ainsi, selon son point de vue particulier, la totalité des relations de manière obscure et confuse, mais Dieu seul les perçoit « suivant la vérité géométrique ». À cette unité perceptive vient s'ajouter dans ce passage – à titre de possibilité – une unité substantielle, qui nous invitera à chercher la consistance des corps non plus dans la perception divine (ou l'intellect divin), mais dans les corps mêmes :

11. *Tentamen expositionis irenicae*, Rösler-Le Van 2013 : 804-827.
12. Robinet 1986 : 32 ; Garber 2009 : 381.
13. GP II, 438 ; Look and Rutherford 2007 : 230-232.

> Mais, outre ces relations réelles, on peut en concevoir une plus parfaite, par laquelle, à partir de plusieurs substances, naît une nouvelle [substance]. Et ceci ne sera pas un simple résultat, c'est-à-dire qu'elle ne consistera pas seulement en de vraies ou réelles relations, mais ajoutera en outre une substantialité nouvelle, ou un lien substantiel, qui sera l'effet non seulement de l'intellect divin, mais aussi de la volonté [divine].[14]

L'unité substantielle naîtrait de la multiplicité des simples grâce au lien substantiel, qui ne découle pas comme un mode des substances elles-mêmes, mais s'y ajoute comme un réalisant de la substantialité de l'agrégat. La formule *perfectior relatio* peut ici prêter à confusion, car il n'est pas certain que le *vinculum* puisse être conçu sur un modèle relationnel. Il semblerait que la *perfectior relatio* nous invite à penser un changement de nature, et non uniquement de degré, car, si le *vinculum* transforme des agrégats de monades qui contiennent déjà leurs relations mutuelles (en vertu de l'harmonie préétablie) en substances composées, il opère davantage qu'un simple « perfectionnement » de ces relations. Ce perfectionnement serait, d'une part, inexplicable à partir des monades et, d'autre part, injustifiable comme intervention divine, car il obligerait à reconnaître une absence de perfection, c'est-à-dire une défaillance, dans l'ordre harmonique initial. Or, dans un système où la question de la faute n'instaure de toute évidence pas de rupture, s'intégrant elle-même à l'ordre qui n'est choisi par Dieu que parce qu'il est le meilleur possible, rien ne justifierait un perfectionnement *a posteriori* des relations inter-monadiques, contenues par les monades mêmes. C'est la raison pour laquelle le *vinculum* est une union « surajoutée » par Dieu, et non une simple relation. Si le lien est dépendant de la volonté divine, c'est parce qu'il n'y a pas de nécessité métaphysique de son existence.

Leibniz cherche ensuite à préciser le mode de fonctionnement du *vinculum* :

> […] il suffit d'unir ces monades qui sont sous la domination d'une seule, ou qui forment un seul corps organique, ou une seule machine de la nature. Et c'est en cela que consiste le lien métaphysique de l'âme et du corps, qui constituent un seul suppôt, auquel est analogue l'union des natures dans le Christ. Et telles sont les choses qui font un être un par soi, c'est-à-dire un seul suppôt.[15]

Sans évoquer ici la question de la transsubstantiation, Leibniz propose une analogie ambiguë entre le lien des monades et l'union des natures dans le Christ. Le Christ rentre ainsi, de façon manifeste, bien que seulement analogique, dans la caractérisation de la réalité unionale (*realitas unionalis*) attribuée au corps, dès lors que celui-ci est davantage qu'un simple agrégat de substances simples. Il s'agit désormais de comprendre comment.

Notre hypothèse de lecture est la suivante : tout comme il n'y a pas d'union substantielle entre Dieu et le monde, Leibniz reconnaît qu'il n'y aurait pas non plus d'union substantielle entre la monade dominante et l'*aggregatum* en l'absence d'un lien médiateur ; celui-ci permet de rendre possible l'union des natures dans le Christ et, analogiquement, l'union des monades dans la substance composée. Si Dieu était âme

14. *Ibid*.
15. GP II, 439 ; Look and Rutherford 2007 : 232.

(*forma substantialis*) du monde, le Christ ne serait pas nécessaire comme médiateur réalisant l'union des natures, car Dieu se donnerait déjà à travers la nature dont il ferait une unité elle-même divine – hypothèse panthéiste rejetée par Leibniz.[16] De même, si l'âme était forme substantielle du corps, le *vinculum* ne serait pas nécessaire pour en assurer la substantialité : l'âme serait déjà impliquée par la nature du corps, en tant qu'unité constitutive de ce dernier ; dès lors, il n'y aurait pas de différence entre la « Machine organique » (ou matière seconde) et « l'Animal » (ou substance corporelle)[17] – hypothèse démentie par le cadre monadologique. Tout comme l'Incarnation exige de reconnaître la double nature du Christ, dont la médiation équivaut à un lien substantiel entre Dieu et le monde, le caractère substantiel des corps exige l'existence d'un lien substantiel, assurant la fonction unifiante de la forme substantielle scolastique, que la monade dominante n'assumait plus.

Certes, Dieu pourrait être considéré l'« âme du monde » comme la monade dominante est « l'âme » de l'*aggregatum*, à savoir comme principe de perception unifiante, mais non comme forme substantielle immanente. La réalité des êtres privés de forme substantielle consisterait alors en cela qu'ils sont des « phénomènes de Dieu », sans être en Dieu comme les modes sont dans la substance. Ce réalisme des phénomènes, fondés dans la perception divine, confine toutefois à un idéalisme, dans la mesure où il dément la substantialité des corps. Dès lors, la monade dominante ne serait pas le principe d'une union substantielle, mais seulement d'une unité phénoménale ou perceptive : les autres monades composant le corps demeureraient autonomes et le retour à Aristote, que visait la réhabilitation des formes ou entéléchies, se trouverait mis en échec. Expliquer l'union substantielle requiert d'introduire quelque chose de nouveau, un *vinculum*, qui réalise l'union des monades, tout comme la personne du Christ réalise l'union des natures humaine et divine. L'analogie est suggestive en cela qu'elle permet de concevoir de manière conjointe le passage du Dieu le Père au Christ (i.e. l'Incarnation et, implicitement, l'eucharistie) et celui de l'*aggregatum* au corps (i.e. le *vinculum substantiale*), sans confondre le plan théologique et celui métaphysique – comme cela pouvait être le cas dans le débat initial sur la Transsubstantiation – mais en faisant de la théologie un point d'appui fécond pour l'élaboration d'une nouvelle hypothèse métaphysique.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

Quel est donc le secret de la « méditation secrète » de Leibniz ? Le *vinculum* est-il, comme l'affirme Blondel, le moyen de trancher en faveur d'un « réalisme supérieur » ? Cette position de Blondel laisse apparaître la difficulté suivante : Leibniz n'a jamais reconnu la nécessité métaphysique d'une telle hypothèse et – comme le montre Hartz[18] – idéalisme et réalisme sont également fondés dans sa philosophie tardive. Cependant, il a pris au sérieux les limites de l'idéalisme et a mis à l'épreuve l'hypothèse du *vinculum*,

16. GP VI, 528-538.
17. A II, 4, 135.
18. Cf. Hartz 2006.

conscient du fait que les rapports de sa philosophie à la théologie chrétienne seraient travaillés par des tensions irréductibles dans le contexte d'une affirmation du caractère phénoménal des corps. S'il n'y a pas de nécessité métaphysique à trancher, la théologie doit se donner pour fondement le réalisme scolastique héritier d'Aristote pour penser l'Incarnation et, *a fortiori*, la transsubstantiation, problème complètement esquivé par le néoplatonisme chrétien. Tel un Janus à deux visages, Leibniz se tourne tantôt vers Platon et le néoplatonisme, tantôt vers Aristote et la scolastique, en inventant toujours, aussi fidèle que possible sinon à la lettre, du moins à l'esprit des deux maîtres de l'École d'Athènes, de nouvelles voies en les prenant pour complices.

**ABRÉVIATIONS**

A = G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt & Leipzig & Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1923-.

GP = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-1890; repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978.

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**The Substantial Bond in Leibniz's "Secret Meditation"**

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PASQUALE MARINO

# Le concept du vivant chez Leibniz à la lumière de la controverse avec Stahl et d'autres textes contemporains

ABSTRACT: This paper addresses the metaphysics of the living in Leibniz's thought between 1709 and 1711, aiming to show that it must be conceived in hylomorphic terms through the distinction organic-vital, although Leibniz revisits the semantics of the *animatum* and the actuated through the doctrine of pre-established harmony.
KEYWORDS: Leibniz; Stahl; Organism; Hylomorphism; Pre-established Harmony

## 1. INTRODUCTION : MÉTAPHYSIQUE DU PERCEVANT ET MÉTAPHYSIQUE DU VIVANT

L'objectif de cette intervention est de montrer qu'entre 1709 et 1711 Leibniz a une conception du vivant largement inspirée par une forme d'hylémorphisme[1] même si elle est déterminée par la doctrine de l'harmonie préétablie, en dépit du fait que dès les premiers mois de 1706 Leibniz présente à De Volder une conception de sa métaphysique de la substance plus en termes de métaphysique du percevant que de métaphysique du vivant. Par métaphysique du percevant, nous entendons une conception qui restreint la substance à la monade douée de perception et d'appétition, avec la réduction conséquente des phénomènes matériels à des représentations congruentes et coordonnées des monades elles-mêmes. Cette métaphysique du percevant représente pour Robert M. Adams ce qu'il appelle l'idéalisme, raison pour laquelle il affirme que Leibniz est le premier phi-

1. La forme d'hylémorphisme auquel je fais référence est celui formulée par Leibniz lui-même déjà dans la correspondance avec Damaris Masham, où il écrit que l'âme et le corps sont toujours conjoints : « […] les ames ou formes sans les corps seroient quelque chose d'incomplet ; d'autant qu'à mon avis, l'ame n'est jamais sans animal ou quelque chose d'analogique » (A II, 4, 260) ; mais le corps n'est pas un être substantielle : « […] les corps ne pouvant pas même estre des substances à proprement parler, puisque ce sont tousjours des assemblages ou resultats seulement des substances simples ou de veritables monades qui ne sauroient estre étendues, ny par consequent, des corps. De sorte que les corps supposent les substances immaterielles » (A II, 4, 325). Il existe toutefois une différence entre l'hylémorphisme de la métaphysique des substances composées proposé par Daniel Garber et notre interprétation. En effet, alors qu'il insiste sur la caractéristique de contenance des substances corporelles étendues à l'intérieur d'autres substances étendues, l'hylémorphisme réformé par Leibniz repose sur la relation métaphysique que chaque monade entretient avec les autres, basée sur le principe de raison suffisante, dont l'emboîtement physique n'est qu'un reflet en termes mécaniques.

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losophe idéaliste de l'histoire.[2] Une telle métaphysique du percevant (ou idéalisme) est construite dans la correspondance avec De Volder[3] à travers deux réductions : 1) la réduction de la substantialité au modèle de l'*ego* en tant qu'entité simple et indivisible ; 2) la réduction de la force motrice au plan des forces dérivatives, c'est à dire au plan des phénomènes. On retrouve ces mouvements dans les deux passages suivants :

> Je tiens pour indivisible ou Monade parfaite, la substance même, douée de puissances primitives active et passive, tel le Moi ou quelque chose de semblable, ce qui n'est pas le cas de ces forces dérivatives qu'on trouvera continuellement différentes. Et si rien de *vraiment un* est présent, toute chose véritable sera supprimée. Les forces qui naissent de la masse et de la vitesse sont dérivatives et s'appliquent aux agrégats et aux phénomènes. Et quand je parle de la force primitive qui demeure, je ne comprends pas la conservation de la puissance motrice totale dont il a été question autrefois entre nous, mais l'Entéléchie exprimant avec toute une autre toujours cette force totale. Et assurément, les forces dérivatives ne sont que des modifications et des conséquences des primitives.[4]

Premièrement, « le Moi ou quelque chose de semblable » est considéré l'exemplification de la substance et les forces primitives sont identifiées avec l'activité et la passivité de l'*ego* lui-même ou de quelque chose d'analogue, c'est-à-dire avec ses perceptions distinctes et ses perceptions confuses. Leibniz souligne en second lieu que la conservation de la puissance motrice totale est autre chose que l'entéléchie qui l'exprime, en distinguant ainsi un plan physique par rapport à un plan métaphysique. Le second mouvement de réduction consiste précisément à faire de la puissance motrice une force dérivative, phénoménale.[5] En d'autres termes, la seconde réduction rend la force motrice une entité semi-mentale,[6] tandis que l'entéléchie est internalisée.[7] Par métaphysique du vivant, nous entendons une conception de la substance comme constitution harmonique de monades dotées d'un corps organique. Cette conception est déjà présente dans la correspondance avec De Volder dans un passage très célèbre :

> Je distingue donc 1) l'Entéléchie primitive ou Ame, 2) la Matière, à savoir la matière première, ou puissance passive primitive, 3) la Monade complète avec ces deux choses, 4) la Masse ou matière seconde, ou Machine organique, à laquelle concourent d'innombrables Monades subordonnées, 5) l'Animal ou substance corporelle, que la Monade dominante sur la Machine fait Un.[8]

2. Adams 1994 : 217-218.
3. Pour une reconstruction du contexte de la correspondance : Leibniz 2013 : xxiii-ci.
4. A II, 4, 133-134 = Leibniz 2016a : 227-228.
5. A II, 4, 309 = Leibniz 2016a : 257-258.
6. Leibniz sera plus explicite dans la correspondance avec Des Bosses : « Talem materiam, id est passionis principium perstare suaeque Entelechiae adhaerere intelligimus, atque ita ex pluribus monadibus resultare materiam secundam, cum viribus derivatis, actionibus, passionibus, quae non sunt nisi entia per aggregationem, adeoque semimentalia, ut Iris aliaque phaenomena bene fundata » (GP II, 306).
7. À cette perspective s'oppose Arthur 2018 : 228.
8. A II 4 135 = Leibniz 2016a : 228-229.

Ce passage constitue la pierre de touche de toutes les interprétations contemporaines de la métaphysique de la substance chez Leibniz. Pour Pauline Phemister, il représente la persistance d'une conception de la substance corporelle même dans le Leibniz monadologique, tandis que pour Daniel Garber, il est le manifeste de la nouvelle métaphysique monadologique de Leibniz, dans laquelle il n'y a plus de substances corporelles composées d'autres substances corporelles, propres à la correspondance avec Arnauld, mais s'affirme une métaphysique minimale faite uniquement de monades avec leurs perceptions et leurs appétitions.[9] Nous tenterons de reconstruire certaines positions utiles à notre propos dans cette vaste littérature et d'en vérifier les limites.

### 1.1 Interprétations autour de la substance corporelle

Robert M. Adams élabore un modèle proposant trois alternatives possibles à Leibniz pour concilier son idéalisme et une théorie des substances corporelles : la conception à deux substances, l'interprétation aristotélicienne à une substance et la théorie de la monade qualifiée.[10] Notre interprétation de la métaphysique du vivant s'écarte de la *two-substance conception* proposée par Adams que de l'identification de la monade à la substance corporelle elle-même, thèse défendue par Pauline Phemister.[11] La conception à deux substances est à rejeter parce qu'elle introduit un dualisme entre substance simple et substance composée. L'application de la distinction suarézienne entre matière et forme, en tant qu'actes substantiels incomplets, s'accorde mal avec le fait que l'âme, compte tenu de ses propriétés, est une substance au sens plein du terme, comme l'écrit Leibniz dans la correspondance avec Damaris Masham où il écrit que l'âme est « Estre simple douée d'Action et de Perception ».[12] La théorie des deux substances d'Adams est donc inconciliable avec les affirmations de Leibniz selon lesquelles le corps organique ne coïncide pas avec la substance corporelle car, en tant que matière seconde, il est un composé de substances et non une substance unique, et donc un agrégat. D'un autre côté, la thèse de Phemister implique que la monade, identifiée avec la substance corporelle, a des organes, c'est-à-dire des parties, ce qui contredit l'indivisibilité de la monade. En outre, l'interprétation de Phemister considère la monade et son corps comme deux aspects (à la Spinoza ?) de la substance corporelle, mais, encore une fois, il faut noter la distinction métaphysique entre âme et corps : l'une est une substance, l'autre n'est qu'un agrégat.[13] Michel Fichant a proposé une ontologie à trois niveaux pour la métaphysique du vivant :

9. Garber 2009.

10. Adams 1994 : 265-274. Reprenant le langage de la scolastique, et en particulier celui de Suárez, Adams estime que Leibniz soutient la conception à deux substances et interprète la monade comme une substance incomplète, tandis que la substance corporelle serait la substance complète.

11. Phemister 2005 : 133.

12. A II, 4, 220.

13. Voir la note 1.

> Ainsi s'esquisse, comme une des possibilités pour la Thèse monadologique de rejoindre la description la plus rigoureuse de la réalité, une ontologie à trois niveaux : ceux de la monade, du pur agrégat sans unité réelle, et, entre le deux, du substantié, ou substance corporelle, ou machine de la nature. On ne saurait réduire la dernière métaphysique de Leibniz à la seule confrontation duale de la monade et de ses phénomènes.[14]

Fichant identifie la substance ou la machine organique à la substance corporelle, ce qui crée un dualisme entre la substance simple qu'est la monade et la substance corporelle que serait la machine organique. Nous estimons que la machine organique n'a pas de substantialité en dehors de celle que lui confère la monade, que Leibniz appelle, dans sa controverse avec Stahl, *actuatrix*. La machine de la nature, en tant que matière seconde, est dépourvue d'unité véritable, mais elle possède autant de réalité que celle qui lui vient de ses composants ;[15] c'est pourquoi un corps organique, qui possède une finalité immanente, a plus de réalité qu'un tas de pierres, car ses parties agissent de concert, mais tous deux ont une unité purement mentale, à moins que, dans le cas du corps organique, on n'y ajoute une substance simple.[16]

## 2. LE LEXIQUE DU VIVANT : ORGANIQUE ET ANIMÉ COMME STRUCTURE ET FONCTION

Il convient de noter que la monade est une entité qui s'exprime intérieurement par la perception et l'appétition et extérieurement par les mouvements et les forces dérivatives, et qu'elle a donc besoin d'un corps organique.[17] Il serait plus correct de dire que l'action externe de la monade est la force dérivative.[18] En 1711 encore, la substance corporelle est invoquée lorsqu'il s'agit de mettre en lumière le vivant du point de vue structurel et sans perdre la substantialité que garantissent la perception et l'appétition.[19] Mais la matière seconde n'était-elle pas, selon le schéma à 5 niveaux de la lettre à De Volder du 20 juin 1703, un concours de monades, c'est-à-dire de substances simples et non de substances corporelles ? L'opposition n'est qu'apparente car, comme le précise le passage de la lettre à Bierling du 12 août 1711, chaque corps organique a sa monade correspondante selon la structure hylémorphique, de sorte qu'un corps organique est associé à l'entéléchie dominante. Le concept de corps organique est lié à celui de partie, et en particulier de parties hiérarchiquement incluses les unes dans les autres.[20] Le concept de monade dominante est lié à la notion d'actualisation.[21] Ainsi, tout ce qui

14. Fichant 2005 : 54.
15. Voir Levey 2007 : 61-106
16. En ce sens, Fichant 2003 : 19 correctement observe : « […] pour qu'il y ait substance corporelle, il faut que cette fonction unificatrice rencontre, comme condition de son exercice, un ensemble physique structuré comme une machine de la nature ».
17. GP VII, 329 = Leibniz 1991 : 148.
18. *Ad* XXI/4 = Leibniz 2004 : 129.
19. GP VII, 501-502.
20. Voir Smith 2011 : 107.
21. Voir Pasini 2011 : 93.

est organique a des parties, mais tout ce qui est vivant n'est pas organique, puisque la monade est vivante et dépourvue de parties. L'*organicum* n'identifie pas la réalisation d'un corps organique dans un être vivant, c'est l'*animatum* et tout le champ sémantique hylémorphiste qui lui est associé (*actuare*, *actuatum*, etc.) qui indiquent cette réalisation par une monade dominante. L'exemple du cœur explanté que Leibniz présente dans la controverse avec Stahl le confirme. Leibniz affirme qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de supposer un élément unique vivifiant du cœur à partir du fait qu'il continue de battre pendant quelques instants après avoir été explanté. Un *nudus mechanismus* constitué d'esprits animaux suffit à justifier ce mouvement.[22] S'il est vrai que le cœur n'est pas un corps organique, il n'est pas dépourvu de corps organiques. En termes techniques, il s'agit d'un *aggregatum*, un interstice métaphysique qui contient des corps animés, *corpora animata*, *corpora actuata* ou *corpora organica completa*. Un corps organique est un corps animé uniquement grâce à la présence d'une monade dominante qui implique la perception et l'appétit. Peu après, Leibniz précise en effet que le corps organique en soi n'a ni perception ni appétit.[23] L'absence de perception et d'appétit centralisés rend le corps organique non substantiel. En passant du côté de l'*animatum*/*actuatum*, on constate que dans le texte de la réplique XVII, Leibniz parle de *monas actuatrix*.[24] Si le domaine sémantique de l'organique appartient à celui de l'organisé en parties, celui de l'animé appartient à celui de la perception et de l'appétit.

## 3. HYLÉMORPHISME ET HARMONIE PRÉÉTABLIE

Dans la controverse avec Stahl, Leibniz estime que la monade dominante ou l'âme actualise le mouvement des organes, comme dans l'exemple spécifique du cœur explanté : « Mais j'ai ajouté un argument plus spécial en montrant la présence d'un mouvement dans le cœur, quand il n'est plus actualisé (*actuatur*) par l'âme de l'animal ».[25] L'harmonie préétablie réalise l'actualisation hylémorphique du corps organique à travers une monade actualisatrice. Dans l'univers leibnizien il n'y a pas d'autres relations que celle d'expression dont la perception est un cas.[26] Donc la relation d'actualisation doit se donner en termes de perceptions et appétitions qui sont les seules activités des monades. Puisque, comme Leibniz l'observera dans la *Monadologie* §51 et dans la correspondance avec Des Bosses,[27] chaque monade est accordée à toutes les autres selon leurs prétentions, le principe qui régit la relation d'actualisation est le principe de raison suffisante.

22. *Ad* XVII/17 = Leibniz 2004 : 137.

23. *Ad* XVII/ 27 = Leibniz 2004 : 139.

24. *Ad* XVII/16 = Leibniz 2004 : 135 (tr. fr. modifiée).

25. *Ad* XXXI/1 = Leibniz 2004 : 143 (tr. fr. modifiée). Stahl avait refusé l'existence d'esprit vital dans les corps organique, en considérant que l'âme n'a pas besoin d'intermédiaire pour agir sur son corps. Voir Leibniz 2016b : 189, 191.

26. Voir la correspondance avec Arnauld : A II, 2, 240.

27. « Substantia agit quantum potest, nisi impediatur; impeditur autem etiam substantia simplex, sed naturaliter non nisi intus a se ipsa. Et cum dicitur monas ab alia impediri, hoc intelligendum est de alterius repraesentatione in ipsa. Autor rerum eas sibi invicem accommodavit, altera pati dicitur, dum ejus consideratio alterius considerationi cedit » (GP II, 516).

Il régit la communication idéale entre les monades : la monade dominante rend compte des modifications internes qui se produisent dans les monades subordonnées, lesquelles ont besoin de se référer à elle pour rendre compte de leurs modifications. Donc l'actuation ne se réalise pas à travers le modèle aristotélicien de l'acte et de la puissance – l'âme comme εἶδος σώματος φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντος[28] – mais à travers la relation de dominance et de subordination entre une monade dominante et un ensemble de monades subordonnées, chacune dotée de son propre corps organique, c'est-à-dire à travers l'harmonie préétablie. L'entéléchie primitive chez Leibniz n'est pas l'accomplissement d'un statut potentiel qui est saisi et compris par la définition d'une certaine entité, mais une projection infinie de puissance perceptive et appétitive qui peut atteindre l'état de torpeur de la monade nue, mais qui ne s'éteint jamais complètement. Il y a là une autre différence fondamentale avec Aristote. Comme le note Enrico Berti à propos de l'hylémorphisme d'Aristote :

> La forme n'est pas une « partie » du composé, mais c'est la manière dont ses parties sont disposées, l'ordre dans lequel elles se trouvent, et, si le composé en question est un organe, cet ordre est en fonction d'une activité, c'est-à-dire qu'il s'agit précisément d'une fonction.[29]

Pour Leibniz, la forme n'est pas une disposition ou un ordre de parties et, comme il le fait remarquer dans sa correspondance avec Arnauld, pas même « le concours à un même dessein »[30] ne suffit pas à former une substance ; tout au plus définit-on ainsi une machine, comme le corps, la machine organique. Il faut un être doté de perception et d'appétit pour qu'il y ait une substance, le reste n'est qu'agrégat. Pour reprendre le fil de la discussion sur la comparaison avec l'interprétation suàrezienne d'Adams, on peut dire que Leibniz est aristotélicien-thomiste dans sa conception de la monade, car il précise qu'il ne peut y avoir de monade qui ne possède pas de matière première ou de puissance passive primitive, tout comme Aristote[31] et Thomas d'Aquin[32] estiment qu'il n'y a pas de matière pure sans une forme qui l'actualise. Le problème le plus ardu se pose si l'on compare la conception leibnizienne du corps organique ou de la matière seconde, car dans ce cas entre en jeu l'adage *ex duobus entibus in actu non fit unum per se*. En effet, comment peut-on faire d'une multiplicité d'entités différentes, telles que les monades, un *unum per se* ? Comme on le sait, Suárez, face à la question de l'actualité de la matière et de la forme, introduit un *modus unionis* pour résoudre le problème ; Leibniz, en revanche, élabore, comme nous l'avons montré, la doctrine de la dominance qui n'est autre qu'une forme d'harmonie préétablie entre toutes les monades qui instituent métaphysiquement le corps organique comme un ensemble hiérarchique de fonctions. Et c'est le principe de raison suffisante qui institue et régit cette hiérarchie. Ce n'est qu'à la fin de son parcours philosophique, dans la dernière partie de sa correspondance avec

28. Arist. *De an*. 412a20.
29. Berti 2011 : 173 (ma traduction).
30. A II, 2, 185.
31. Arist. *Metaph*. IX 8.1050a15-16.
32. S. Thomas I q. 7 a. 2 ad. 3.

Des Bosses, que Leibniz tentera d'introduire un *vinculum substantiale* qui lie toutes les monades en une unité composée.

**ABRÉVIATIONS**

A = G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt & Leipzig & Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1923-.

GP = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-1890; repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978.

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**Leibniz's Concept of the Living in Light of the Controversy with Stahl and Other Contemporary Texts**

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# Leibniz on the Illumination of the Agent Intellect

ABSTRACT: How does Leibniz think of the relationship between God and the human intellect? Does he admit some form of divine illumination, or does his account of the intellect leave neither need nor room for any relation beyond the creation and expression shared with non-rational substances? Leibniz's strong opposition to monopsychism and vision-in-God seems to suggest the latter. However, his commitment to the difference between sense and intellect being based on the creature's ability to reflect, affords a more positive answer. Intellects are uniquely illuminated because in participating in divine reflection, they grasp the absoluteness of the divine essence through seeing their perspective as a perspective.
KEYWORDS: Divine Illumination; Agent Intellect; Averroism; Reflection; Perspectivism

## 1. INTRODUCTION: NO ROOM AND NO NEED FOR ILLUMINATION?

It is an important aim, for those interested in Leibniz's philosophy, to understand his account of the relationship between God and the human intellectual faculty. After all, he is the philosopher who held that "Spirits express God rather than the world, but the other substances express the world rather than God".[1] Yet many issues remain open. One is whether there is a role for *divine illumination* within his account. I will point out some neglected aspects of Leibniz's relationship with the illuminationist tradition, mainly by noting how, in the *Discourse,* it is marked by his aversion to Averroism. I will then propose a way to situate illumination within his mature system.

The proposal is this. Leibniz thinks of illumination not as an extraordinary concourse of God, but as an expression in some creatures of the divine wisdom which includes even its reflexivity. All substances express God, but some recognise their expressing *as expressing*. They discover that what they see limited in themselves must express something absolute. In attending, even mediately, to those absolute predicates, they become capable of thinking truths – which is precisely intellectuality. God, then, is indeed the light of the spirits in an extraordinary sense. Namely, as the abstracted absolute, required for thinking truths, which reflexive minds take to be what their essence expresses from a limited perspective.

Notions of divine illumination have a rich and complex history, which I cannot explore here. Take just the claim that *intellectual acts require something from God beyond creation*. Does Leibniz want this in his theory, or is his appeal to it a vestige from his forma-

1. A VI, 4, 1584. All English translations are my own.


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tive years?[2] Emblematic of this dilemma is Jolley's claim that "Leibniz preserves the outer shell of the doctrine of divine illumination, but he throws away its philosophical heart".[3]

There are two ways of thinking about the obstacle in ascribing illumination to Leibniz: that he might have no room for it, and that he might have no need for it. He might have no *room*, if accepting illumination means giving up on the *spontaneity* he grants to all substances. He might have no *need*, because he grants that all substances express God, and thus illumination collapses into creation without "according special status to minds".[4]

My proposal aims to clear both obstacles. Nevertheless, they are serious problems: the *Discourse* gives us cause to consider both. To the first, we find Leibniz retorting, against Malebranche[5] that "we think immediately through our own ideas, not through those of God".[6] We are thus left wondering what God needs to do beyond creation: if the ideas are 'our own' then the only sense in which God is our light is that he created us as having them. For the second, he says that "God alone is the immediate object of our perceptions […]".[7] But illumination presupposes a distinction between sense and intellect. Instead, here Leibniz appears to be offering a general theory of all perceptual acts. His motives for upholding both obstacles are clear from his engagement with tradition, to which I now turn.

## 2. SPONTANEITY VERSUS ILLUMINATION

In the claims that risk leaving *no room* for illumination, Leibniz is driven by a core concern: his commitment to the individual existence of created minds *as substances*, and thus *as principles of activity*. Averroist monopsychism and Malebranche's vision in God seem to him – like Spinoza's monism[8] or Fénelon's quietism[9] – to deprive the substance of its individuation as an activity. However, to motivate Leibniz's entelechism fully would require more than can be done here, so I will limit myself to some neglected aspects of his engagement with the philosophical tradition. Returning to *Discourse* §28:

> God is the sun and the light of souls, […] After Sacred Scripture and the Fathers, who have always been rather for Plato than for Aristotle, I remember having remarked elsewhere, that since the time of the Scholastics, many have believed that God is the light of the soul and according to their manner of speaking, *the agent intellect of the rational soul*. The Averroists have twisted this in a wicked sense, but some others, among whom I believe that William of S. Amour, Doctor of the

2. Cf. Blank 2019: 161.
3. Jolley 1998: 148.
4. *Ibid*.: 149.
5. *Ibid*.: 146.
6. A VI, 4, 1574.
7. A VI, 4, 1573.
8. A VI, 5, VE 2657.
9. GP VI, 536.

> Sorbonne, has found himself, and many mystical theologians have taken it in a manner worthy of God and capable of elevating the soul to the awareness of its good.[10]

By alluding to Platonic patristics he means Augustine, the cornerstone of medieval interest in divine illumination.[11] The interpretation of Augustine's illuminationism is controversial, but if Leibniz is reducing illumination to God's concurrence which continually "bestows on each creature whatever perfection there is in it",[12] his is hardly a faithful exegesis. Indeed, this sounds like surrender to the obstacle that there is no *need* for illumination.

Crucial to understanding Leibniz's approach to illumination is his comparison of the Augustinian and the Averroist account of the intellect. He comments on the *Confessions* that "[…] there is great resemblance between the agent intellect, be it Aristotle's or Averroes's, when it is corrected (on this see Thomasius's *dissertation)* and this pure intellectual substance of Augustine".[13] Thomasius's 'correction', however, in aiming to preserve individual immortality,[14] is that there is no "cause for us, because we live and move and have our being in God, to immediately call Him the agent Intellect".[15] Again, therefore, it seems that Leibniz intends to reduce illumination to expressing God, rather than receiving an influence besides creation. The divine light is what is in us by our creation, not by a second divine action, for which there is no room.

The reference to William "of S. Amour" also points in that direction. Leibniz was clearly thinking of someone else – Saint-Amour's *Opera Omnia* (1632) says nothing on these matters. But one of Leibniz's drafts has "of Paris" instead, and a more likely Parisian William is William *of Auvergne,* as also suggested by Rodis-Lewis.[16] But, far from a friend of calling God the "intellectus agens animae rationalis", William of Auvergne's *De Anima* attacks both the distinction between the active and passive intellect, and the positing of an external agent intelligence as necessary for our thinking.[17] Like Thomasius, he took it to be contrary to Christianity, and thus saw no *room* for it.

William does acknowledge *some* things in the mind which cannot have come from the senses, and thus are in some way infused by God.[18] But after infusion no active cooperation of God is required: these truths are 'lights in themselves'.[19] This view is thus closer to positing innate ideas than illumination. There would be no *need* for it: hence Leibniz approves, because here the illumination of the soul is 'spontaneous': once what cannot come from the senses is infused by God, it shines with its own light.

10. A VI, 4, 1573.
11. Noone 2010: 379.
12. A II, 4, 642; GP III, 656.
13. A VI, 4, 1684; cf. e.g. A VI, 1, 510.
14. Radeva 2017: 453; Mercer 2001: 203.
15. Thomasius 1693: 299.
16. Rodis-Lewis 1976: 495. Cf. A VI, 4, 2119, citing OO I, 650.
17. Teske 2000: 33.
18. Marrone 1983: 50.
19. Teske 2000: 443.

## 3. ILLUMINATION AS REFLECTION ON THE ABSOLUTE

Having outlined the obstacles in this less usual historical perspective, I will exposit a sense in which, though there is no *extraordinary* concourse, as the Averroists would have it, the expression of God by all creatures acquires an extraordinary function in some of them: *reflection*. This notion, taken in a sense certainly "rather for Plato than for Aristotle", can rescue Leibniz's claim to the illuminationist tradition.[20]

In the *Discourse,* Leibniz gives us an account of the difference between bare or sensible perception and intellect: "the main difference is that they [souls of beasts] do not know what they are, nor what they do, and consequently, since they cannot have reflections, they will not be able to discover truths".[21] Rather than infusion, Leibniz here is appropriating the complex tradition of connecting rationality and *reflexivity*.[22] But the key is how reflexivity here grounds the ability to *discover truth*. For Leibniz, truth is the inherence of a predicate in a subject,[23] but such predicates express absolute categories:

> […] They [beasts] seemingly are acquainted with whiteness and recognise it in chalk and snow, but that is not yet abstraction, for that requires consideration of the common separated from the particular, and consequently involves acquaintance with universal truths […].[24]

Hence, true intellectual acts require something *absolute*. That "true reasoning depends on eternal truths"[25] is a well-known Leibnizian thought, and the eternal and the absolute both mean that they involve the divine rather than the creaturely. In the c. 1714 "Monadology" §30 he will explicitly say:

> In thinking of ourselves we think of Being, substance, the simple or the composed, the immortal and God himself, *by conceiving that what is limited in us is in him without limit*. And these Reflexive Acts provide the principal objects of our reasonings.[26]

Upon this, Leibniz founds his famous amendment of the peripatetic maxim, "there is nothing in the intellect that was not in the senses, except the intellect itself".[27] Crucially, however, while the *order of discovery* might be from the limited to the unlimited, the *order of composition* is top-down, and absolute-first, as he sets out clearly in a 1696 draft on the science of the infinite:

> [...] the imagination provides occasions to the intellect, but when the intellect then considers for itself the notion put before it, it finds out that what is absolute is so

20. Cf. Rutherford 1998: 27.
21. A VI, 4, 1583.
22. Blank 2009.
23. A VI, 4, 1540.
24. A VI, 6, 142.
25. GP VI, 600.
26. GP VI, 612, my emphasis.
27. A VI, 6, 111.

> much prior in the intellect that limited predicates are nothing but modes by which the absolute ones vary, and cannot be understood but through the absolute ones.[28]

But whatever is *absolute* is just what is eminently contained in the divine essence, as we read in a 1698 letter to Morell: "God is the primitive unity, expressed by all other things according to their capacity […] varied according to the different combinations of unity with zero".[29] Therefore we can speak of a sense in which God is a special light for the rational souls, because while the merely perceiving substances never encounter anything except the limited versions, the intellect, as far as it deals with absolute predicates, is looking at God. If Jolley's challenge to the illumination claim was that there's no discerning between the brute and the spiritual perception of God, then this construal seems to dispel it.

## 4. PERSPECTIVAL ASCENT TO THE ABSOLUTE

But *how* does the reflexive act grant absolute perspective? An infused vision of God, to which Leibniz is opposed, would have been an easy solution. The hurdle with the reflection answer is that the individual creature has an essence which is constituted by *limited* instances of the divine attributes. How does immediate perceptual access to our limited essence grant us any more power to "conceive unlimited in God what we see limited in us" than access to sensibilia?

Leibniz finds the solution in *the realisation of* the perspectivity of our experience. Reflection allows us to see our perspective *as a perspective.* If we do, we commence a process of abstraction towards the absolute, and thereby gain a distinct perspective, that of the intellect:

> Indeed we cannot see such an order, while we do not stand in the right point of view (*Gesichtspunkt*) […] We alone must place ourselves with the eyes of the intellect where we do not see and cannot see with the eyes of the body.[30]

Brutes, instead, cannot see that their perceptions are perspectival. It is really this perspective which allows the apprehending, even if not the contemplation, of absolute predicates. Again Platonically, Leibniz takes the mark of the intellect to consist in distinguishing reality and appearance.[31] In light of the reflection account this becomes precise: by seeing appearance as appearance, we become aware of there being something underneath. Leibniz offers a powerful analogy to illustrate this distinction in the *Discourse* §35, where he claims that "the difference is as great as that between the mirror and the one who sees".[32]

This self-perception is not itself an absolute perspective, but what allows an ascent towards it. In a 1712 draft for a letter to Des Bosses, Leibniz outlines the difference

28. LH 35, 7, 10 Bl. 5r.
29. A I, 15, 650. Compare Antognazza 2015: 15.
30. DS 51.
31. GP VI, 502.
32. A VI, 4, 1585.

between the divine and the creaturely perspective: "among bodies, their appearance for us and for God is somewhat like that between scenography [perspective projection] and ichnography [parallel projection]".[33] We are cut off from *experiencing* ichnography, but refer to it in reasoning by recognising scenographies as derivative from it. Leibniz's appropriation of Augustinian illumination might thus seem less heterodox: the same light shines in all substances, *but* only those capable of reflection *see* the light within themselves, and thus by *seeing* rather than just *having* the light within, they see God.

The objection now might be that though the reflective realisation of our limitedness might alert us to the fact that there is an absolute perspective beyond ours, it does not automatically grant us an ability to progress towards it. Leibniz's solution would be that the ascent towards the absolute involves comparison of multiple perspectives upon it. A highly allegorical text from ca. 1693, known as *Philosophical Dream,* suggests just that:

> A venerable old man […] told me that this Light was what, back here, is called prudence and reason. […] I often changed in posture to consider different holes of the vault which provided this small light, and when I placed myself in a spot where one could at once be aware (*apperçûes*) of multiple lights from their truthful point of view, I found an assemblage of rays which enlightened me very much.[34]

A crucial point is that Leibniz does not take the *completion* of the ascent to be necessary, or even possible, to already use absolute predicates. Leibniz regards even an incomplete perception of the absolute to have already shifted its object from the world to God, because it is sufficient to ground our use of 'blind' cognitions[35] by which our 'scenographic' experience is repurposed into *échantillons architectoniques*[36] of the absolute perspective.

## 5. CONCLUSION: REFLEXIVITY AS PARTICIPATION

There is another aspect of his notion of reflexivity by which Leibniz approaches illumination. Since *all* creaturely properties are only limitations upon the divine ones, also the reflexive faculty will just be another limitation of a divine property. In Leibniz's sense of Platonic participation, all perceiving is an emanation into creatures of a possible limited version of the divine wisdom.[37] Whether a perception is reflective or not can be thought of as depending on how that attribute is limited in its bearer.

The notion that God engages in a reflexive act has a long history. For Leibniz, it is that reflection that generates the contents of the divine intellect and thereby is at the root of the possible worlds presupposed by creation.[38] It is one of the highest aspects of the divine act, thus it is fitting that Leibniz should take participation in it to elevate

33. GP II, 438.
34. LH 4, 8, Bl. 53r.
35. A VI, 6, 264.
36. GP VI, 621.
37. GP VI, 615.
38. E.g. Grua 326.

souls into communion with God. If we ask in what transcreation[39] – i.e. God making a sensitive soul rational – would consist, we would explain it in terms of a change in the privations applied to the pure positivity constituting the essence of the creature: as a lifting of the privation of reflexivity. Be it the result of a qualitative or, if we take Leibniz's principle of continuity very strictly, of a quantitative difference in participation in divine wisdom, *reflexivity in act* is a criterion which only some substances meet, and these are in a sense extraordinarily enlightened.

Participation in the divine reflexive act is to be admitted in the sense that, like all other properties, creaturely reflections are an emanation from the divine essence. Nevertheless, in line with the aversion to monopsychism, we cannot say that the creature's reflection participates in the divine in the sense that there is a single universal reflexive act in multiple substances. Even the "conversation"[40] with God of spirits seems to be best explained as pre-established stages of the development of the law of the substance, conserved in existence by the divine emanation without need for *extraordinary* concourse.

I think this helps clarify some aspects of Leibniz's thoughts on the God-intellect relationship. Firstly, it notes that his historical engagements suggest that a core desideratum is that divine illumination must leave no slippery slope to monopsychism. Secondly, it notes that he can rescue the 'extraordinary' flavour of illumination without positing an extraordinary concourse from God. He finds it in the unique position in which replicating the divine reflexive act puts limited creatures. In fact, he finds *need* for it, in the requirement that reason move from the limited to the absolute, and he finds *room* for it, in the possibility that the reflexive act participates in God's reflection. In this light, it is not only because everything positive in creatures expresses God in a limited way that God is our light. Instead, it is also by the grasp of the absolute behind that limited expression, even though full contemplation of it lies at the end of an endless Platonic ascent.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

A = G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Darmstadt & Leipzig & Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1923- (Volume VI, 5 in preprint = VE).

DS = G. W. Leibniz, *Deutsche Schriften*, hrsg. von G. E. Guhrauer, 2 vols., Berlin, Veit und Comp., 1840.

GP = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, hrsg. von C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols., Berlin, Weidmann, 1875-1890; repr. Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1978.

Grua = G. W. Leibniz, *Textes inédits d'après les manuscrits de la Bib. Provinciale de Hanovre*, éd. par G. Grua, 2 vols., Paris, PUF, 1948.

LH = *Die Leibniz-Handschriften der Königl. öffentl. Bibliothek zu Hannover*, Mit Ergänzungen und Register von G. Krönert und H. Lackmann, sowie einem Vorwort von K.-H. Weimann, Hannover, Leibniz-Archiv, 1966.

OO = B. Le Feron, *Guilielmi Alverni Opera Omnia,* Paris, Hotot, 1674.

39. GP VI, 153.

40. A VI, 4, 1585.

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# Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli storico globale dell'antichità

## Riflessioni e memorie (2020-2024)

ABSTRACT: Between 2020 and 2024, a number of scholarly events took place and several publications were released to honour the memory of Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, the great historian of antiquity, and to reflect on his teachings as well. In both cases special attention was paid to his view on the origins of philosophy, according to which this phenomenon – which was typically Hellenic – was intimately linked to the emergence of independent *poleis* from the ashes of the ancient Mycenaean kingdoms. Indeed, for Pugliese Carratelli – just as it was for B. Croce before him – the spirit of liberty was the true driving force of history, of which the Hellenes provided a memorable example.
KEYWORDS: Hellenic *Poleis*; Ancient Civilisations; Origin of Philosophy; Liberty

Per circostanze diverse, e solo in parte collegate, i primi anni di questa nostra decade hanno visto succedersi numerosi e significativi eventi, legati alla memoria di Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, il grande storico del mondo antico, Maestro di diverse generazioni di studiosi. Si sono così succedute occasioni per riflettere sulla sua eredità scientifica, ma anche per tratteggiarne il profilo umano e civile, insieme con momenti dedicati al ricordo e all'espressione degli affetti. Per chi, come me, si è formato alla ricerca presso l'antico Centro di Studio per il Lessico Intellettuale Europeo, è particolarmente grato rinnovarne la memoria. Pugliese, infatti, fu una delle grandi personalità accademiche che, in qualità di componenti del Consiglio Scientifico del Centro, affiancarono per anni Tullio Gregory e il suo gruppo di ricerca, offrendo loro alta consulenza e saggi consigli per l'indirizzo delle attività, sempre accompagnati – nel suo caso – da quel tratto di cordiale e signorile umanità che lo distingueva.

Il 12 febbraio 2020, presso la borrominiana Villa Falconieri di Frascati, sede di rappresentanza dell'Accademia *Vivarium novum*, studiosi, antichi allievi, collaboratori e amici di Pugliese Carratelli si riunirono a convegno, per celebrarne la figura e l'opera, nel decennale esatto della scomparsa. A metà del 2022 apparve l'ampia monografia di Federico Melotto, dedicata alle drammatiche vicende che segnarono la vita dell'epigrafista Mario Segre e che, pur non avendo in Pugliese il suo centro d'interesse, a lui dedica ampio spazio e documentate pagine di notevole spessore storico ed umano.[1]

1. Melotto 2022. Il nome di Pugliese Carratelli è di gran lunga il più citato in questa monografia. Col suo lavoro Melotto offre, fra l'altro, un notevole contributo alla conoscenza della vita intellettuale e accademica italiana nel ventennio della dittatura fascista.


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Non senza dar prova di un certo coraggio, infatti, a metà del 1939 egli aveva accettato, su richiesta dello stesso Segre, di subentrargli nella realizzazione del *corpus* epigrafico delle 'isole italiane dell'Egeo', dopo che l'epigrafista era stato privato dell'insegnamento e bandito dai pubblici incarichi, per l'entrata in vigore delle leggi razziali.[2] L'amicizia e la stima fra i due rimase inalterata fino al compiersi del tragico destino di Segre,[3] trovando espressione, nei decenni successivi alla fine della guerra, nel reiterato impegno di Pugliese a pubblicare quanto del lavoro di Segre era rimasto inedito, non solo in ossequio ad una evidente motivazione di natura scientifica ma anche per tener fede ad un più profondo impegno morale nei confronti dell'amico e collega.[4] A gennaio del 2023 – ma con riferimento agli anni 2020, 2021 e 2022 – uscirono i ricchissimi numeri 75, 76 e 77 della rivista *La parola del passato*, che egli (insieme a Gaetano Macchiaroli) aveva fondato nel 1946 e aveva poi sempre diretto; le tre annate, interamente dedicate a studi in memoria di Pugliese, furono tutte edite a cura di Pia De Fidio, Valeria Gigante Lanzara, e Antonio Rigo, con la collaborazione di Luigi Vecchio.[5] Ancora nei primi mesi del 2023 è uscito per le edizioni dell'Accademia *Vivarium novum*, il bel volume che offre le risultanze del convegno tenutosi tre anni prima a Frascati. A rallentarne la pubblicazione erano state le drammatiche vicende connesse all'epidemia planetaria che si manifestò proprio pochi giorni dopo la fine dei lavori, con le conseguenti misure restrittive che per quasi due anni impedirono l'ordinario svolgimento di ogni attività.

Questo volume, dal titolo *Memoriae sacrum.* Μναμοσύναϛ ἱερόν*,* raccoglie – per la cura di Ignacio Armella Chávez – sedici contributi, distribuiti in cinque sezioni tematiche, dedicate nell'ordine: all'impegno profuso da Pugliese Carratelli a favore di diversi e importanti Istituti di cultura, ai suoi studi sul mondo antico, a quelli sull'Oriente, ad alcuni interventi espressamente dedicati a ricordare il Maestro, ed ancora ad alcuni contributi – quasi per intero proposti in lingua latina – che è sembrato appropriato riunire sotto il titolo di *Levia gravia*. In appendice, impreziosisce il volume uno scritto autobiografico inedito: un'intervista rilasciata da Pugliese Carratelli poco prima della scomparsa, dal titolo, *La mia Grecia e la libertà degli studi*.[6]

2. Pugliese era certamente noto agli occhiuti organi di polizia del regime, essendosi guadagnato – non ancora diciottenne – un anno di confino politico a Gaeta, per aver protestato pubblicamente contro il governo fascista e la sua politica liberticida.

3. Mario Segre, insieme alla moglie, Noemi Cingoli, e al piccolo Marco che non aveva ancora compiuto due anni, furono arrestati nell'aprile del 1944, poi deportati e assassinati nel campo di Auschwitz.

4. Melotto 2022: 221-229 (*Epilogo*). Pugliese pubblicò un primo testo inedito di Segre nel 1948 (= Segre 1948); in calce, una nota editoriale spiegava che l'autore, "morto giovine ancora nell'agosto [*sic*] del 1944", era stato "tra le innumeri vittime della più stolta e disumana persecuzione che i nostri tempi abbian visto". La pubblicazione da parte di Pugliese dei lavori di Segre continuò fino al 1993.

5. De Fidio, Gigante Lanzara e Rigo 2020, 2021, 2022.

6. Armella Chávez 2023: 291-314. L'intervista era stata rilasciata da Pugliese a Massimo Peri e Gianfranco Maddoli.

Pochi mesi più tardi, per iniziativa di Francesco Verde, la casa editrice Bibliopolis tornava a proporre – a trent'anni dalla prima edizione – il breve, ma così significativo, studio di Pugliese Carratelli, *Principii della filosofia greca. La nascita della filosofia*,[7] che in origine era uscito nell'ambito del progetto dell'Enciclopedia Multimediale delle Scienze Filosofiche, diretta da Renato Parascandolo.[8] Interamente dedicato al pensiero antico, il saggio affronta in un'ottica comparativa il tema dell'origine storica della filosofia greca sullo sfondo delle civiltà dell'Asia anteriore e delle civiltà egee, minoica e micenea, scorgendo nel peculiare fenomeno della *polis* ellenica una premessa fondamentale per l'emergere dell'indagine filosofica.

Nel 2024, un primo appuntamento di rilievo per l'approfondimento della figura umana e scientifica di Pugliese Carratelli fu costituito dal seminario organizzato il 21 marzo dall'Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici in Napoli, nell'ambito del ciclo "I Maestri dell'Istituto", e dedicato per l'appunto a Pugliese, che dell'Istituto era stato Presidente nel quinquennio 1986-1990. D'altro canto, i suoi rapporti con quell'istituzione erano sempre stati molto stretti, anche per il legame culturale e personale che lo aveva unito a Benedetto Croce, sua figura di riferimento primaria fin dai tempi della giovinezza, insieme a quella di Adolfo Omodeo.[9] Il seminario fu tenuto da Carmine Ampolo e da Giuseppe Cambiano, i quali – dai rispettivi punti di vista dello storico e del filosofo – tratteggiarono un ampio ritratto del Maestro, prendendo spunto in particolare da alcune pubblicazioni: la raccolta dei suoi saggi riuniti per Rubbettino da Gianfranco Maddoli sotto il titolo di *Umanesimo napoletano*;[10] le tre annate de *La parola del passato*, sopra ricordate, dedicate a studi in memoria di Pugliese; e infine il menzionato volume sui *Principii della filosofia greca*, che era uscito da pochi mesi.[11] Alla presentazione di quest'ultimo volume, come pure di quello che raccoglieva i frutti del convegno organizzato nel febbraio del 2020 furono quindi dedicate due giornate di studio nella primavera del 2024.

Il tema "Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, filosofo dell'età nostra", fu scelto per la duplice presentazione, organizzata dall'Accademia *Vivarium novum* (insieme con Bibliopolis e ISMEO), della nuova edizione del volume sui *Principii della filosofia greca* e di quello intitolato *Memoriae sacrum*. Μναμοσύνας ιερόν. Ancora una volta, dunque, il 23 aprile 2024, antichi allievi e amici di Pugliese si riunirono a Villa Falconieri attorno alla sua figura, per onorarne la memoria e riflettere sul suo insegnamento e, in particolare, sul suo peculiare modo di interpretare l'emergere della riflessione filosofica

7. Pugliese Carratelli 2023[2].

8. Pugliese Carratelli 1993. L'Enciclopedia Multimediale delle Scienze Filosofiche era stata promossa, a partire dal 1987, dalla RAI in collaborazione con l'Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, l'Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato e la Redazione *Vivarium*.

9. A questo proposito si vedano i saggi, *Benedetto Croce e la libertà* e *Benedetto Croce e Adolfo Omodeo. Storia di un'amicizia*, rispettivamente in Pugliese Carratelli 2015: 61-71 e 73-82.

10. Pugliese Carratelli 2015.

11. L'intervento di Cambiano è stato pubblicato in Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici 2026: 51-74. L'intera registrazione del seminario è invece disponibile sul canale youtube dell'Istituto napoletano (https://www.youtube.com/@istitutoitalianostudistori5735).

sullo sfondo delle civiltà del mondo antico. Nell'impossibilità di rendere conto, entro i limiti della presente nota, di tutti gli interventi che hanno animato quelle giornate, mi limiterò a porne in evidenza solo alcuni aspetti fra i più significativi.

Giorgio Camassa e Marisa Tortorelli Ghidini hanno sottolineato in quell'occasione il convincimento di Pugliese che la nascita della filosofia debba considerarsi un fenomeno eminentemente ellenico, perché unicamente ellenica fu la caratteristica formazione socio-politica della *polis* che – a suo avviso – ne costituì la necessaria premessa storica. In quanto comunità di uomini liberi che si danno in piena autonomia le proprie leggi e scelgono i propri magistrati, le *poleis* elleniche infatti si opponevano idealmente sia agli antichi regni micenei sia alle ierocrazie orientali. In un caso come nell'altro, la derivazione religiosa del potere politico aveva impedito il libero esercizio del pensiero. Con il crollo dei regni micenei e il progressivo passaggio alla civiltà ellenica, invece, si erano aperti spazi di libertà intellettuale che erano prima sconosciuti, mentre alla dimensione ctonia dell'esperienza religiosa propria dei Micenei si sostituiva da parte degli Elleni il culto di divinità uranie, per loro natura nettamente separate dal mondo degli umani. Solo quando, dopo una vicenda secolare, tale processo giungerà a termine con l'instaurarsi dell'organizzazione della società ellenica in *poleis* indipendenti, potranno nascere in un breve volgere di tempo la riflessione filosofica, l'indagine scientifica, l'esercizio della storia. D'altro canto, e diversamente che secondo altri indirizzi interpretativi, nell'ottica di Pugliese l'origine della filosofia non andrebbe individuata nell'Atene dell'età classica, ma se ne dovrebbero scorgere gli inizi tra Asia minore e Magna Grecia in figure come quella di Talete, nella Ionia, o di Pitagora e Parmenide, che furono attivi fra i Greci delle colonie italiche. Nelle comunità urbane più lontane dalla madrepatria, infatti, meno forte risultava la presa degli antichi culti ctoni, così strettamente legati all'esercizio del potere politico nei precedenti regni micenei.

Su questo tema aveva del resto insistito anche Francesco Verde nella sua ampia introduzione ai *Principii della filosofia greca*,[12] facendo notare tuttavia che per Pugliese la religione aveva comunque continuato a ricoprire un ruolo molto rilevante nella vita dei Greci, sebbene non più come *instrumentum regni* ma come fondamento del *nomos*, il sistema di valori, usi e consuetudini identificativi della *polis*. La relativa separazione tra religione e politica, d'altro canto, aveva avuto un duplice effetto: da un lato, di consentire più ampia libertà di pensiero, dall'altro di legittimare – accanto ai culti pubblici – forme rituali e pratiche religiose non ortodosse, nella forma di religioni misteriche. In altri termini, la mancanza sia di un potere politico centrale sia di una teologia ufficiale avevano permesso il diffondersi di culti alternativi a quelli civici non meno che il costituirsi "di quel razionalismo che sarà il carattere essenziale e inaggirabile del pensiero greco a partire dalla *physiologia* degli Ionici".[13] Di qui anche l'interesse di Pugliese per l'orfismo, visto come fondo misterico dell'insegnamento pitagorico e, in particolare, come elemento determinante nella formazione di Parmenide, per la sua concezione dell'Essere, come sottolineato da Alberto Jori, non meno che per la fondazione di una

12. Verde "Introduzione", in Pugliese Carratelli 2023²: xx-xxii.

13. Ivi: xxv.

scuola medica a Elea, secondo quanto vorrebbe un'antica tradizione.[14] Senza dimenticare, come notava Carmine Ampolo, che nell'ottica di Pugliese l'attività del medico e quella dello storico trovavano ampi motivi di convergenza sul piano del metodo, tali da giustificare studi sul rapporto tra Ippocrate e Tucidide.

Del resto, era ancora Jori a notarlo, era viva in lui come eredità crociana una concezione della storia che trova nello spirito di libertà il suo principio animatore e vede nel lavoro dello storico non l'acquisizione di mera erudizione, ma un'alta missione etica e civile. E in fin dei conti, se ai Greci dobbiamo l'esempio di un irreprimibile amore per la libertà, ancora ad essi dobbiamo la conquista di quella visione illuministica che individua il tratto caratteristico dell'umanità nell'uso della ragione, principio quasi divino capace di affratellare gli esseri umani e al tempo stesso di emanciparli dal dominio della necessità, proprio della natura. Motivazioni di questa sorta non dovettero essere estranee all'impegno costante profuso da Pugliese nel promuovere gli studi e le stesse istituzioni culturali a quel fine dedicate, come è stato più volte notato, in particolare da Ampolo e dallo stesso Jori.[15]

La Tavola rotonda "Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli storico della filosofia antica", organizzata nel pomeriggio del 2 maggio 2024 a Villa Mirafiori dal Dipartimento di Filosofia della Sapienza Università di Roma è stata interamente dedicata alla presentazione e alla discussione del volumetto sulla nascita della filosofia. Non poteva che riproporsi all'attenzione dei partecipanti la più gran parte dei temi che avevano caratterizzato gli interventi della precedente giornata svoltasi a Villa Falconieri, sui quali quindi eviterò di tornare. Alcune riflessioni tuttavia meritano un'attenzione specifica. Se Piergiorgio Donatelli ebbe a soffermarsi sulla capacità, propria del razionalismo greco, di declinare opportunamente i dati dell'esperienza empirica, come nel caso della medicina antica, Donatella Di Cesare ravvisava in Pugliese il grande storico, ancora capace di mantenere vivo quel dialogo tra filosofia e storia della filosofia che talora è sembrato venir meno. Massimo Cacciari, da parte sua, sottolineò la giusta cautela espressa da Pugliese riguardo alla pretesa origine orientale della filosofia, in favore del carattere in tutto originale della filosofia quale emerge fra i Greci, sia per la centralità che in essa riveste il concetto di *episteme*, cioè di una conoscenza rigorosa che per ciò

14. Sull'insieme di questi temi vedi il saggio "La scuola medica di Parmenide a Velia" e quelli riuniti sotto il titolo di "Religiosità preolimpica e misterica" nella Parte terza del volume, rispettivamente in Pugliese Carratelli 1990: 269-280 e 365-463.

15. Senza alcun intento di completezza, a questo proposito basterà ricordare che Pugliese, socio dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei fin dal 1962, fu Presidente dell'Istituto Italiano di Studi Storici in Napoli, come pure della Fondazione Faina in Orvieto, della direzione scientifica dell'Enciclopedia Italiana e dell'Enciclopedia del Novecento. Negli anni Sessanta contribuì significativamente all'apertura del CNR verso le discipline umanistiche, promuovendo (con Carlo Gallavotti) la costituzione di quello che allora si chiamò 'Istituto per gli studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici', in Roma e, come si è sopra ricordato, partecipando anche alla vita scientifica del Centro di Studio per il Lessico Intellettuale Europeo, anch'esso in Roma. Nel decennio successivo ebbe un ruolo non secondario nella fondazione, da parte dell'avvocato Gerardo Marotta, dell'Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici in Napoli, né fece mancare un suo fattivo sostegno alla costituzione dell'Accademia *Vivarium novum*, con sede attualmente a Frascati.

stesso si contrappone alla mera opinione, sia per il suo legame genetico con la libertà di pensiero offerta dalla *polis* ma del tutto sconosciuta alle ierocrazie orientali.[16] Come si è avuto modo di accennare, Pugliese vedeva queste dinamiche operare ancor prima nelle colonie che nella città-madrepatria e, con Aristotele, individuava in Talete il primo filosofo ovvero, come notò in quell'occasione Emidio Spinelli, colui che per primo aveva tentato di ricondurre ad unità la molteplicità dei fenomeni, e proprio questa prospettiva storiografica orientata all'unità spiegherebbe l'ininterrotto interesse di Pugliese per Platone e per l'intera tradizione platonica fino a Plotino, e ancora oltre, fino a tutto il Rinascimento. Tanto Spinelli quanto Verde posero poi l'accento sul senso di un'operazione culturale, quella di riproporre al pubblico il testo dei *Principii della filosofia*, che era stata animata dal proposito generale di mantenere viva la circolazione dei testi dei grandi Maestri, rendendoli disponibili in primo luogo alle giovani generazioni, per le quali, in un contesto degli studi profondamente mutato e ancora in rapido cambiamento, potrebbero rischiare di cadere nell'oblio.

Luciano Canfora, che – dichiara lo stesso curatore – era stato fra quanti avevano autorevolmente preso a cuore l'iniziativa di una nuova edizione del testo di Pugliese, ebbe a sottolineare la sua figura di 'storico totale' del mondo antico, non solo per l'ampiezza dei suoi orizzonti in senso cronologico ma anche per la sua capacità di padroneggiare culture e civiltà che andavano dalle colonie greche dell'Italia meridionale al Medio Oriente, spingendosi ben oltre fino agli antichi regni dell'India.[17] Ed era – egli sostenne – sullo sfondo di un tale ampio quadro di riferimento che Pugliese aveva indagato i princìpi della filosofia, guardando ben al di là dei confini della sola Grecia. Giudizio questo pienamente consonante con la definizione formulata da Marisa Tortorelli Ghidini, nella commemorazione del Maestro tenuta a Napoli nel 2013, come di uno "storico senza frontiere temporali e geografiche, uno studioso globale", in ragione dell'ampiezza dei suoi orizzonti e delle sue competenze, del fascino della sua intelligenza critica e della rigorosa tensione morale che ne avevano animato le scelte storiografiche.[18] Difficile quindi non concordare con Alberto Jori, quando ebbe a definire Pugliese Carratelli un grande intellettuale del Novecento, motivato da un forte impegno etico. Impegno che si tradusse nella mai sopita passione per gli studi, nella cura dispensata nel seguire momenti formativi e percorsi scientifici dei giovani studiosi, infine nella sua eccezionale e, si direbbe, instancabile attività di organizzatore culturale. Quanto al suo modo di intendere le origini della filosofia, traspare in esso una forma di

16. Tale radicamento genetico della filosofia nella libertà di pensiero, resa possibile per i Greci dalla loro organizzazione in *poleis*, definisce, secondo Cacciari, la natura intrinsecamente politica del pensiero filosofico.

17. A tal proposito sarà qui sufficiente ricordare l'edizione italiana degli editti del re Aśoka, sovrano di un impero che abbracciava quasi per intero il sub-continente indiano (III secolo a.C.), che Pugliese pubblicò nel 1960 presso l'editore La Nuova Italia e dopo un quarantennio riprese in una versione riveduta e ampliata per i tipi di Adelphi. Vedi Pugliese Carratelli 1960 e Pugliese Carratelli 2003$^{2}$.

18. Tortorelli Ghidini 2014: 9-10. La commemorazione si era tenuta, a classi riunite, il 30 maggio 2013 presso la Società Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti in Napoli. Essa offre un profilo piuttosto completo della figura umana e scientifica di Pugliese Carratelli.

illuminismo umanistico, basato sul convincimento che la ragione sia il solo mezzo per svincolare gli esseri umani dal giogo della necessità naturale, aprendo spazi alla libertà altrimenti preclusi.

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**Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, Global Historian of Antiquity**
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