

Introduction

The Other Voice

It is a commonplace view among scholars who relate the history of early modern philosophy that in this history, both Sophie, Electress of Hanover (1630–1714), and her daughter, Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia (1668–1705), qualify for a footnote, which in both cases reads: patron and correspondent of the great philosopher Leibniz.¹ More munificent scholars expand this entry to include the claim that both women had an interest in philosophy.² By that what is usually meant is that they read philosophical works and encouraged others to do the same. The roots of such a view go back a long way. John Toland, who met Sophie in 1701 and 1702, wrote of her: “She has bin long admir’d by all the Learned World, as a Woman of incomparable Knowledge in Divinity, Philosophy, History, and the Subjects of all sorts of Books, of which she has read a prodigious quantity.”³ Two hundred years later, Adolphus Ward painted much the same picture:

Beyond a doubt, Sophia was distinguished by an intellectual curiosity that was still uncommon, though much less so than

1. See, for example, Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie, *Women in Science: A Biographical Dictionary with Annotated Bibliography* (London: MIT Press, 1986), 166–67; Patricia Fara, “Leibniz’s Women,” *Endeavour* 28 (2004): 146–48; Stuart Brown and N. J. Fox, *Historical Dictionary of Leibniz’s Philosophy* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 213.

2. Ethel M. Kersey, *Women Philosophers: A Bio-Critical Source Book* (London: Greenwood Press, 1989), 189–90; Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, eds., *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2: 1464; Jacqueline Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16, 126–27. Some do not even grant Sophie and Sophie Charlotte the status of a minor footnote: in one large volume on the history of women philosophers, for instance, Sophie gets only a single, passing mention, as someone who may have had a conversation with George Burnet about Catharine Trotter’s *Defence* of Locke. See Mary Ellen Waithe, ed., *A History of Women Philosophers*, vol. 3, 1600–1900 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), 123.

3. John Toland, *An account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover; sent to a minister of state in Holland by Mr. Toland* (London, 1705), 67. See also John Toland, *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704), preface §7.

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is often supposed, among the women of her age... She certainly had a liking for moral theology and philosophy, which were, in general, more in the way of the ladies of the period than the historical sciences.⁴

And a contemporary writer tells us that Sophie “expressed an interest in philosophy” and “was extremely curious about intellectual matters, and encouraged the philosophical interests of her daughter, Sophie-Charlotte.”⁵ Such remarks give the impression that the extent of Sophie’s involvement with philosophy was to keep abreast of the philosophy of others and encourage others to do the same. Such an interest in philosophy would be, of course, essentially a passive one.⁶

The same story is told of Sophie Charlotte. Her enthusiasm for philosophy was legendary in her own time; for instance, John Toland wrote after meeting her: “Her Reading is infinit, and she is conversant in all manner of Subjects; nor is She more admir’d for her inimitable Wit, than for her exact Knowledg of the most abstruse parts of Philosophy.”⁷ Stories of her genius were also passed down to her grandson, Frederick II, who wrote of her:

She was a princess of distinguished merit, who combined all the charms of her sex with the graces of wit and the lights of reason... This princess brought to Prussia the spirit of good society, true politeness, and the love of arts and sciences... She summoned Leibniz and many other learned men to her court; her curiosity wanted to grasp the first principles of

4. Adolphus William Ward, *The Electress Sophia and the Hanoverian Succession* (London: Goupil & Co., 1903), 191–93.

5. Broad, *Women Philosophers of the Seventeenth Century*, 16 and 126–27.

6. At times Leibniz himself likewise portrays Sophie’s interest in philosophy as essentially passive, for example when he claims that “Madam the Electress is a great genius. She loves rare and extraordinary thoughts in which there is something fine, curious and paradoxical.” Leibniz to Gabriel D’Artis, July 1695, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften, multiple volumes in 8 series (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–), I 11: 547 (cited hereafter as A, followed by series and volume).

7. Toland, *An account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover*, 33. Toland also gushes in his *Letters to Serena* that Sophie Charlotte is a “Mistriss of a vast Compass of Knowledge.” Toland, *Letters to Serena*, preface §9.

things. One day she pressed Leibniz on this subject, and he said to her; “Madam, there is no way to satisfy you: you want to know the reason for the reason.”⁸

The picture painted by both Toland and Frederick II has long since become part of the philosophical landscape. For example, one contemporary writer describes Sophie Charlotte as “a ‘philosopher-Queen’ with a passion for learning,”⁹ while another opts for the blunt characterization as “German patroness and disciple of Leibniz.”¹⁰ As for her association with Leibniz, it has also been claimed that Sophie Charlotte “helped him by stimulating his philosophical thinking.”¹¹

It is of course true that both Sophie and Sophie Charlotte provided Leibniz with friendship, patronage, and intellectual stimulation. It is also true that both had an interest in philosophy. But it does both a disservice to suppose that their place in the history of philosophy can be secured only through the services they rendered to Leibniz. Likewise, it does both a disservice to depict (intentionally or otherwise) their interest in philosophy as a passive one, since there is clear evidence that both actively engaged in philosophical discussion proper, and had contributions to make to the philosophical debates of their day. This evidence is to be found in their respective writings for Leibniz, but unfortunately nowhere else.¹² By restricting their philosophical writing to their letters for Leibniz, Sophie and Sophie Charlotte elected to keep their philosophical views private. While it is

8. Frederick II, King of Prussia, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de Brandebourg* (Berlin, 1750), 177–78.

9. Myriam Yardeni, “Huguenot Traces and Reminiscences in John Toland’s Conception of Tolerance,” in *The Religious Culture of the Huguenots 1660–1750*, ed. Anne Duncan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 175.

10. Kersey, *Women Philosophers*, 190.

11. Beatrice H. Zedler, “The Three Princesses,” *Hypatia* 4 (1989): 58.

12. In choosing to restrict their philosophical writing to their letters to Leibniz, Sophie and Sophie Charlotte took after Sophie’s sister, Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia (1618–80), who wrote philosophy only in her correspondence with René Descartes (1596–1650). Sophie had a minor role in the Elizabeth-Descartes correspondence, being the intermediary for several of the exchanges while Elizabeth was in Berlin. For the correspondence see Princess Elizabeth and René Descartes, *The Correspondence between Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, ed. and trans. Lisa Shapiro (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

often true that letters were a semi-public form of communication in early modern times, this is not the case with the letters the two women wrote for Leibniz. These were personal, not for wider circulation, and certainly not for publication. On this matter they could count on Leibniz's discretion: their letters for him remained in his private collection, to which he alone had access. This effectively meant that their voices were not heard by anyone other than Leibniz until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when their letters to him were published for the first time.¹³ Yet the publication of their letters still did not lead to their voices being heard: scholars who studied the correspondences in depth, and wrote of them in detail, elected not to mention, let alone discuss, the philosophical contributions of the two women.¹⁴ No doubt part of the reason for this is the fact that scholarly interest in the contributions of women in early modern philosophy has developed only comparatively recently. Another factor is that the philosophical writings of Sophie and Sophie Charlotte are but a very small part of their respective correspondences with Leibniz, which are mostly filled with political news and court gossip. To find the philosophical material requires combing through volumes and volumes of writings, most of which are of no interest to philosophers. As a result, the voices of Sophie and Sophie Charlotte are much harder to detect than those of, for example, Anne Conway or Margaret Cavendish, who composed entire philosophical treatises. Nevertheless they are there. Sophie's voice is undoubtedly louder than that of her daughter, who lived less than half the years of her mother and so had considerably less time and opportunity to philosophize; for this reason, Sophie will occupy more of our attention in what follows.

13. In *Die Werke von Leibniz*, ed. Onno Klopp, 11 vols. (Hanover: Klindworth, 1864–84) (cited hereafter as Klopp). The correspondence with Sophie is to be found in vols. 7–9 (all published 1873), while the correspondence with Sophie Charlotte is to be found in vol. 10 (published 1877). In neither case is the correspondence complete, however.

14. See for example, Louis Alexandre Foucher de Careil, *Leibniz et les deux Sophies* (Paris: G. Bailliere, 1876); George MacDonald Ross, "Leibniz und Sophie Charlotte," in *Sophie Charlotte und ihr Schloß*, ed. S. Herz, C. M. Vogtherr, and F. Windt (London: 1999), 95–105; Michel Fichant, "Leibniz et Toland: philosophie pour princesses?" *Revue de Synthèse* 116 (1995): 421–39.

*Personal Relations: Sophie, Sophie Charlotte, and Leibniz*¹⁵

Among Anglophones, Sophie is and has always been best known as the German princess who was almost Queen of Great Britain. When she was born in 1630, Sophie's prospects did not seem particularly bright. She was the twelfth of thirteen children born to the exiled "Winter King" Frederick V (1596–1632), Elector Palatine of the Rhine, and Elizabeth Stuart (1596–1662). She relates in her memoirs that her name was chosen by lot, a method resorted to once it was realized that "all the kings and princes of consideration had already performed this office [i.e., finding a name] for the children that came before me."¹⁶ She was educated by private tutors in Leiden and then the Hague, her city of birth (brought up, she says, "according to the good doctrine of Calvin,"¹⁷ though her education also included history, philosophy, mathematics, and law), before going to live with her brother, Karl Ludwig (1617–80), following the restoration of the Palatinate. After a broken engagement to a Swedish prince and numerous marriage proposals from various nobles, in 1658 Sophie married Ernst August, son of George, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg (1582–1641). She had been briefly courted by Ernst August six years earlier but had not considered him a desirable match at the time because he was the youngest of four brothers and consequently had little prospect of inheriting a domain.¹⁸ She had instead become engaged to his elder brother Georg Wilhelm, but he quickly got cold feet, and in an effort to extract himself honorably from his betrothal he made a pact with Ernst August: should Ernst August marry Sophie in his place, Georg Wilhelm promised never to take a wife and so produce any legitimate heirs, ensuring that all land and titles due to him would instead devolve to Ernst August,¹⁹ an arrangement deemed acceptable both by Ernst August and Sophie. Four years after the marriage Ernst August was appointed

15. For full biographical details, I refer the reader to the bibliography.

16. Sophie, Electress of Hanover, *Memoirs*, ed. and trans. H. Forester (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1888), 2.

17. Sophie, *Memoirs*, 4.

18. Sophie, *Memoirs*, 46.

19. A copy of Georg Wilhelm's renunciation of marriage, including these promises, can be found in Sophie, *Memoirs*, 72–75.

bishop of Osnabrück; by this time he had fathered two children with Sophie, Georg Ludwig (1660–1727), and Friedrich August (1661–90). Five more children were to follow: Maximilian Wilhelm (1666–1726), Sophie Charlotte (1668–1705), Karl Philipp (1669–90), Christian Heinrich (1671–1703), and Ernst August (1674–1728). The status of the bishop prince once thought to be without prospects improved considerably with the death in 1679 of his elder brother, Johann Friedrich (1625–79), who had since 1665 ruled the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg (often referred to as Hanover after its principal town). As Georg Wilhelm had voluntarily relinquished his hereditary claim to the domain, Ernst August took over as duke upon Johann Friedrich's death. Three years earlier, Johann Friedrich had employed the services of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) as court counselor and librarian, and Leibniz's services, like those of other low-ranking officials, were retained by the incoming duke. Although relieved to have retained his job, the position was not the one that the young Leibniz had hoped for, or felt that his achievements deserved. And by the time he came into Hanover's employ his achievements were not inconsiderable: he had been awarded a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1662, a master's degree in 1664, and a doctorate in law in 1666, and in 1668 began work on legal reform for the Elector of Mainz. In 1672 he was dispatched to Paris on a diplomatic mission on behalf of the elector. When his employer died shortly afterward, Leibniz decided to remain in France to take advantage of the superior opportunities for intellectual development and networking, and while there he started to attract attention for his writings on jurisprudence and mathematics, as well as for his calculating machine. Despite all this promise, job offers were few and far between, and when it became clear that no possibility of a position in Paris would emerge Leibniz accepted the only offer on the table—counselor and librarian at the court of Hanover.²⁰

Almost as soon as Ernst August had assumed the reins of power, Leibniz—keen to impress his new employer—bombarded him with various practical proposals, most of which would involve his promo-

20. For more information on Leibniz's early years in Hanover, see Nicholas Rescher, "Leibniz Finds a Niche (1676–1677)," in Nicholas Rescher, *On Leibniz* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 162–98.

tion from mere court counselor.²¹ While the majority of these proposals met with indifference, two in particular caught the new elector's eye: the first was to continue with efforts to improve mining technology so as to increase the output of the Harz mines;²² with various suggestions up his sleeve as to how this could be achieved, Leibniz assumed a role as mining engineer, which led him to spend almost three years in the Harz mines between 1680 and 1686, though success in the endeavor eluded him. The second proposal to meet with Ernst August's approval was the writing of the history of the House of Guelph (or Welf),²³ a European dynasty that included many monarchs and nobles from England and Germany, and detailing its links with the House of Este, an earlier European dynasty dating back to the time of Charlemagne. As a member of the Guelph line himself, and eager to establish his pedigree, albeit for dynastic rather than personal reasons, Ernst August saw the value of a well-researched Guelph history and needed little encouragement from his court counselor to give his blessing to the project.²⁴ From 1685 onward, writing the Guelph history was Leibniz's chief task for the Hanoverian court, and one that proved to be a burden under which he would labor for the rest of his life.

The duchy of Hanover and an eager young Leibniz were not the only things inherited by Ernst August from his predecessor: he also co-opted Johann Friedrich's desire to promote church reunion efforts. In the late 1670s Johann Friedrich had given a warm reception to the bishop of Tina, Cristobal de Rojas y Spinola (c.1626–95), who had met with Germany's various territorial leaders to gauge the possibility of church reunification. As the Hanoverians had been receptive to the idea, Spinola returned to the duchy again in 1683 and held further talks with a Protestant delegation headed by Gerhard Wolter Molanus (1633–1722), the Abbé of Loccum. As the negotiations proceeded other interested parties joined the fray, such as France's chief theologian and Bishop of Meaux Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704),

21. See for example, A IV 3: 332–40, and 370–5, both from 1680.

22. See "Resolution," Duke Ernst August for Leibniz, 14/24 April 1680, A I 3: 47–48.

23. See Leibniz for Franz Ernst von Platen?, end January (?) 1680, A I 3: 20, and Leibniz to Ernst August, May 1680, A I 3: 57.

24. See "Resolution," Duke Ernst August for Leibniz, 31 July/10 August 1685, A I 4: 205–6.

but Spinola's attempts to generate wider support among the heads of German states were coolly received.

Aside from hosting reunion efforts, European politics dominated the attention of Ernst August and Sophie throughout the 1680s. In 1684, the political need for closer ties with the court of Brandenburg resulted in the marriage of their daughter, Sophie Charlotte, to the recently widowed Electoral Prince Friedrich of Brandenburg (1657–1713). Four years later Friedrich became Elector Friedrich III of Brandenburg, with Sophie Charlotte correspondingly elevated to electress. An even more prestigious elevation of rank seemed to bode for Sophie, following negotiations in the English parliament to name her as future heir to the throne of England and Scotland. As a daughter of Elizabeth Stuart (who was in turn daughter of James I England/VI of Scotland), Sophie had some claim to the throne, though with Queen Mary II and King William III, as well as Princess Anne—all of whom were young enough to produce male heirs—standing between her and the crown, the likelihood of Sophie ever being heir apparent, let alone crowned queen, seemed slim at best. The lack of promise in such a prospect was underlined in 1689 when Anne gave birth to a son, William, Duke of Gloucester. As if to ensure that the prospect of Hanoverian rule over England remained a dim one, Parliament subsequently passed the Bill of Rights (1689) which laid down the succession to the English throne but made no mention of Sophie or her children.

While Sophie's chances of becoming queen of England were being thrashed out by Parliament, Leibniz was away collecting documents pertaining to the Guelph history. After setting out from Hanover in October 1687, his grand tour took him through Southern Germany, Austria, and Italy, where he combed the libraries of Rome, Venice, Modena, and Florence, eventually returning in June 1690. By then the talks aimed at reuniting the Catholic and Protestant churches had resumed. The initial promise of the reunion effort had faded until Spinola returned to Hanover in 1688 to breathe new life into it. Leibniz himself had no official role in any of the proceedings or in the documents they produced, and his input in the reunion effort was limited to behind-the-scenes advising and counseling, and attempting to generate support for the enterprise through his acquaintances and cor-

respondents. Sophie likewise had no official role in the proceedings, but she was also able to claim some minor involvement as the hostess to the negotiating parties, and (more importantly) as their occasional intermediary, which led her to draw a light-hearted parallel between Mary—from whom Christianity had originated—and herself, through whom, she hoped, the reunion of the churches could be effected.²⁵ (Sophie's initial hope for the enterprise gradually faded, however, as she believed that there would always be some on both the Catholic and Protestant sides who would impose obstacles to reunion.)²⁶ Leibniz's time away from Hanover ensured that he remained on the fringes of the discussions, having to make do with second-hand reports, but upon his return in 1690 he assumed a more active role, albeit still an unofficial one. In the fall of that year, Sophie's sister, Louise Hollandine (1622–1709), sent a copy of a book by the court historian of Louis XIV, Paul Pelisson, *Reflexions sur les différends de la religion* (Paris, 1686) to Sophie, in the hope that it would inspire her to convert to Catholicism. It had no such effect, however, and Sophie merely passed the book to Leibniz together with an instruction that he draw up a response.²⁷ Leibniz obliged, and a cordial correspondence with Pelisson ensued, conducted through the channels of Sophie and Marie de Brinon, Louise Hollandine's secretary. A year later Bossuet joined in the epistolary exchanges, which until then had largely concerned matters of Catholic doctrine, giving Leibniz the opportunity to press the case for reunion. Bossuet, however, was unsympathetic to Leibniz's suggestion that the Council of Trent be superseded by a new council acceptable to all sides,²⁸ insisting that Trent was not up for negotiation.²⁹ The impasse could not be broken, and further setbacks, such as Pelisson's death in January 1693, Spinola's death in 1695, and Bossuet's with-

25. "As Christianity came into the world through a woman, it would be glorious for me if the union occurred through me." Sophie to Leibniz, 27 January/6 February 1689, A I 5: 401.

26. See Sophie to Louise Hollandine, 10 September 1691, in G. W. Leibniz, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Ludovic Dutens (Geneva, 1768), 1: 512.

27. See Leibniz to Landgrave Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, 3/13 October 1690, A I 6: 114.

28. See Leibniz's "Remarks on the authority of the Council of Trent," 15 June 1693, A I 9: 116–45.

29. See Bossuet to Leibniz, 15 August 1693, A I 9: 153.

drawal from the correspondence with Leibniz the same year, turned church reunion into little more than a distant hope once again.³⁰

Although Sophie and Leibniz were unable to celebrate any progress on the matter of church reunion, they did find some cheer in the elevation of Hanover to the status of an electorate with the Empire. Leibniz had championed Hanover's cause in this regard for many years, and had authored a series of documents that detailed various arguments in favor of Hanover becoming an electorate (the most pressing of which was the need for greater balance in the Electoral College, which at the time comprised three Protestant electors and five Catholic).³¹ Emperor Leopold granted Hanover the status of an electorate of 23 March 1692, and Ernst August was officially invested on 19 December of the same year, following which he took the title of elector and his wife, Sophie, that of electress.

At this time Leibniz's stock was rising almost as fast as the court for which he worked. In May 1691 he received an offer to work for Louis XIV. Although tempted, Leibniz ultimately turned it down, partly due to his belief that taking a position in Louis' court would require him to convert to Catholicism. Although Leibniz had maintained friendly relations with many prominent Catholics, among them Landgrave Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels (1623–93), he had held firm against all attempts to lure him away from Lutheranism.³² Sophie had likewise faced pressures to change her religion, most notably from her sister, Louise Hollandine, who had long wished for Sophie to convert to Catholicism, and took every opportunity presented to her to press her case. In September 1679, during a visit to her sister at Maubisson (the abbey to which Louise Hollandine had fled following her own conversion in 1658), Sophie remained steadfast in the face of

30. The correspondence between Leibniz and Bossuet resumed in 1699, but again foundered on the differing views of the two men on the validity of the Council of Trent. For more information on the reunion effort, see Karin Masser, *Christobal de Gentil de Rojas y Spinola O. F. M. und der lutherische Abt Gerardus Wolterius Molanus: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Unionsbestrebungen der katholischen und evangelischen Kirche im 17. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2002).

31. See, for example, his document "Considerations sur les interests de Bronsvic," A IV 4: 338–58.

32. See for example, Landgrave Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels to Leibniz, 11 September 1687, A II 2: 226.

a sustained conversion attempt mounted by her sister in tandem with Bossuet and Prince William of Fürstenberg.³³ Louise Hollandine's desire for Sophie to convert was also shared by her secretary, Marie de Brinon, who expressed her wish to see Sophie Catholic during the exchanges surrounding church reunion in the early 1690s.³⁴ In the summer of 1697 de Brinon tried her hand at converting Sophie once more, insisting that her salvation could only be assured if she chose the path of Rome,³⁵ but with a practiced hand Sophie diplomatically and gracefully deflected de Brinon's overtures.³⁶

It is not unlikely that de Brinon's repeated conversion attempts were galvanized in part by the common perception of Sophie as one "sitting lightly in her religion."³⁷ Although ostensibly a Calvinist, certain aspects of Sophie's behavior led others to doubt her convictions. For one thing, she was tolerant of other Protestant confessions: her husband was a Lutheran, as were many members of the court, and she regularly attended Lutheran ceremonies with Ernst August.³⁸ Moreover, in the early 1680s she was reported to have been of the view that, as far as she was concerned, her daughter Sophie Charlotte, then a teenager, was not yet of any religion, and which religion she would

33. "I enjoyed their conversation, but thought little of their arguments for my conversion." Sophie, *Memoirs*, 238.

34. See Marie de Brinon to Leibniz, 5 October 1691, A I 7: 159, and 16 July 1691, A I 6: 231, 232. See also Marie de Brinon to Sophie, 18 December 1698 in *Œuvres de Leibniz*, ed. Louis Alexandre Foucher de Careil (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1858–75), 2: 214.

35. See Marie de Brinon to Sophie, 2 July 1697.

36. See Sophie to Marie de Brinon, 13/23 August 1697. Sophie's diplomacy in this matter is all the more remarkable given her personal view of the Roman Church. In the matter of religions, she confided to the Earl of Strafford, "There is none that I abhor so much as the Popish: for there is none so contrary to Christianity." Sophie to the Earl of Strafford, 4 August 1713, in James Macpherson, ed., *Original Papers; containing the Secret History of Great Britain, from the Restoration, to the Accession of the House of Hannover* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1775), 2: 500.

37. Quoted in Maria Kroll, *Sophie, Electress of Hanover: A Personal Portrait* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1973), 156, and in a slightly different form in Hester W. Chapman, *Privileged Persons* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), 171. Kroll attributes the quotation to James Stuart.

38. See Toland, *An Account of the Courts of Prussia and Hanover*, 56.

eventually adopt would be determined by whether she married a Protestant or a Catholic.³⁹

Further question marks over Sophie's religious convictions were raised as a result of her willingness to associate with heterodox thinkers such as Francis Mercury van Helmont and, later, John Toland. Van Helmont, a Quaker turned proponent of the Kabbalah, had been held by the Inquisition for more than a year in the early 1660s for teaching metempsychosis (the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul) and universal salvation, and was widely considered to be a heretic. In 1696 he visited Hanover twice, and on both occasions was welcomed by Sophie and by Leibniz, who had met him at least twice before. During both these visits both Sophie and Leibniz had extensive discussions with van Helmont about the latter's philosophy, several of them taking place in Sophie's apartments in the palace of Herrenhausen.⁴⁰ Such was Sophie's interest in van Helmont's ideas that she included reports of them in her regular correspondence with her niece, Duchess Elizabeth Charlotte of Orléans, who in return ventured her own thoughts on van Helmont's doctrines and arguments.⁴¹ Yet the time both Sophie and Leibniz devoted to van Helmont during his stay was due more to the quality of the man than to that of his thought; both Leibniz and Sophie admired van Helmont's character, but neither found his philosophy particularly convincing, or at times even intelligible.⁴² Leibniz was, however, happy to arrange at van Hel-

39. "One day I asked the Duchess what the religion of her daughter [Sophie Charlotte] was, who may be thirteen or fourteen years old and was very obliging. She replied that she did not yet have one, that it would be a case of waiting to see what would be the religion of the person she married in order to instruct her in the religion of her husband, whether he be Protestant or Catholic." Jean-Herault de Gourville, *Mémoires de Gourville*, tome second 1670–1702, ed. Léon Lecestre (Paris: Renouard, 1895), 127.

40. See Leibniz to Thomas Burnett, 7/17 March 1696, A I 12: 478.

41. See Elizabeth Charlotte to Sophie, 2 August 1696.

42. See Leibniz, "Thoughts on van Helmont's doctrines," first half of October (?), 1696. After reading van Helmont's book *Two Hundred Queries concerning the Doctrine of the Revolution of Humane Souls* (London, 1684), which contains numerous proofs of metempsychosis drawn from scripture, Sophie instructed Leibniz to ask van Helmont to come up with a similar number of proofs based on reason: "As nearly all of your two hundred queries are based on Holy Scripture, Madam the Electress, who would rather see how your views could be confirmed even further by reason, would like one or two hundred proofs based on reason,

mont's request the reprinting of a German translation of Boëthius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*,⁴³ which van Helmont had originally published in 1667 and which had won the admiration of both Sophie and Sophie Charlotte; Leibniz even added a preface to the new edition extolling the virtues of Sophie and Sophie Charlotte as much as those of the translator's work.⁴⁴ Although van Helmont did not return to Hanover again before his death in December 1698, he did pay a visit to Sophie Charlotte in Berlin in the spring of his final year, where he expounded his Kabbalistic interpretation of the first four chapters of Genesis,⁴⁵ much to Sophie Charlotte's bemusement.⁴⁶

As it happened, 1698 was also the final year of Sophie's husband and Leibniz's employer, Ernst August. He had been sick since the previous fall, and in spite of Sophie's devoted care he died on 23 January/2 February 1698.⁴⁷ As her eldest son, Georg Ludwig, took over the reins of power, Sophie began to spend more time in the palace of Herrenhausen to restore her spirits, taking long walks through the gardens. Georg Ludwig's accession to the pinnacle of government also marked a change in Leibniz's fortunes: whereas Ernst August had indulged

order and experience." Leibniz to Francis Mercury van Helmont, 18 October 1696, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek* LBr. 389, 53. Van Helmont did not oblige.

43. Boëthius, *Christlich-vernunftgemesser Trost und Unterricht in Widerwertigkeit und Bestürzung über den vermeinten Wohl- oder Übelstand der Bösen und Frommen*, ed. and trans. Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (Sulzbach, 1667). The reprinted version was published as Boëthius, *Des fürtrefflichen hochweisen Severini Boetti Christlich-vernunftgemesser Trost and Unterricht in Widerwertigkeit und Bestützung über dem vermeinten Wohl- oder Uebelstand der Bösen und Frommen verteutschet, und mit beygefüigten kurzen Anmerkungen über etliche Ort desselben, zum andermahl aufgelegt*, ed. and trans. Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (Lüneburg, 1697).

44. See Leibniz (and Francis Mercury van Helmont?), "Preface to the Second Edition of Boëthius's *Consolation of Philosophy*," 9 June 1696.

45. The work in question is *Quaedam praemeditatae et consideratae cogitationes super Quatuor priora Capita Libri primi Moysis Genesis nominati* (Amsterdam, 1697). Leibniz had ghost-written this book for van Helmont during the latter's stay in Hanover in 1696. For more information on Leibniz's role in this work, see Anne Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont: bagatelle pour des monades," in *Magis Naturalis und die Entstehung der modernen Naturwissenschaften*, ed. Albert Heinekamp (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978): 127–29.

46. See Sophie Charlotte to Leibniz, May 1698.

47. See Leibniz to Sophie Charlotte, 2/12 February 1698, A I 15: 21.

Leibniz's penchant for taking on numerous outside projects, Georg Ludwig was keen for Leibniz to focus on the task for which he was being paid, namely, producing the Guelph history. That the reins had been tightened became increasingly clear to Leibniz when opportunities and invitations to travel came his way, as they increasingly did. In the years immediately following Ernst August's death, many of these invitations came from Sophie Charlotte. In October 1697 Leibniz received word that she proposed to construct an observatory in Berlin.⁴⁸ Leibniz took the opportunity to urge her to pursue a more ambitious plan—the establishment of a scientific academy.⁴⁹ Leibniz had nursed hopes of founding such an academy for years, even proposing the establishment of an imperial scientific academy in Germany, but all of his plans and appeals had fallen on deaf ears. Seizing the opportunity Sophie Charlotte had presented to him, Leibniz offered whatever assistance was required, which resulted in her issuing numerous invitations for him to visit Berlin, and just as many refusals from his new employer, Georg Ludwig, for permission to undertake such a trip. Undeterred, Leibniz made what contributions he could from a distance, one of the most important of which was a recommendation that the fledgling academy be funded by a monopoly on the production of calendars, to tie in with the switch from the Julian to Gregorian calendar due to take place in Germany's Protestant states on 1 March 1700.⁵⁰ With a source of funding now identified, in March 1700 the Elector of Brandenburg decided to approve the founding of what was to be the Berlin Society of Sciences, and invited Leibniz to assist in its establishment.⁵¹ Now able to cite business rather than pleasure as his motive for travel, Leibniz once again approached his employer for permission to take “a short trip” to Berlin.⁵² This time Georg Ludwig relented, and in April 1700 Leibniz made the first of what would turn out to be many visits to Berlin, staying in the palace which Sophie Charlotte dubbed “Lustenburg,”⁵³ i.e., castle of pleasures, a name which Leibniz thought

48. See Johann Jacob Julius Chuno to Leibniz, 2/12 October 1697, A I 14: 597.

49. See Leibniz to Sophie Charlotte, end November 1697, A I 14: 771–73.

50. See Leibniz's paper to the Academy of Sciences of 8 February 1700, A I 18: 346.

51. See Daniel Ernst Jablonski to Leibniz, 23 March 1700, A I 18: 467–68.

52. Leibniz to Georg Ludwig, 28 March 1700, A I 18: 41.

53. Sophie Charlotte to Leibniz, 4 August 1700, A I 18: 179.

fitting not least because of the presence there of Sophie Charlotte herself.⁵⁴ This marked the start of an especially close relationship with Sophie Charlotte, which was to last until her death five years later.

For several months in the spring and summer of 1700 Leibniz played a key role in drawing up the charter for the newly formed Berlin Society of Sciences. The Society itself was officially founded on 11 July 1700, with Leibniz appointed president for life. At its inception, however, and for some time thereafter, it was little more than an institution that existed on paper, and Leibniz's energies often focused on the matter of how the society would be funded, since no contributions would be forthcoming from the Elector of Brandenburg. Leibniz often enlisted Sophie Charlotte's help in the matter of the Society's funding, for example requesting a patent, i.e., exclusive rights of production, on silk.⁵⁵ Although this request was granted, Leibniz's other schemes, such as imposing taxes on wine and paper and seeking donations from the church, were less successful.⁵⁶

While attempting to ensure the financial security of the fledgling Society, Leibniz received word that Princess Anne's last surviving child, William, the Duke of Gloucester, had died, which at that time left only William III and Anne herself between Sophie and the English throne.⁵⁷ This prompted Leibniz to consider how best the Hanoverian succession could be secured, and to this end he drew up various documents detailing not only the right of the House of Hanover to inherit the English throne, but also the strategy to achieve it.⁵⁸ Yet Leibniz's

54. See Leibniz to Bartolomeo Ortensio Mauro, 10 August 1700, A I 18: 800.

55. See Leibniz to Sophie Charlotte, 18 May 1704, Klopp 10: 246.

56. For further information on the Berlin Society of Sciences and Leibniz's role in its establishment, see Jürgen Mittelstrass, "Der Philosoph und die Königin – Leibniz und Sophie Charlotte," in *Leibniz in Berlin, Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft 16*, ed. Hans Poser and Albert Heinekamp (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 21–24. Ayval Ramati, "Harmony at a Distance: Leibniz's Scientific Academies," *Isis* 87 (1996): 430–52.

57. See Leibniz to Sophie, 21 August 1700, A I 18: 192. Sophie was already aware of the death of William, the Duke of Gloucester, as she had notified Leibniz of it several days earlier; see Sophie to Leibniz, 18 August 1700, A I 18: 190.

58. See, for example, his "Reflexions sur un écrit anglais," 2 January 1701, A I 19: 24–31, and "Considerations sur le droit de la Maison de Bronsvic, à l'égard de la succession d'Angleterre," 17 (?) January 1701, A I 19: 37–48.

4. Leibniz to Sophie (13/23 October 1691)

Versions:

- M1: Draft: *Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv*, Dep. 84 A 180, 70–72.
 M2: Fair copy, dispatched: *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek*, LHI I 20, 4–6.

Transcriptions:

- K: Klopp 7: 144–49 (following M1).
 A: A I 7: 33–37 (following M2).

The following is Leibniz's response to Sophie's reports about Rosamunde von der Asseburg (see nos. 1, 2, and 3).

[M2: fair copy, dispatched]²⁶

Madam

Your Serene Highness did me a very special favor by informing me of the history of a local young prophetess. There are people who judge this very offhandedly and think that she should be sent to the waters of Pyrmont instead.²⁷ For my part, I am firmly convinced that all this is completely natural, and that there must be some embellishment in the matter of the English note sealed by Dr. Scott, to which, it is claimed, she replied perfectly well, without opening it, because our Lord supposedly dictated the response to her. It would be good to have more details of her life and some examples of what was dictated to her.²⁸ Nevertheless I admire the nature of the human mind, all the workings

26. From the French. Incomplete; a brief closing remark about having been delayed in responding to Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux, has not been translated.

27. This was the view of Molanus, who supposed that Asseburg's visions were a result of her being constipated. Molanus informed Leibniz in his letter of 12/22 October 1691 that Asseburg should be taken as soon as possible to the waters of Pyrmont in order to cleanse her mesentery (i.e., her intestines). See A I 7: 406. Bad Pyrmont is a small town in Lower Saxony and is famous, even today, for its spring waters.

28. This sentence is not present in M1.

of which we do not know well. When we come across such persons, far from reproaching them and wanting to make them change, we should instead preserve them in this beautiful state of mind, just as one keeps a rarity or a cabinet piece.²⁹ We have only two means of distinguishing imaginations (by which I mean visions and dreams) from true perceptions. One is that true perceptions have a connection with general affairs, which dreams do not have in sufficient measure; for those who are awake are all in a common world, whereas those who are dreaming each have a private world. The other way of distinguishing them is that the present impressions of true objects are livelier and more distinct than the images that come only from a remnant of past impressions. However, a person who has a very strong imagination can have apparitions lively enough and distinct enough to seem to him to be truths, especially when the apparitions have a connection with the things of the world or reality, or are taken for such. This is why young people raised in cloisters, where they hear a thousand little stories of miracles and ghosts, are prone to have such visions if they have a very active imagination, because their head is filled with them, and the confidence they have that spirits or people from another world often communicate with us does not allow them to entertain the doubts and scruples that we others would have in a similar encounter with them. It is also notable that visions usually relate to the nature of those who have them. And that even holds good with regard to true Prophets, for God adapted himself to their particular talents because he does not perform superfluous miracles. I sometimes think that Ezekiel had learned architecture or was an engineer of the Court because he has magnificent visions and sees beautiful buildings.³⁰ But a prophet of the fields, such as Hosea or Amos, sees only landscapes and rustic scenes,³¹ while Daniel, who was a man of state, rules the four kingdoms of the world.³² This young lady that Your Serene Highness has seen should not be compared with these prophets, however; she believes she has

29. Leibniz repeated the recommendation that Asseburg “should be preserved as a rarity, and as a cabinet piece” in a letter written one month later (13/23 November 1691) to Landgrave Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, A I 7: 190.

30. An allusion to Ezekiel 40–43.

31. An allusion to Hosea and Amos 4–9.

32. An allusion to Daniel 7.

Jesus Christ in front of her eyes because another Saint would hardly be accepted among Protestants. This love, so ardent, that she carries for the Savior, excited by sermons and by reading, has finally brought about in her the grace to see the image or appearance of him. For why would I not call it a grace? It does her nothing but good, it fills her with joy, she conceives the finest sentiments of the world with it. Her piety is reinvigorated by it at all moments. We have some authentic enough Acts of the martyrdom of St. Perpetua and of St. Felicity,³³ who were martyred in Africa at the time of the Romans. It is clear that similar apparitions drove them to suffer.³⁴ These were therefore graces, and perhaps many saints had no other graces. We should not imagine that all of God's graces have to be miraculous. When he uses the natural dispositions of our mind and the things which surround us to bring light to our understanding, or the fervor to do the right thing to our heart, I hold it to be a grace. This multitude of prophets of the people of Israel was apparently not of another nature. Also, despite being fine Prophets, those who prophesied against Micah were mistaken on that occasion; their nature having acted in them in an ordinary way, but on an occasion in which the external events did not correspond to it, because providence had ordered otherwise.³⁵ I am afraid that it will end up being much the same with this virtuous young girl if she meddles too closely in events, and that will bring her tremendous grief.

However, I admit that *the great Prophets*, that is, those who can teach us the detail of the future, have to have supernatural graces. And it is impossible that a limited mind, however penetrating it may be, can succeed in this. A seemingly small thing can change the whole course of general affairs. A lead bullet travelling low enough will encounter the head of an able general, and this will ensure that the battle

33. Leibniz is referring to *Passio Perpetuae*, often attributed to Tertullian. English translation available in Michelle Thiébaux, ed. and trans., *The Writings of Medieval Women: An Anthology* (New York: Garland, 1994), 8–20. Both Perpetua and Felicity were killed during the persecution of Septimius Severus in Carthage, 203 C.E.

34. For details of their visions, see Thiébaux, *The Writings of Medieval Women*, 11 and 13–15.

35. Leibniz here confuses the prophet Micah with the prophet Micaiah. He is alluding to an event related in I Kings 22, in which around 400 prophets claimed that Ahab and Jehoshaphat would be victorious if they attacked Ramoth in Gilead, while Micaiah prophesied their defeat, a prophecy that was fulfilled.

is lost. A melon eaten at the wrong time will kill a King. A certain prince will not be able to sleep one night because of the food he ate in the evening; this will give him despondent thoughts and will lead him to take a violent resolution on matters of state. A spark will jump to a shop, and that will lead to Belgrade or Nice being lost. There is no devil or angel who can foresee all these small things which give rise to such great events, because nothing is so small which does not arise from a great variety of even smaller circumstances, and these circumstances from others again, and so on to infinity. Microscopes show us that the smallest things are enriched with variety in proportion to the great. Moreover, all the things of the universe have such a close and remarkable connection between themselves that nothing happens here which does not have some insensible dependency on things which are a hundred thousand leagues from here. For every corporeal action or passion, in some small part of its effect, depends on the impressions of the air and of other neighboring bodies, and these again on their neighbors further away, and this carries on through a continuous chain, irrespective of distance. So every particular event of nature depends on an infinity of causes, and often the springs are set up as in a rifle, where the slightest action that occurs makes the whole machine discharge. Therefore one could not be certain of the detail of any future event through the consideration of causes or through foresight unless one is endowed with an infinite mind. I speak of detail, since we do not have to be psychic to say that the sun will rise tomorrow, and that the Pope will die at some point. One can even predict an uncertain future very easily, but by chance, like for example whether such and such a pregnant princess will deliver a boy or not. For since there are only two possible outcomes, it is as easy to get it right as to get it wrong, and two men who agree between them to predict—one to a Prince who desired a son, the other to his brother who had reason to wish only for a girl—to each what he wished, could not fail to get the reward that they secretly agreed to share between them. But when it is a matter of a detail, it is something completely different. And as *Prophecy* is in effect *the history of the future*, I believe that any prophet who could genuinely give us the history of the forthcoming century would without doubt be inspired by God. Mr. Huet, a very learned man who had been made responsible for educating the Dau-

phin and who is now bishop of Avranches, has written a fine book in favor of the Christian religion,³⁶ the purpose of which is to show that the prophets of the Old Testament have amazingly foreseen the detail of the new, since prophecy of detail is a miracle the devil himself could not imitate. But this is enough philosophizing on prophets, true or imaginary. The ancients understood poets and prophets under the same name, calling them *Vates*.³⁷ As for judicial astrology and other so-called sciences of this kind, they are just pure nonsense.

I have just received *l'Horoscope des Jesuites*.³⁸ It is a certain Mr. Carré, a French minister in England, who has gone to the trouble of basing it not on the stars, but on the words of the *Apocalypse*.³⁹ Apparently he wanted to imitate Mr. Jurieu.⁴⁰ This is his argument: The Jesuits are the locusts which emerged from the land of the abyss.⁴¹ This is something that should not be doubted unless one is a disciple of the Antichrist. Now these locusts are due to torment men for five months.⁴² Five months are a hundred and fifty days, at 30 days a month. The prophetic days are years. Thus the Jesuits are only due to exist for a hundred and fifty years. The author gets into a little difficulty about when this period starts. Finally he decides that it began with the Council of Trent, but as this Council lasted from 1545 to 1563 the fall of the Jesuits is due to occur between 1695 and 1713. Alas, poor people. They will all be plunged into the pit of the abyss, that is, into hell. That displeases me. I do not like tragic outcomes. I would prefer everyone to be at ease. Neither would I want those who are called Chiliasts or Millenarians to be persecuted for an opinion to which the *Apocalypse* appears so favorable. The Augsburg Confession

36. Pierre Daniel Huet (1630–1721), prelate and scientist. He was appointed assistant tutor to the Dauphin, Louis XIV's son, in 1670, and became bishop of Avranches in 1685. Leibniz is referring to Huet's *Demonstratio Evangelica ad Serenissimum Delphinum* (Paris, 1679).

37. As Leibniz notes, the Latin word “vates” means “poet” or “prophet.”

38. Louis Carré, *L'Horoscope des Jesuites, ou Lon découvre combien ils doivent durer, et de quelle maniere ils doivent cependant tourmenter les Hommes* (Amsterdam, 1691).

39. That is, the book of Revelation.

40. Leibniz is referring to Jurieu's *L'Accomplissement des propheties*, in which Jurieu predicted the overthrow of the Antichrist—identified as the Pope—in 1689.

41. Cf. Revelation 9:2.

42. Cf. Revelation 9:5.

seems only to be against Millenarians destructive of the public order.⁴³
But the error of those who wait patiently for the Kingdom of Jesus
Christ seems quite harmless...⁴⁴

I am with devotion

Madam, to Your Serene Highness

Your very humble and very obedient servant

Leibniz

Hanover, 13 October 1691

43. Leibniz is mistaken in his interpretation of the Augsburg Confession, §17 of which clearly condemns millenarianism on doctrinal grounds with no distinction between millenarians who are a public nuisance and those who are not. For further information on Leibniz's attitude towards millenarianism see Antognazza and Hotson, *Alsted and Leibniz*, 127–214; Daniel J. Cook and Lloyd Strickland, "Leibniz and Millenarianism," in *Pluralität der Perspektiven und Einheit der Wahrheit im Werk von G. W. Leibniz*, ed. Friedrich Beiderbeck and Stephan Waldhoff (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010).

44. harmless. | It would be a charity to prevent the disgracing of this honorable man [i.e., Johann Wilhelm Petersen]. Although I only know him by reputation, and am not completely informed of his conduct, if there is only that [i.e., his public support of millenarianism] to find fault with, one is entitled to take his side. | M1.

5. Sophie to Leibniz (15/25 October 1691)⁴⁵

Versions:

M: Fair copy, dispatched: *Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv*, Dep. 84 A 180, 63–64.

Transcriptions:

K: Klopp 7: 150 (following M).

A: A I 7: 37–38 (following M).

Sophie's reply to Leibniz's letter of 13/23 October 1691 (see no. 4).

Ebsdorf, 15/25 October 1691

I found everything you wrote to me to be so much in keeping with my judgement that I am glad to have had the same thoughts, as Mr. Causacau and others can attest,⁴⁶ though I did not explain them as agreeably as you did. So I have made a trophy of your letter, all the sentiments of which are so sound and without preoccupation that they gave me the greatest pleasure in the world, and I think that your letter deserves to be published much more than those you have addressed to Mr. Pelisson.⁴⁷ As I see my name in this publication, I greatly feared that the trifles I often wrote to my sister⁴⁸ to amuse myself would also be in it, which is why I have read it again up to the end.

Sophie

To Mr. Leibniz in Hanover

45. From the French. Complete.

46. Joseph de Causacau, a Hanoverian courtier.

47. Paul Pelisson-Fontanier (1624–93), a Catholic convert and official historian to Louis XIV. Leibniz and Pelisson corresponded between 1690 and 1693, mostly about issues concerning the reunion of the churches. Sophie is here alluding to Paul Pelisson-Fontanier's *Reflexions sur les différends de la religion. Quatrième partie. Ou Réponse aux Objections envoyées d'Allemagne, sur l'unité de l'Eglise, et sur la question si elle peut tolérer les Sects* (Paris, 1691). This book contains a number of Leibniz's letters to Pelisson, all of which were written between August 1690 and January 1691.

48. Louise Hollandine, Abbess of Maubisson.

6. Leibniz to Sophie (16/26 October 1691)

Versions:

M1: Fair copy, dispatched: *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek*, LH I, 20, 7–8.

M2: Copy of M1: *Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv*, Dep. 84 A 180, 102.

Transcriptions:

K: Klopp 7: 151–53 (following M2).

A: A I 7: 38–40 (following M1)

Leibniz's reply to Sophie's letter of 15/25 October 1691 (see no. 5).

[M1: fair copy, dispatched]⁴⁹

Madam

I am very happy to learn that my thoughts on the young lady proph-
etess bore some relation to what Your Serene Highness had already
concluded about her. Maybe the Dukes who are or were in Ebsdorf,⁵⁰
as well as Madam the Duchess of Celle,⁵¹ will not be very far removed
from them. For the best thing is to let these good people be, as long
as they do not interfere in anything that can be of consequence. I find
throughout history that sects are ordinarily born by an excessive op-
position to those who had some peculiar opinion, and under the pre-
text of preventing heresies one gives rise to them. These things usually
fade out of their own accord, when the virtue of novelty wears off;
but when one tries to oppress them by making a big fuss of them, by
persecutions, and by refutations, it is as if one tried to extinguish a fire
with a bellows. It is like a torch which is dying out, but is rekindled

49. From the French. Incomplete; a paragraph concerning a text written for Marie de Bri-
non and part of a postscript concerning greetings from Mr. de la Loubere have not been
translated.

50. Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel; Ernst August (1629–98), Duke of
Hanover and Sophie's husband.

51. Eleonore d'Olbreuse (1637–1722).

because of agitation. Out of fear that there are no heretics, theologians sometimes do all they can to find them; and to immortalize them, they give them derogatory names, like Chiliasts, Jansenists, Quietists, Pietists, and Payonists. Often a man obtains the honor of being a heresiarch without knowing it, like the late Mr. Payon,⁵² very able Minister in France, whose disciples and supporters are now styled “Payonists” by Mr. Jurieu and others...⁵³

I am with devotion
 Madam, to Your Electoral Highness
 Your very obedient and very faithful servant
 Leibniz

P.S. ... I think one would do well not to put the young lady prophetess to the test with sealed notes any more. I would like to know what Mr. Causacau says about her.

52. Claude Payon/Pajon (1626–85), French Protestant divine.

53. Pierre Jurieu, *Traité de la nature et de la grâce, ou du concours général de la Providence & du concours particulier de la Grace efficace: contre les nouvelles hypothèses de M. P & de ses disciples* (Utrecht, 1687).

leave, as I respect him in his way as much as I do Father Vota.⁶¹⁶ If I do not come to Hanover, although I hope to do so, I hope to see you here, Sir, and to assure you that I am wholly devoted to serving you.

Sophie Charlotte

616. Carlo Maurizio Vota (1629–1715), Jesuit priest and confessor of the Elector of Saxony.

64. Leibniz to Sophie Charlotte (7 December 1703)⁶¹⁷

Versions:

M: Draft: *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek*, LBr. F 27, 129–30.

Transcription:

K: Klopp 10: 220–24 (following M).

Leibniz's reply to Sophie Charlotte's letter of 4 December 1703 (see no. 63).

Hanover, 7 December 1703

Madam

Although Mr. Locke's book is well written,⁶¹⁸ I fear that it will seem too dry to Your Majesty, as this author, while very clever, is not enough of a mathematician to know the nature of demonstrations. The upshot of this is that he did not know enough to distinguish the sources of the universally or eternally necessary truths and the truths of fact (or particular and contingent truths), which are not bound to be true and are not of an absolute necessity at all. Sense-experiences teach us truths of fact, but they are never able to teach us what is necessary; for even if a thing has happened a million times it does not follow that it will always happen for all eternity. For example, the sun always returns before 24 hours have passed, and this has been true for several thousands of years, but a time may come when it fails to be true, whereas necessary truths cannot fail to be true. Knowledge of facts is called empirical, because it does not come from knowledge of reasons, which are required in mathematics. For example, experience shows that the odd numbers are consecutively the differences between the square numbers taken in succession.

617. From the French. Incomplete; several paragraphs of political news and court gossip have not been translated.

618. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*.

Numbers multiplied	1	2	3	4	5	6	etc.
by themselves,	1	2	3	4	5	6	etc.
squared		—	—	—	—	—	—
	1	4	9	16	25	36	
	
	
Differences		3	5	7	9	11	

and continuing like that for a long time the experience is that it succeeds, so that it is very probable that it would always succeed if continued to infinity; but one is not absolutely assured of it until one knows the reason for it. As, then, the reasons or eternal truths cannot be proved by experiences alone or by the external senses alone, it follows that they draw their source only from the innate light, or from natural reason. And these truths are also known before experience. For example, everyone will accept this principle of Archimedes before having experienced it, namely, that if in a balance everything was equal on both sides, like the weights, the form of the balance, external impression, etc., nothing would move because there is no reason why one side should incline rather than the other, and they cannot both incline. Therefore these sorts of truths are only known by the assistance of the natural light. However it is very true that the external senses give us the occasion to think effectively about these truths, and that without them we wouldn't think about the truths, and they would only be potentially and habitually in our mind, that is, by the disposition that it has to yield to them in the event that we come to think of them.

Your Majesty has all the reasons in the world to say that forgetting disagreeable things (for a time at least), such as the bad news of which she speaks, is one of the useful things about the search for truth. This only confirms what I have always thought, and what I maintained in Herrenhausen and Linsburg...