

LEIBNIZ AND ADAM

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From Adam to Alexander and Caesar:
Leibniz's shift from logic
and metaphysics to a theory of history
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Leibniz's letter to Arnauld of July 14, 1686 (GP,II,47-59) mentions the name of Adam more than any other Leibniz text (with a single exception). The letter renewed the direct correspondence between the two philosophers, thereby enabling Leibniz to win Arnauld as a partner in the discussion of the just completed principles of his philosophy. This could only be achieved, however, by exploiting the missionary aims of Arnauld and of Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels.¹ The relative conclusion of the principles of Leibniz's philosophical system was to a great degree a result of his achievements in the field of logic, especially in the *Generales inquisitiones* of 1686, where he noted in the margin: "Hic egregie progressus sum" (GP,2).²

For Leibniz, Arnauld was not merely a Cartesian who had to be taken seriously. He also respected him as the philosophical head of the Catholic theologians and as an important logician. It was therefore natural that Leibniz would try to interest Arnauld in a discussion of his new metaphysical principles, which would afford an opportunity to test both their philosophical as well as their theological acceptance. In organizing this correspondence Leibniz demonstrated considerable theatrical skills, not only in overcoming Arnauld's reluctance to get involved in the philosophical discussion at all,³ but even more in the manner in which he guided the discussion. At first he sent the Landgraf only a summary of the *Discours de Metaphysique*; allegedly he had not been able to send the whole because there was still no clean copy available (GP,II,11). It is basically an outline of the contents of the sections. Only one of the sections is formulated in detail. It concerns one of the most explosive – and at the same time most frequently discussed – philosophical and theological problems of the 17th century. This is §13, which refers to the question of free will through its explanation of the individual concept. The philosopher, above all the theologian Arnauld, must have felt provoked. And indeed, he at first even refused to answer to the supposed heretic.⁴ But after some persuasion by the Landgraf, who reminded him of the mission, and after considering the Leibnizian arguments (mediated by the Landgraf, GP,II,16) about free will, he could not but take up the

challenge of §13.

In his first answer – still to the Landgraf – Arnauld comes instantly to the point that is to Adam. He declares Leibniz's philosophy to be horrible and shocking, especially §13, which denied the free will of God. For if the individual concept of Adam included all his children and all events that would happen to them, their children and so on, then there would be no place for the free will of God.⁵

Leibniz's mood in his first ironic answer to Arnauld (still mediated by the Landgraf)⁶ seems not to betray any anger at all, despite his correspondent's aggressive attack. In fact he appears even to take some pleasure in showing Arnauld the logical foundations of his metaphysical arguments.⁷ Leibniz declares the following thesis the most important:

c'est que tousjours, dans toute proposition affirmative, veritable, necessaire ou contingente, universelle ou singuliere, la notion du predicat est comprise en quelque facon dans celle du sujet, praedicatum inest subiecto; ou bien je ne say ce que c'est que la verité. Or, je ne demande pas d'avantage de liaison icy que celle qui se trouve a parre rei entre les termes d'une proposition veritable, et ce n'est que dans ce sens que je dis que la notion de la substance individuelle enferme tous ses evenemens et toutes ses denominations, même celles qu'on appelle vulgairement extrinseques ... puisqu'il faut tousjours qu'il y ait quelque fondement de la connexion des termes d'une proposition, qui se doit trouver dans leurs notions" (GPII,56).

Leibniz was aware from the beginning that this principle had to be accepted by the author of the *Port Royal Logic*.⁸ In fact Arnauld's next answer, already direct, is especially defensive on this point; he accepts Leibniz's explanation and remarks only that it is unusual to consider the specific concepts in their presence in the divine mind and – moreover – to conclude from the nature of the specific to the nature of the individual concepts.

Leibniz is generous in applying this unusual view to the nature of concepts and in effect he has already won, since the rest of the following discussion is not as important as these logical foundations of his metaphysics, which Arnauld has already accepted.

After this little victory Leibniz grants the important difference between both kinds of concepts to Arnauld:

C'est que les notions specifiques les plus abstraites ne contiennent que des verités necessaires ou éternelles, qui ne dependent point des decrets de Dieu (quoyqu'en disent les Cartesiens, dont il semble que vous même vous estes pas soucé en ce point); mais les notions des substances individuelles, qui sont completes et capables de distinguer entierement leur sujet, et qui enveloppent

par consequent les verité contingentes ou de fait, et les circonstances individuelles du temps, du lieu, et autres, doivent aussi envelopper dans leur notion, prise comme possible, les decrets libres de Dieu, pris aussi comme possibles, parceque ces decrets libres sont les principales sources des existences ou faits; au lieu que les essences sont dans l'entendement divin avant la consideration de la volonte (GPII,49).

In other words all concepts, specific as well as individual, are in the divine mind prior to any consideration of the will; that is, God forms and recognizes all concepts a priori, but only the individual concepts of the actually existing concreta still need the decrees of the divine will for their existence. This is because their existence shall closely cohere with the divine decision to choose this world among all other possible worlds as the best possible one.

In addition to this differentiation concerning the divine will Leibniz sees a difference between specific and individual concepts in their contents, too. The former, as concepts of abstracta only, include a finite number of denominations or determinations and are thus recognizable a priori for human beings with finite ability of cognition. The latter include an infinite number of denominations and are therefore recognizable a priori as complete concepts only for God. Human beings are able to recognize them only partially and by experience.

But in spite of this Leibniz insists on the principle that specific and individual concepts include all their predicates, which means that the complete concepts of individual substances include all events which shall happen to them. He directs special attention to the question of free will. Arnauld had feared that the creation of Adam, and with him all his descendants and the future events in their lives, prevented the free decrees of God in special situations (and thus the free will of God). Leibniz argued in contrast that God, with his creation of the best of all possible worlds, at the same time chose all individual substances, their relations and all his future free decrees for the eventual special situations like the foundation of the Jewish or Christian religions (GPII,50). In similar fashion Leibniz expounds on the difficulties surrounding the question of the free will of man. He criticized the Cartesian position that the free will of man was the possibility to choose between indifferent alternatives. He argued that nobody was free who did not have a reason for his decisions. Freedom of man and in a sense of all individual substances lay in their independence from any external influences, since they produced all their actions and ideas spontaneously. Only God as their creator has an external influence on them.

This criticism of the Cartesian view of free will as pure indifference brought Leibniz into opposition with the prevailing Cartesianism and placed him in dangerous proximity to Spinoza, who had also criticized Cartesian

indifference and defined human freedom as self-determination – although in a completely different way than Leibniz.⁹ In fact, in this connection we find phrases in Leibniz which express a radical determinism not only in the suspicious eyes of the theologian Arnauld, e.g.:

Tout estant dans l'ordre jnsqu'aux miracles, quoyque ceuxcy soyent contraires à quelques maximes subalternes ou loix de la nature. Ainsi tous les evenemens humains ne pouvoient manquer d'arriver comme ils sont arrivés effectivement, supposé le choix d'Adam fait; mais non pas tant à cause de la notion individuelle d'Adam, quoyque cette notion les enferme, mais à cause des desseins de Dieu, qui entrent aussi dans cette notion individuelle d'Adam et qui determinent celle de tout cet univers et ensuite tant celle d'Adam que celles de toutes les autres substances individuelles de cet univers ... (GPII,51).

And later in the same letter we read:

D'ailleurs si dans la vie de quelque personne et même dans tout cet univers quelque chose alloit autrement qu'il en va, rien nous empêcheroit de dire que ce seroit une autre personne ou autre univers possible que Dieu auroit choisi" (GPII,53).

One particular argument of Leibniz againsts Arnauld's doubts is the explanation that God had created the best world, not only according to a few principles, but after examining all possible worlds in all their denominations. Only then did he choose that completely determined world which agreed most with his principal aims as the best world. As an illustration Leibniz again used the metaphor of Adam:

J'avois dit que la supposition de la quelle tous les evenemens humains se peuvent deduire n'est pas celle de créer un Adam vague, mais celle de créer un tel Adam déterminé à toutes ces circonstances, choisi parmy une infinité d'Adams possibles (GPII,54).

But in this phrase one can already feel the drawback of the metaphor of Adam, which Leibniz had not originated in the discussion, but had taken from Arnauld. The metaphors Leibniz chose in order to illustrate his conception of individual substances were the historical personalities of Caesar and Alexander in the *Discours* and also in the *Generales Inquisitiones*, where he added Petrus. When Leibniz wanted to describe a certain Adam in the letter to Arnauld, he scarcely found individual marks; only the proper names 'paradise' and 'Eva' can refer to a specific Adam in contradiction to other possible Adams as first men in other possible universes. It thus seems to make sense when in his own texts Leibniz prefers historical personalities which include many marks and names characterizing them clearly as

individuals. At the same time these predicates include times, places, relations to other individuals, and so on. By choosing the example of Caesar and his actions, Leibniz can illustrate what he understands in saying that all future actions and events of an individual substance are included in its concept:

puisque Jules Cesar deviendra dictateur perpennel et maistre de la Republique, et renversera la liberté, cette action est comprise dans sa notion, car nous supposons que c'est la nature d'une telle notion parfaite d'un sujet de tout comprendre, à fin que le predicat y soit enfermé, *ut possit inesse subiecto*. ... Car si quelque homme estoit capable d'achever toute la *demonstration*, en vertu de laquelle il prouveroit cette connexion du sujet qui est Cesar et du predicat qui est son entreprise heureuse, il feroit voir en effect que la dictature future de Cesar a son fondement dans sa notion ou nature, qu'on y voit une raison, pourquoy il a plustost resolu de passer le Rubicon que de s'y arrester, et pourquoy il a plustost gagné que perdu la journée de Pharsale, et qu'il estoit raisonnable, et par consequent asseuré que cela arrivera, mais non pas qu'il est necessaire en soy même, ny que le contraire implique contradiction" (DM, §13; VOR, 1703-1704).

Consequently, the complete notion of Caesar includes his complete biography, with all events which occur in his life, with all times and places, with all relations to other persons and so on.¹⁰ The difference between such complete notions of individuals and the specific notions is that in the latter the opposite includes a contradiction, while in the former the opposite can be possible when the concept is considered alone and in itself. Leibniz thus differentiates between necessary and certain propositions. But there are also certain propositions, for example one predicate of Caesar, which cannot be another predicate in this world, for it would be another Caesar with another biography.

Leibniz used metaphors like Adam, Caesar and Alexander with the sole intention of illustrating his metaphysical conception of individual substances, a logically founded conception. At first glance the name he used seems to be chosen accidentally, but on further consideration the historical examples are more suitable for showing us what it means to be an individual. We know only these examples in points of time, names of places where the named people lived.

Although the correspondence with Arnauld, the *Discours* and even the *Generales Inquisitiones* basically treat the same subject, the historical strength of this conception comes to light only in the *Discours* and the *Generales Inquisitiones*. The following argument, from §8 of the *Discours* is particularly significant for the historical dimension of the metaphysical foundations of Leibniz:

Ainsi quand on considere bien la connexion des choses, on peut

dire qu'il y a de tout temps dans l'ame d'Alexandre des restes de tout ce qui luy est arrivé, et les marques de tout ce qui luy arrivera, et même des traces de tout ce qui [se] passe dans l'univers, quoy qu'il n'appartienne qu'à Dieu de les reconnoistre toutes" (DM, §8, VOR, 1697-1698).

And in the *Generales inquisitiones*, §74, Leibniz introduces the chronological determination of an individual substance and its predicates as an important characteristic of it, when he argues:

Ut si dico Petrus abnegat, intelligendo de certo tempore, utique praesupponitur etiam illius temporis natura, quæ utique involvit et omnia in illo tempore existentia" (GI, 64).¹¹

As early as in 1904, Cassirer argued that the chronological succession was no longer an external and unimportant denomination, but the adequate form of the representativeness of the individuals, which he emphasized as a philosophical achievement of Leibniz.¹²

But it is primarily Leibniz's solution to the problem of free will by means of his metaphysical conception that was a direct contribution to the contemporary philosophical discussion of the question "How can history be possible as a science?" In the 17th century, when several sciences like geometry, mechanics and optics had achieved a high status, all other sciences had to take up the demands for a stringent method of knowledge. Especially exposed to criticism were empirical sciences like physics, medicine, and history.¹³ Thomas Hobbes, respected by Leibniz despite his radical thinking, excluded history from the sciences.¹⁴ In his opinion, while history was not useless for education, it could not be a strict science, because it was merely a collection of memories and sensations or notes about them. Hobbes subdivided history into natural history, which dealt only with natural facts independent of the human will, and civil history, which dealt with human actions which depend on the human will.

Leibniz was of course familiar with the application of the term 'history' to the knowledge of facts, but he did not use this subdivision regarding human will. Nor was he able to follow Hobbes in his exclusion of history from the sciences. To my mind, this is a consequence of his metaphysical conception of individual substances and of his solution to the problem of free will. Leibniz used this conception, which he had acquired in his works on logic, to influence the contemporary debate about the possibility of history as a science.

Jungius, in his *Logica Hamburgensis*, had already declared that natural history, which concerns only those facts independent of the human will, can ultimately be reduced to a demonstrative science. Only the "actiones liberae,

quales sunt hominum" would remain as "res vere contingentes" (Jungius 1957: 278)¹⁵ for which we were not able to find a stringent method of science because of the influence of the free will of man and God on these actions. Jungius as well as Hermann Conring¹⁶ were willing to diminish the significance of free will, as Hobbes had done with intention, to make a science of politics possible. They argued that human beings only rarely depart from the rules or habits of life dictated to them by their nature, age, social status, education and life goals. But neither Jungius nor Conring ventured to deny free will or to exclude it from civil history.¹⁷

Leibniz's metaphysics allows him to take the lead in yet another way. He can accept free will as a certain volition, as a predicate of an individual substance at a certain time, and as an effect of another idea of this individual.¹⁸ Referring to his metaphysical principles he argues:

si j'étais capable de considerer distinctement tout ce qui m'arrive ou parois à cette heure, j'y pourrais voir tout ce qui m'arrivera qui ou me paroitra à tout jamais" (VOR, 1706-1707, DM, §14.)

In other words, for an intuitive knowledge like God's a demonstrative science of the history of human actions would be possible. We can have a knowledge of the complete concepts of individuals, too, but only through an infinite historical science. This is Leibniz's argument in §74 of the *Generales Inquisitiones*:

Petri notio est completa, adeoque infinita involvit, ideo nunquam perveniri potest ad perfectam demonstrationem, atamen semper magis magisque acceditur, ut differentia sit minor quantumvis data (GI, 64).¹⁹

That is, while for Jungius the limits of human knowledge are reasons only for a diminution of the principal separation between demonstrative and empirical sciences, Leibniz deploys his metaphysical conception to abolish free will in so far as it is an impediment to history being a science. Thus Leibniz can neutralize the ontological separation of natural and civil sciences on the one hand and between demonstrative and empirical sciences on the other hand. According to these reflections historical science is faced in principle with the same methodological problems as any other empirical science (physics or medicine, for example) although in another dimension. Leibniz therefore declares that the discovery of stringent methods for the foundation of the empirical sciences, which are the far greater part of all sciences, is an urgent task of philosophy.

From this point of view the problem of a theory of history appears as a special, but extremely difficult case of the general problem of empirical

science. The question thus arises whether Leibniz's special interest in historical science, which had become obvious since the middle of the 80's, was really in the first place a consequence of his new role as a historian,²⁰ or rather whether he used that occasion to treat historical subjects with a new methodology and to test his metaphysical principles in this new field: above all the conception of the complete concepts of individual substances, which include the traces of all the events which happen in their life, but also the principle of continuity, his theory about representation and expression of the substances, the principle of the equivalence of cause and effect and so on. His reflection on this methodological problem in the *Nouvelles Essais* can thus also be read as a result of his work on history.²¹ Here Leibniz postulates an understanding of experience as a systematic connection of theoretic knowledge and perception, a connection of sensations guided by theory. Leibniz gives us a general criterion to evaluate the truth of sensations:

je crois que le vray *Criterion* en matiere des objets des sens, est la liaison des phenomenes c'est à dire la connexion de ce qui se passe en differens lieux et temps, et dans l'experiance de differens hommes, qui sont eux mêmes les uns aux autres des phenomenes très importants sur cet article. Et la liaison des phenomenes, qui garantit les *verités de fait* à l'égard des choses sensibles hors de nous, se verifie par le moyen des *verités de raison*, comme les apparences de l'optique s'éclaircissent par la Geometrie (NE.4.2.14; A, VI.6.374-375).

Leibniz freely admits that in this way empirical science will never attain the status of a demonstrable science, that of a "scientia perfecta", but he means that empirical sciences could acquire a sure foundation if it was possible "par le moyen de quelques principes d'expérience rendent raison de quantité de phenomenes, et peuvent même les prévoir dans la pratique" (NE.4.12.10; A, VI.6.454).

Furthermore Leibniz points out a fourth method of cognition that would make another sphere of empirical cognition accessible to reason-guided methods in science, expressedly in history, and this is the examination of the degrees of probability:

L'opinion, fondée dans le vraisemblable, merite peut être aussi le nom de connaissance; autrement presque toute la connaissance historique et beaucoup d'autres tomberont. Mais sans disputer des noms: je tiens que la *recherche de degrés de probabilité* seroit très importante, et nous manque encore, et c'est un grand défaut de nos Logiques. Car lorsqu'on ne peut point décider absolument la question, on pourroit toujours déterminer le degré de vraisemblance *ex datis*, et par conséquent on peut juger raisonnablement quel parti est le plus apparent (NE.4.2.14; A, VI.6.372).

'Reasonably' – that means for Leibniz that what is probable has to be found

out by examining the character of the object itself and should not be guided by the opinion of the majority or of some authority. In his realistic judgement of the small range of application for the pure demonstrative sciences Leibniz assigns these skills a high value for the development of science in general.

Thus we can see a shift not only from Adam to Caesar and Alexander, but also in the movement of Leibniz from logic and metaphysics to a science of history. According to his metaphysical conception – developed on the basis of logical reflection – the possibility of history as a scientific theory became for him a touchstone for the truth of his metaphysics.

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Notes

- 1 In fact the Landgraf had to infer serious reflections of Leibniz about a conversion to the Catholic church from his letter of January 1/11, 1684 (A.I.4, Nr. 285). In any case the Landgraf informed Arnauld about this new subject of their missionary work, as Leibniz's reaction shows (Leibniz to Landgraf Ernst, 7(?) April 1684; A.I.4, Nr. 291).
- 2 "Here I have made extraordinary progress". In the middle of the eighties Leibniz had established the principles of his philosophy, not only in logic, with his conception of individual concepts, but also in the connection of physics with metaphysics, with his conception of the *potentia agendi et patiendi*, i.e., of power and with his new view of final causes. And from this time we can see Leibniz again publishing *philosophical* writings in journals, especially criticism of Cartesianism in different fields.
- 3 Leibniz took Arnauld's missionary claims seriously, but used them dexterously to oblige the theologian to a philosophical discussion. See note 1 above.
- 4 "Ne vaudroit il pas mieux qu'il laissast là ces speculations metaphisiques qui ne peuvent estre d'aucune utilité ny à luy ny aux autres, pour s'appliquer sérieusement à la plus grande affaire qu'il puisse jamais avoir, qui est d'asseurer son salut en rentrant dans l'Eglise, dont les nouvelles sectes n'ont pu sortir qu'en se rendant schismatiques?" (GP.II.16).
- 5 "Si cela est, Dieu a esté libre de créer (ou de ne pas créer Adam; mais supposant qu'il l'ait voulu créer), tout ce qui est depuis arrivé au genre humain, et qui luy arrivera à jamais, a dû et doit arriver par une nécessité plus que fatale. Car la Notion individuelle d'Adam a enfermé qu'il auroit tant d'enfants, et la notion individuelle de chacun de ces enfants tout ce qu'ils feroient et tous les enfans qu'ils auroient et ainsi de suite. Il n'y a donc pas plus de liberté en Dieu ..." (GP.II.15).
- 6 Leibniz wrote two letters to the Landgraf, both intended for Arnauld, one

explicitly and the other with full knowledge that Arnauld would receive it. The tension between these two methods of replying to Arnauld's arguments was exploited by Leibniz.

7 See in the first part of the *Logic* the discussion of specific notions (Arnauld 1965: 53-58).

8 See the discussion about the right definition by Hobbes (1839: 71-73), Spinoza (1972: 34-35) and Arnauld (1965: 87-91).

9 See the letter to Arnauld from July 4/14, 1686, where Leibniz claimed that "une parfaite indifférence" is "une supposition chimérique ou incomplète" (GP.II, 56-57).

10 This is how Mittelstrass (1970: 510) describes the Leibnizian conception of individual concepts: "In der Alexander den Grossen betreffenden Kennzeichnung sollen also nicht nur neben den hier bereits angeführten Prädikatoren weitere Prädikatoren wie 'über-den-Hellespont-gehen' oder 'bei-Issos-siegen' vorkommen, Prädikatoren nämlich, von denen unter Umständen ein einziger genügen würde, um Alexander eindeutig zu kennzeichnen, sondern auch solche wie 'Anfang-November-333-schlecht-schlafen' und 'in-Aristotelescher-praktischer-Philosophie-schlecht-benotet'. Die zum vollständigen Begriff Alexanders des Grossen gehörige vollständige Kennzeichnung ist eine lückenlose Biographie."

11 "Thus, if I say, 'Peter denies', understanding this of a certain time, then there is presupposed also the nature of that time, which also involves all that exists during that time" (P66).

12 "Die zeitliche Folge und Ordnung ist ihm nichts Äusserliches und Nebensächliches mehr, sondern sie bezeichnet die angemessene Form, unter der allein die *Einzeldinge* sich darstellen können. Alle konkrete Wirklichkeit... ist an die Bedingung der Zeit geknüpft" (Cassirer 1904.II: 92-93). And Mittelstrass (1970: 513) refers to a strange similarity in physics: "Kann man alle physikalischen Bestimmungen (darunter auch die Randbedingungen) eines physikalischen Systems zu einem gegebenen Zeitpunkt (die Koordinaten der Massepunkte und deren zeitliche Ableitungen zu einem gegebenen Zeitpunkt), so sind daraus auf analytischem Wege alle künftigen Zustände des Systems vollständig ableitbar. Für ein solches System lässt sich damit nach Leibniz ein vollständiger Begriff angeben."

13 H. Dretzel, whom I wish to thank for having contributed significantly to stimulating an investigation into the philosophical sources of the modern science of history, points out that it was at the end of the 16th century (at the latest) that "die Polemik gegen eine zusammenhanglose Aufhebung historischer Tatsachen ohne Darstellung ihres inneren Ursachenzusammenhanges ein stehender Topos der einschlägigen Literatur" (Dretzel 1981: 266).

14 "There are of Knowledge two kinds; whereof one is *Knowledge of Fact*: the other *Knowledge of the Consequence of one Affirmation to another*. The former is nothing else, but Sense and Memory, and is *Absolute Knowledge*: as when we see a Fact doing, or remember it done: and this is the Knowledge required in the Witness. The later is called *Science*; and is *Conditional*; as when we know, that, *If the figure showne be a Circle, then any straight line through the Center shall divide it into two equal parts*. And this is the Knowledge required in a Philosopher; that is to say, of him that pretends to Reasoning. The Register of *Knowledge of Fact* is called *History*. Whereof there be two sorts: one called *Natural History*; which is the History of such Facts, or Effects of Nature, as have no Dependance on Mans Will; Such as are the Histories of *Metals, Plants, Animals, Religions*, and the like. The other, is *Civil History*; which is the History of the Voluntary Actions of men in Common-wealths" (Hobbes 1952: 64).

15 And so they can not be a strict science like geometry but only something that approximates it: "Et haec quidem ad scientiam constituentem minus sunt idoneae. Apodicticae tamen praecipua, & Methodi scientificae aliqua ex parte his accommodari queunt, ut inde quaedam quasi *secundum analogiam* sive in *sua genere scientia* oriantur" (Jungius 1681: 278-279).

16 "At vero homines raro utuntur plena arbitrii sui libertate, sed plerumque illic, quo vergit naturalis illa inclinatio, sequuntur, aut patuntur sese duci ab iis moribus, quibus assueti sunt" (Comaring 1730, III: 323).

17 Vico too accepted the free will of human beings, but defined it as the common sense of all people for acquiring the things they need. See §§8-11 of the *Scienza Nuova* (Vico 1959, V: 57).

18 See the sentence in the letter to Arnauld of October 9, 1686, where Leibniz gives a graphic representation of his conception, according to which "l'estat des corps au moment B suit de l'estat des corps au moment A" (GP.II, 114).

19 "But the concept of Peter is complete, and so involves infinite things; so one can never arrive at a perfect proof, but one always approaches it more and more, so that the difference is less than any given difference" (P66).

20 The beginning of the investigations about the origins of the Guepts occurs already in the spring of 1685. In letters from this time we can also find methodological reflections about a science of history (A.I.4, Nr. 422 and 441).

21 About Leibniz's achievements in history and especially in historical methodology, see the work of Davillé (1909: 550-559).

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Leibniz and Vico on the pre-Adamite theory

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The theory that there were men before Adam, the pre-Adamite theory, put forth by Isaac La Peyrère in 1655 in his *Præ-Adamitæ*, was one of the most discussed, refuted and condemned theories in the latter part of the 17th century. The book was banned and burned everywhere, even in supposedly tolerant Netherlands, and the author was arrested in Belgium in 1656. He was only released due to the influence of his master, the Prince of Condé, on condition that he would personally apologize to the Pope and convert to Catholicism. He went to Rome, apologized to Pope Alexander VII, converted, and was greeted by Vatican officials who said, "Let us embrace the man who is before Adam". He then wrote an apology in which he blamed his heretical views on his Calvinist upbringing. Though offered a post in the Vatican, he decided to return to Paris where he became Condé's librarian, and later retired to the Oratory as a lay brother, where he spent the rest of his life gathering further evidence for his theory. (On La Peyrère's career, see Popkin 1987)

His case and his theory reverberated throughout Europe. The book had five printings in 1655 in Latin, an English translation in 1656, and a Dutch one in 1666.¹ The first refutation, by Hugo Grotius, appeared a full dozen years before the book was published.² The book was finished in 1643 and was dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu who promptly banned it. Father Marin Mersenne sent manuscript copies to the Vatican, to Hugo Grotius and to others. As soon as the book was published in 1655 (with the aid of Queen Christina; Cf. Akeman 1991: 204-205), refutations appeared in France, The Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia, England and elsewhere.³ Refutations were being published well into the 18th century. German ones appeared from 1656 until at least 1721. These were written by theologians, some of whom Leibniz knew personally, and some of whom were involved in Church reunification discussions during the latter part of the 17th century.

Spinoza had probably known La Peyrère personally in Amsterdam in 1655 (when the latter was in contact with rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, the leading teacher in Spinoza's school). Spinoza owned a copy of *Præ-Adamitæ*, and used material from it liberally in the *Theological-Political*