

LEIBNIZ AND THE KABBALAH

ALLISON P. COUDERT

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I began thinking about this book twenty-five years ago when I was fortunate enough to be a graduate student at the Warburg Institute with Frances Yates and D. P. Walker as my tutors. Their profound erudition, combined with their kindness to a student who had never heard of Renaissance occultism, much less the Kabbalah, provided the foundation for this book. The actual book would never have been written, however, without the support and encouragement of Richard H. Popkin. It is with deep appreciation and profound gratitude that I dedicate this book to him.

A Preliminary Note on the Kabbalah

Because the Kabbalah, and especially the Lurianic Kabbalah, is so central to the arguments presented in this monograph, the reader should have some idea of its history and basic doctrines. In what follows I give a rudimentary sketch, referring the reader to the studies of Gershom Scholem, Ernst Benz, and Moshe Idel, cited in the bibliography, for a comprehensive treatment of the subject.

The Kabbalah is the commonly used term for the mystical teachings of Judaism, especially for those originating after the twelfth century. The Kabbalah was considered to be the esoteric and unwritten aspect of the divine revelation granted to Moses on Mt. Sinai, while the Bible was simply the written and exoteric portion of this same revelation. The word itself means “that which is received” or “tradition,” and it was generally believed that the Kabbalah had passed orally from one generation to the next until the time of Esdras when it was finally written down. The Kabbalah’s reputed divine origin led many Jews as well as Christians to view it as the purest source of divine wisdom. They consequently scrutinized kabbalistic writings with especial care, expecting to find in it the incontrovertible word of God.

The two major sources of kabbalistic thought available to Christians before the seventeenth century were the *Sefer Yezirah*, or *Book of Formation*, written some time between the third and sixth century C. E. and translated by Christian Kabbalists during the Renaissance, and the *Zohar*, [*The book of Splendor*], which was believed to have been written by Simeon ben Yohai in the second century C. E., although it was actually a late thirteenth century forgery. The *Sefer Yezirah* envisioned creation in terms of divine speech and the manipulation of the Hebrew letters, which are described as the “gates” or “roots” from which all things were formed. The *Zohar* is a collection of treatises dealing with a wide range of topics, such as the creation, divine revelation, biblical interpretation, physiognomy and chiromancy, the soul, the world to come, the significance of the commandments, the mysteries of the Hebrew language, and redemption.

In the sixteenth century a new form of Kabbalah appeared, the Lurianic Kabbalah, derived from the teachings of Isaac Luria, who was born in Jerusalem of German parents in 1534 and died an acclaimed “zaddik,” or holy man, in 1572. Luria spent a quiet life and three very important years at Safed surrounded by a group of devoted followers who eagerly accepted the astonishingly novel twists he gave to kabbalistic thought.

Luria delighted in allegories, enigmas, and mysteries, which makes his thought obscure and open to a wide variety of interpretations. He embraced an essentially gnostic and neoplatonic view of creation in terms of the emanation of divine light or the articulation of divine speech. Luria accepted the gnostic idea that souls were sparks of light trapped and exiled in the material realm; but he postulated an end to this exile when all souls would be redeemed, together with their material “husks,” and return to their pristine perfection through the process of reincarnation. Luria was an animist. There was nothing dead and devoid of soul in the Lurianic universe. Souls were in everything, including stones, and every soul would become better and better until finally freed from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

The doctrines of reincarnation (*gilgul*) and universal salvation, or restoration (*tikkun*), are the two most important aspects of Luria’s thought and the basis for an impregnable theodicy. By attributing the inequalities and misfortunes of life to the faults of previous existences, Luria reaffirmed a belief in God’s goodness and justice. Human beings were responsible for their own sin and suffering; but God was merciful and granted every soul the necessary time to complete the arduous process of redemption. A fundamental axiom of the Lurianic Kabbalah was that human beings were entirely responsible for redeeming themselves and the fallen world. As a result of human actions in the form of *tikkunim* (positive redemptive acts) every individual contributed to the restoration of the world to its original perfection. This idea was utterly at odds with the orthodox Christian belief in original sin, predestination, and the essential redemptive role of Christ. Although such a positive view of man was heretical and smacked of Pelagianism, one of the major arguments presented in this monograph is that this optimistic philosophy of universal salvation found its way into Leibniz’s mature theodicy.

The roots of the Kabbala, especially in its Lurianic form, lay in those strands of ancient Gnosticism which conceived of creation in terms of an emanation from the God-head and salvation in terms of the return of all created things to their original perfection in the God-head. There are therefore many similarities between the Kabbalah and Neoplatonism, which also absorbed gnostic elements. These gnostic elements, especially the implicit monism entailed in emanationism, were, however, antithetical to the orthodox Jewish and Christian view that there is an unbridgeable gulf between God

and his creatures. Consequently, the Kabbalists could be, and were, accused of teaching the heretical doctrine of pantheism as well as that of perfectionism. As I will suggest, Leibniz himself was not immune from the same charges. However much he tried to guard against it, his monadology exhibits the kind of spiritual monism characteristic of some forms of Gnosticism in general and the Lurianic Kabbalah in particular.

It is the purpose of this book to argue that for all its complexities the Lurianic Kabbalah had a significant influence on Leibniz's thought. In making this argument I am profoundly indebted to the work of Gershom Scholem, whose analysis of the Kabbalah is the starting point for anyone interested in the subject. The work of Moshe Idel is also invaluable for understanding essential elements of kabbalistic thought, especially its roots in Gnosticism and ties to Neoplatonism.

LEIBNIZ AND VAN HELMONT: A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1667 Leibniz reads van Helmont's *Alphabeti vere naturalis Hebraici brevissima Delineatio* and his translation of Octavius Pisani's *Lycurgus Italicus* (p. 5).
- 1671 Leibniz meets van Helmont, who introduces him to von Rosenroth (p. 6).
- 1672 15/25 February – Leibniz writes to Johann Friedrich Schütz von Holzhausen, asking about van Helmont's whereabouts (p. 6).
21 December – Leibniz writes to Johann Christian Boineburg, mentioning that van Helmont is in England (p. 165, n. 140).
- 1676 February – Von Rosenroth sends Leibniz two works of Robert Boyle (p. 6).
- 1679 December – Leibniz and van Helmont meet while visiting the Palatine Princess Elizabeth, Abbess of Herford, at Herford (pp. 6, 36).
- 1680 November – In a letter Leibniz says he does not think van Helmont possesses the secret of transmutation (p. 7).
- 1681 Leibniz writes to Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, mentioning van Helmont's conversion to Quakerism (p. 7).
- 1687–8 31 December to 1 February – Leibniz stays with von Rosenroth in Sulzbach (p. 41). Leibniz's notes of their meeting (pp. 46–47).

- 1688 10/20 January – Leibniz writes to Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, praising von Rosenroth's erudition and describing his work on the Kabbalah (p. 47).
 24? April – Leibniz praises von Rosenroth in a letter to Gerhardt Molanus (p. 47).
 September – Leibniz describes von Rosenroth and his work in a letter to Hiob Ludolph. He would like to establish a correspondence between Ludolph and von Rosenroth (p. 48).
- 1692 25 January – Leibniz writes to Loubère describing von Rosenroth as “perhaps the cleverest man in Europe concerning knowledge of the most esoteric matters of the Jews.” He mentions a magical square which von Rosenroth showed him.
 2 June – Leibniz refers to the square in another letter to Loubère (p. 42).
- 1693 Leibniz writes *De L'Horizon de la Doctrine Humaine*, denying the possibility of progress past a certain point (p. 112).
- 1693?–4 Leibniz writes two critiques of van Helmont's *Seder Olam* (p. 68ff.).
- 1694 Van Helmont visits Hanover. In September Leibniz writes a long memorandum for Sophie, the Electress of Hanover, about van Helmont's philosophy (p. 58ff.).
- 1694–96? Stimulated by van Helmont's ideas, Leibniz writes three memoranda on whether or not progress is infinite (p. 126ff.).
- 1696 During March and April van Helmont visits Hanover and meets with Leibniz and the Electress every morning at nine o'clock to discuss his philosophy (pp. 38, 80). He then leaves to visit Sophie's daughter, the Electress of Brandenburg-Prussia, Sophie Charlotte, in Berlin (pp. 49–50).
 7/17 March – Leibniz writes to Thomas Burnett, describing his morning meetings with van Helmont (p. 38).
 20 March – Leibniz describes these same meetings in a letter to Adam Kochanski (p. 38).
 March – Leibniz writes to van Helmont after his departure from Hanover, sending him a letter from the younger von Rosenroth with the request that on his return to Hanover van Helmont stop in Wolfenbüttel to meet Duke Anton Ulric (pp. 49–50).
 March – Leibniz writes a summary of what van Helmont

had said to him and Sophie during their morning meetings (p. 80ff.).

7 April – Van Helmont writes to Sophie (p. 50).

9 June – Leibniz praises von Rosenroth's translation of Boethius' poetry and describes his role in republishing van Helmont's and von Rosenroth's translation of Boethius (p. 64).

11 July – Hermann von der Hardt writes to Leibniz, praising van Helmont (p. 70).

July – Van Helmont returns to Hanover. Leibniz's discusses Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* with van Helmont and writes his first criticisms of Locke, which he sends to Thomas Burnett (p. 150).

August-September – Van Helmont visits Hanover and has many conversations with Leibniz and the Duchess of Hanover (p. 57ff.).

August-September – Leibniz keeps a journal in which he describes his meetings with van Helmont and their discussions about van Helmont's philosophy and mechanical inventions (p. 58ff.).

September – Leibniz writes a memorandum about van Helmont's opinions for Sophie, which she sent on to her niece, Elizabeth Charlotte, the Duchess of Orleans (p. 65).

September – Leibniz writes a preface for van Helmont's and von Rosenroth's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. At van Helmont's request Leibniz arranges to have the work republished (p. 64).

October – Van Helmont writes to Sophie, describing his meeting with Sophie's daughter, the Electress of Brandenburg-Prussia, and his arrival at his cousin's near Ter Borg (p. 50).

October – Van Helmont writes to Leibniz asking his help in publishing various of his and von Rosenroth's writings (p. 68).

18 October – Leibniz replies, mentioning some objections that Sophie and her niece, the Duchess of Orleans, have about van Helmont's theory of transmigration (p. 69).

1 December – Sophie receives a letter from Abbé de Lessing asking her to persuade van Helmont to send one of his miraculous medicines to a certain Princess to Chimay (p. 51).

4/14 December – On Sophie's instructions, Leibniz writes to van Helmont about the Princess de Chimay's request (p. 52).

December – Van Helmont writes to Sophie about the medicine (p. 52).

- 10 December – Leibniz writes Morell, expressing his admiration for van Helmont's humanitarianism (p. 9).
- 1697 Leibniz writes van Helmont's last book, *Quaedam praemeditatae & consideratae Cogitationes super Quatuor Priora Capita Libri Moysis Genesis nominati (Thoughts on Genesis)* (pp. 12, 31, 84).
1/11 March – Van Helmont writes to Leibniz describing a process of distillation and a method for making large mirrors (p. 66).
Leibniz sends Erik Benzelius to visit van Helmont (p. 70).
9 May – Leibniz writes to Sophie Charlotte, Electress of Brandenburg-Prussia, about van Helmont's translation of Boethius and divine justice (p. 130).
- 1698 18/28 October – Leibniz writes van Helmont, encouraging him to write down his ideas. He looks forward to van Helmont's return to Hanover in the spring (p. 71).
29 September – Leibniz writes to André Morell, mentioning van Helmont's *Thoughts on Genesis* (p. 84).
27 December – Leibniz writes to van Helmont's cousin, Mme. de Merode, expressing his sorrow at the news of van Helmont's death. He encloses the epitaph he wrote for van Helmont at her request and asks her to preserve van Helmont's papers (p. 71).
- 1699 27 April – Leibniz writes to the Electress of Brandenburg-Prussia about van Helmont (p. 74).
28 June – Mme. de Merode writes to Leibniz about van Helmont's papers (p. 73).
25 August – Leibniz replies to Mme. de Merode, saying that he would like to have van Helmont's memoirs published as well as a catalogue of his books and inventions (p. 74).
- 1701 Leibniz denies that events are bound to repeat themselves and argues instead that progress is inevitable (p. 113).
Leibniz writes a favorable review of Johann Wilhelm Petersen's book advocating universal salvation, in which he mentions Lady Conway and van Helmont (p. 116).
- 1706 Leibniz defends the Kabbalah and von Rosenroth in in his reflections on J. G. Wachter's *Elucidarius Cabalisticus Recondita Hebraeorum Philosophia* (p. 75).
Leibniz sketches a plan for Petersen's long poem advocating

universal salvation, *Uranias seu opera Dei magna carmine heroico celebrata* (p. 115).

- 1711 Leibniz defends van Helmont in a review of Shaftsbury's *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (p. 40).
Leibniz helps Petersen in the actual writing of *Uranias* (p. 116).
- 1715 Leibniz writes two fragmentary treatises advocating universal salvation, the first entitled *Universal Restitution*, the second entitled simply *Restitution* (p. 114).

Introduction

The general view of scholars is that the Kabbalah had no meaningful influence on Leibniz's thought.¹ But on the basis of new evidence I am convinced that the question must be reopened. The Kabbalah did influence Leibniz, and a recognition of this will lead to both a better understanding of the supposed "quirkiness"² of Leibniz's philosophy and an appreciation of the Kabbalah as an integral but hitherto ignored factor in the emergence of the modern secular and scientifically oriented world. During the past twenty years there has been increasing willingness to recognize the important ways in which mystical and occult thinking contributed to the development of science and the emergence of toleration.³ However, the Kabbalah, particularly the Lurianic Kabbalah with its monistic vitalism and optimistic philosophy of perfectionism and universal salvation, has not yet been integrated into the new historiography, although it richly deserves to be.

On the basis of manuscripts in libraries at Hanover and Wolfenbüttel, it is clear that Leibniz's relationship with Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614–1698) and Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689), the two leading Christian Kabbalists of the period, was much closer than previously imagined and that his direct knowledge of their writings, especially the collection of kabbalistic texts they published in the *Kabbala Denudata*,⁴ was far more detailed than most scholars have realized. During 1688 Leibniz spent more than a month at Sulzbach with von Rosenroth. Foucher de Careil has pointed out how strange it was for Leibniz to stay in this one place for such a long time when he stayed hardly anywhere else for more than two nights.⁵ He suggests this must reflect a more than casual interest on Leibniz's part, although he rejects any kabbalistic influence on Leibniz's thought. As he says, "One senses that it [the Kabbalah] was only an object of curiosity for him, like many other imaginary curiosities of his time or of past centuries. . . . This energetic thinker [Leibniz] reduced all these doctrines to his own system. He only took what agreed with his own thought."⁶

Like so many commentators, Foucher de Careil is at pains to protect Leibniz's reputation as a rationalist wholly uncontaminated by the bizarre doctrines of the innumerable mystics, vitalists, and spiritualists populating the intellectual landscape of the early modern period. This view of Leibniz was, and in some quarters still is, prevalent. Many of the best known critics of Leibniz's thought have followed Bertrand Russell's lead and claim that "Leibniz's philosophy was almost entirely derived from his logic."⁷ In the words of Couturat, "Leibniz's metaphysics rests solely on the principles of his logic."⁸ Leibniz is consequently the prime example of a rationalist philosopher: "Thus, the philosophy of Leibniz appears as the most complete and systematic expression possible of intellectual rationalism."⁹ But in recent years this view has been challenged. Leibniz, the rationalist philosopher, has ceded place to a far more complex and interesting individual, whose attempt to synthesize Renaissance vitalism and seventeenth-century atomism led him to an open-ended dialogue with both the living and the dead, a dialogue in which he constantly tested, refined, and modified his views. This is one reason why Leibniz's correspondence and unpublished manuscripts are so important as sources for reconstructing his thought. As Leibniz himself said, "Anyone who knows me only by my publications does not know me at all."¹⁰ Like his monadology, Leibniz's philosophy was both dynamic and in many respects far too radical to be appreciated until the present century.¹¹

The assumption that one can usefully, or even accurately, distinguish between empiricism and rationalism or between the so-called mechanical philosophy and occultism during the seventeenth century has become a subject of considerable debate. Richard Popkin has been one of the most persuasive of those who argue that philosophy, science, and theology were inseparable in this period and that even the most apparently rational of seventeenth-century intellectuals, such as Newton, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, turned variously to the Scriptures, prophecy, mystical or occult texts, and the inner light in formulating and supporting their theories.¹² Meyer makes this point eloquently and consistently in his careful documentation of the great diversity of sources Leibniz drew upon in the formulation of his mature philosophy.¹³ Baruzi emphasizes the "irrational" elements in Leibniz's "rationalism" and suggests that the essence of Leibniz's theodicy lay in his mystical faith in a kind of religious determinism.¹⁴ Mahnke describes Leibniz as "rationalizing mysticism."¹⁵ Friedmann emphasizes the occult aspects of Leibniz's thought, regretting the fact that these sources have not been studied as closely as they deserve.¹⁶ He goes as far as to describe Leibniz as a late seventeenth-century Paracelsus, who had the good fortune to profit from a century of modern science.¹⁷ Knecht presents a detailed account of the diverse occult sources from which Leibniz drew his ideas.¹⁸ For scholars subscribing to the so-called

“external” view of science and philosophy, Leibniz’s logic and metaphysics are indeed connected, but his metaphysics, which includes, or is included, in his theology, came first. Loemker came to this conclusion many years ago: “... it is significant that not only Leibniz’s metaphysics but his logic and physics were developed as a foundation for his theology.”¹⁹ On a number of occasions Leibniz revealed where his priorities lay. For example, he described himself in the eyes of an imaginary visitor as follows:

I surprised him [Leibniz] one day, reading books about [religious] controversies. I showed my astonishment because I had been led to believe he was a mathematician by profession, since he had done practically nothing else while in Paris. It was then that he told me that such an idea was very mistaken, that he had many other interests, and that his principal meditations involved theology. He only applied himself to mathematics, as he did to scholastic philosophy, to perfect his understanding and to learn the art of discovering and demonstrating [truth], which he believed to be so far apart at present as to be entirely different.²⁰

Loemker rejects Russell’s view that there were two Leibnizes, a good logician and a bad, even dishonest, theologian. In his view, Leibniz’s logic, like his science, was one aspect of his larger attempt to formulate a general science, but his conviction that a general science was possible rested on metaphysical and theological assumptions derived from such thinkers as Raymond Lull and the circle of encyclopedists at Herborn, hardly remembered for their rationalism.²¹ For Loemker, it is Leibniz’s refusal to ignore the complexities and inconsistencies of real life for the sake of forging a fully rational system that makes him such an enduring and sympathetic philosopher:

His age and his own genius confirmed the logician and mathematician in him, while his devotion to fact pushed him to acknowledge the unclear, the indistinct, and the relative, to a point far beyond the superficial clarities and rationalizations of the age which followed him. One must choose between the Leibniz who recognizes the symbolic and analogical nature of human thought but seeks the universal logical and moral norms which make it possible and the Leibniz who would analyze possibility and find existence hidden within it. The choice is between his two great analogies – mathematical relationships or psychological continuity within a phenomenally presented environment. It is the choice of beginning either from the pure logic of analysis and failing to build a metaphysics or from the awareness of the human situation but with a willingness to proceed beyond phenomena to the principles on which they may be “well founded.” To one student at least, it is the latter Leibniz, who begins with human problems and human symbols but retains the powerful tools of reason not only in

mathematics and logic but in life, without sacrificing the adventure of human creativity, who seems to offer the more fruitful philosophical answers.²²

Taking Loemker's lead, one must conclude that it is impossible to understand those "quirkier" aspects of Leibniz's thought without admitting that metaphysics and theology played a major part in his thinking and acknowledging that in his effort to comprehend the meaning and purpose of life he drew on a variety of sources from all parts of the philosophical spectrum. For example, Margaret Wilson has demonstrated that the so-called *vis viva* controversy is not fully comprehensible unless one realizes that Leibniz's objection to the Cartesian axiom of the conservation of motion (and not force as Leibniz argued) was motivated by Leibniz's theological and metaphysical commitment to contingency and teleology in nature.²³ David Papineau makes much the same point when he points out how mistaken scholars have been who dismiss the controversy as an empty dispute over terminology.²⁴ Leibniz himself tells us as much, making it crystal clear that metaphysics determined his science, not science his metaphysics:

Although I am one of those who have done much work in mathematics, I have constantly meditated on philosophy from my youth up, for it has always seemed to me that here, too, there is a way to establish something sound through clear demonstrations. I had penetrated deeply into the land of the Scholastics, when mathematics and modern authors made me withdraw from it while I was still young. Their beautiful ways of explaining nature mechanically charmed me, and with good reason I despised the method of those who use only forms or faculties of which nothing is understood. But later, after trying to explore the principles of mechanics itself in order to account for the laws of nature which we learn from experience, I perceived that the sole consideration of *extended mass* was not enough but that it was necessary, in addition, to use the concept of *force*, which is fully intelligible, although it falls within the sphere of metaphysics.²⁵

In a similar way, the debate about exactly what Leibniz envisaged by monads has led at least one scholar to throw up her hands and conclude the problem insoluble from a strictly rational perspective, since a monad "is a mystical concept, not only a construct of reason."²⁶

R. E. Butts has further weakened the case for the rationalist Leibniz, whose admittedly bizarre metaphysics stemmed from his science, by perceptively pointing out that if Leibniz's mathematical and logical discoveries provided the basis for his metaphysics, how can one account for the very different conclusions other scientists derived from the same mathematical and logical theories? Referring specifically to Leibniz's discovery of infinitesimal calcu-

lus, which has often been seen as the foundation for his monadology, Butts remarks, “If the calculus were liable to metaphysical interpretation only in terms of Leibnizian continuity, what fools Newton and Berkeley must have been!”²⁷ Butts completely rejects the view of Leibniz as a rationalist and argues instead that his philosophy is essentially a reformation of Gnosticism: “... the entire intellectual career of Leibniz was an attempt to convert what he took to be the insights and consequences of an essentially gnostic *weltanschauung* into publicly available scientific knowledge.”²⁸ Butts argues that Leibniz’s idea of continuity, his idea that monads emanate from God in the form of light, and his notion that evil represents limit and privation all originate in Gnosticism:

If I am right that the physics of forces was suggested by the organicism of Leibniz’s publicly proclaimed systematic Gnosticism; if I am right that the infinitesimals are a mathematicized expression of the principle of continuity coupled with the basic idea of the monad, then I think I may also be right in suggesting that the fundamental Leibnizian notion that in all true propositions the predicate is fully contained in, or is identical with, the subject is again the statement of a result of having accepted the God-monad-emanation-continuity metaphysics that I have sketched above. Like Plato, Leibniz was not a “systematic” philosopher... . I do think it correct to hold, however, that Leibniz had a system, and that system was a coherent form of Renaissance Gnosticism. To want to make the ancient wisdom public, to want to have it motivate empirical inquiries – even to produce palpable practical results – was a high ambition.²⁹

Butts is entirely right in pointing out the gnostic roots of Leibniz’s philosophy. But instead of the somewhat vague, generic sources he cites, the primary gnostic source for many of Leibniz’s most important ideas was the Lurianic Kabbalah, which Leibniz came to know through his friendship and collaboration with Francis Mercury van Helmont.

My contention that Leibniz was influenced by the kabbalistic philosophy of Francis Mercury van Helmont rests on the fact that Leibniz’s relationship with van Helmont extended over a much longer period, from 1671 to van Helmont’s death in 1698, and was far closer than has previously been known. While it is true that Leibniz had a lively curiosity and a courtier’s courtesy, these alone cannot explain his unusual interest in van Helmont’s views. The manuscripts in the “Helmont” collection in the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek in Hanover, together with manuscripts from other collections, show how conversant Leibniz was with van Helmont’s thought. Even before they met in 1671, Leibniz knew van Helmont by reputation – he was, after all, the son of Jan Baptista van Helmont, whose work Leibniz knew well. In 1667 Leibniz mentions reading the younger van Helmont’s first two books,

his translation of Octavius Pisani's *Lycurgus Italicus*, a book advocating a reform of the penal system, and his *Alphabetti vere naturalis Hebraici brevissima Delineatio*, in which he argued that Hebrew was both a divine and "natural" language.³⁰ Leibniz described their first meeting in Mainz in 1671 and suggests it was far from perfunctory in as much as they talked freely about a touchy subject, alchemy, which greatly interested them both.³¹ Leibniz was also in Sulzbach in 1671, where, through the offices of van Helmont, he was introduced to Christian Knorr von Rosenroth. With van Helmont's help, von Rosenroth was in the process of editing and translating the kabbalistic texts that would later be published in the *Kabbala Denudata*.³² Further references to van Helmont and von Rosenroth occur in 1672 when Leibniz writes to Johann Friedrich Schütz in the hopes of discovering van Helmont's whereabouts,³³ in 1676 when Leibniz mentions that von Rosenroth has sent him a copy of Boyle's "Some Motives and Incentives to the Love of God" and "The Possibility of the Resurrection,"³⁴ and in 1679 when Leibniz again met van Helmont at the sick bed of the Palatine Princess Elizabeth, who was an old friend of van Helmont's and the sister of Leibniz's future patron, Sophie Duchess of Hanover.³⁵ In 1681 Leibniz mentions van Helmont in several letters. Six years after that came Leibniz's long stay in Sulzbach. In 1694 Leibniz again met van Helmont for extensive periods in March and April, this time at Hanover. From this year until van Helmont's death in 1698, Leibniz and van Helmont were in constant contact, either personally or by letter. It is my belief that the initial contacts between van Helmont, von Rosenroth, and Leibniz between 1671 and 1688 laid the foundation for the more intense friendship and collaboration that began in 1694 and played a catalytic role in the formulation of Leibniz's fully developed monadology.

There are many reasons why Leibniz should have been drawn to van Helmont. The description of Leibniz as a super rationalist overlooks the fact that like van Helmont he was enthralled by every aspect of the material world, not in an abstract intellectual sense but as a thorough-going empiricist: "... nothing allows us to indicate the divine perfections better than the admirable beauties that are found in its works." His receptivity to the wonders of nature made him critical of spiritualists and quietists who rejected the study of this world as worthless and even corrupting:

I see that the majority of those who pretend to a greater spirituality, especially the Quakers, try to create a distaste for the contemplation of natural truths. But in my opinion, they ought to do exactly the opposite if they do not wish to maintain our natural laziness and ignorance. < In this I find Messieurs Helmont, Knorr, More and Poiret more reasonable than the majority of the others, although I do not wish to sanction many of their sentiments where they stray from the Church.> True love is based

on knowledge of the beauty of the object one loves. But the beauty of God appears in the marvelous effects of his sovereign cause. Thus, the more one understands nature and the solid truth of real sciences, which are so many rays of divine perfection, the more one is able to truly love God.³⁶

Leibniz's exclusion of Van Helmont (along with von Rosenroth, More, and Poiret) from such world-denying spiritualists was certainly accurate in van Helmont's case, for as van Helmont once wrote, "the beauty of this Living Earth when seen with a microscope will make a man in Love with it."³⁷ Both Leibniz and van Helmont were practicing alchemists who avidly studied minerals, metals, and a variety of different substances and chemical processes.³⁸ Leibniz's interest in alchemy revealed itself early in his career when he became the secretary of a society in Nürnberg whose members were interested in transmutation.³⁹ Although van Helmont's fame as an alchemist was greater, Leibniz also had the reputation of an adept with deep theoretical knowledge. Like his English contemporaries, Boyle, Locke, and Newton, Leibniz hoped to make a fortune from the art. With this aim in mind, he entered into a profit-sharing agreement in 1676 with two alchemists, G. H. Schuller and J. D. Crafft, in which he provided the capital and the advice. As Ross has remarked, Leibniz was apparently always an easy touch for alchemists.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly it was because of his own interest that Leibniz carefully followed van Helmont's alchemical career. In 1680 he told a correspondent that he did not believe van Helmont knew the secret of transmutation, precisely because of the long talks they had some eight years earlier.⁴¹ In 1681 he informed Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels that van Helmont was in the company of a M. Kohlhas, who passed himself off as an adept.⁴² In the letters they wrote and discussions they had between 1694 and 1698 Leibniz and van Helmont often brought up various alchemical subjects concerning the making of medicines and the process of distillation. Leibniz even discussed alchemy on his death bed. Much to the disgust of a Catholic critic, who believed it would have been more profitable for Leibniz to have spent his last moments worrying about the unfortunate state of his soul, Leibniz's final words concerned a report that iron nails had been transmuted into gold through the action of a certain spring.⁴³

The fact that van Helmont and Leibniz were both practising alchemists reveals their common grounding in what has been labelled "Renaissance occultism," a subject of enormous importance in the history of science, as Paolo Rossi, Francis Yates, D. P. Walker, and Charles Webster, among others, have shown. From Nicolas of Cusa to Giordano Bruno, major Renaissance philosophers shared an animistic view of the world as one harmonious whole, filled with innumerable immaterial, vital souls created by God through a series of emanations. Brian Vickers has made the cogent observation that the whole

tenor of Renaissance Neoplatonism and occultism in general is “a progressive reification of the immaterial.”⁴⁴ The elaborate series of emanations described in the various neoplatonic, hermetic, and kabbalistic creation myths woven together in the rich fabric of Renaissance occultism served to explain how the one became the many or how spirit was gradually transformed into matter. Leibniz and van Helmont rejected Cartesian dualism precisely because of their allegiance to Renaissance occultism. Their friendship and collaboration was based to a large extent on their mutual indebtedness to a vitalistic world view that originated in an earlier age and came increasingly under attack with the emergence of the so-called mechanical philosophy.

Renaissance occultists, and those who followed in their footsteps like van Helmont and Leibniz, were also committed to the idea that a certain *prisca theologia*, or primeval philosophy, existed which God had imparted to Moses on Mt. Sinai and which had culminated in Christianity. Elements of this ancient wisdom were thought to be contained in the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato, the *Hermetica*, the *Sibylline Prophecies*, the *Ophica*, and, of course, the Kabbalah.⁴⁵ It was believed that if this *prisca theologia* could be rediscovered in its authentic, uncorrupted form, it would provide the basis for a truly ecumenical religion and bring an end, once and for all, to the terrible wars caused by religious conflicts. While nominally Christian, the various versions of this supposedly rediscovered *prisca theologia* offered by Pico della Mirandola, Guillaume Postel, Giordano Bruno, and Tommaso Campanella, for example, were heretical in many respects.⁴⁶ As I will argue, the version van Helmont thought he had rediscovered in the Lurianic Kabbalah and which influenced Leibniz’s *Monadology* (Leibniz’s own version of the *prisca theologia*)⁴⁷ was equally heretical because it reasserted the Pelagian belief in universal salvation condemned by the Roman Catholic Church in 416 C. E. The subject of both Renaissance occultism and the search for the *prisca theologia* will come up repeatedly in this monograph (for example, when discussing the sources of Leibniz’s *Monadology* in chapter four, his theodicy in chapter six, and his theories of causation in chapter seven), for it is my contention that Renaissance occultism – in all its various forms – and the search for the *prisca theologia* provided the basis for Leibniz’s mature monadology and the rationale for his optimism. Thus, while the whole point of this monograph is to show that van Helmont’s kabbalistic philosophy had a decisive influence in shaping Leibniz’s *Monadology*, it is important to recognize the common heritage of ideas which influenced the thought of both men. Leibniz was not introduced to the Kabbalah by van Helmont; kabbalistic ideas were a part of Leibniz’s intellectual heritage, and he referred to the Kabbalah, both positively and negatively, before the period of his close friendship and collaboration with van Helmont.⁴⁸ Van Helmont did, however,

introduce Leibniz to the Lurianic Kabbalah, and it is the purpose of this monograph to explore the ways in which this particular form of the Kabbalah influenced Leibniz's philosophy.

Although Leibniz and van Helmont were both practicing alchemists and clearly interested in the lucrative aspects of the art, they were more than "projectors" in the alchemical sense. Private gain did not interest them nearly as much as the public good. As Leibniz wrote in a letter to Thomas Burnett: "You know my principles, Sir, which are to prefer the public good to all other considerations, even to glory and gold."⁴⁹ This is perhaps what drew them most together. They were both committed to doing everything possible to improve the human condition, first and foremost by restoring religious unity and, secondly, by devising innumerable projects for all kinds of socially useful inventions. Leibniz's calculator is perhaps the best known, but he also proposed plans for such things as a high speed coach, which would run along rutted tracks on something like ball bearings, a scheme for draining water from the Hartz mines, an inland navigation system, the manufacture of porcelain, the exploitation of waste heat in furnaces, tax reform, a public health and fire service, steam-powered fountains, street lighting, a state bank, and isolation wards for plague victims.⁵⁰ While not quite so ingenious, van Helmont devised plans for a two-handed spinning wheel and weaving projects to employ the poor, a chair to straighten crooked backs, and new methods to teach the deaf and dumb to speak and children to write. Leibniz's similar concern with education appeared early in his career with *A New Method for Learning and Teaching Jurisprudence* (1667). Van Helmont also described a scheme for setting up pawn shops to help the poor, which he presented to the Royal Society,⁵¹ and he offered proposals for reforming both the medical and the legal professions. Leibniz constantly refers to this altruistic aspect of van Helmont's character. In a letter to Thomas Burnett he emphasizes the fact that van Helmont was one of the few people he knew who practiced virtue instead of just talking about it. He admits that van Helmont may well have extraordinary opinions, but he adds, "for all that I find that he has excellent ideas about practical matters and that he would be overjoyed to contribute to the general good, in which I entirely agree..."⁵² Leibniz repeated much the same thing in a letter to André Morell, the numismatist and zealous disciple of Boehme and Poiret:

In my opinion the touchstone of true illumination is a great eagerness for contributing to the general good. I find so few people who take this to heart that I am astonished. I have suggested this thousands of times. But I usually find that those people who wish to appear the most pious are paralyzed when it really comes to doing something good. They are content to vent themselves with fine words as if God can be earned with ceremonies. I find

also that few men have a true idea of good. I only deign to give this name to someone who really tries to make men more perfect and the grandeur of God better known. I also find that those who are of a sectarian or schismatical humor, that is to say those who have separated themselves as men filled with good intentions, but who do not act reasonably in their opinions, do not know how to have charity nor illumination in its true purity. It seems to me that the late M. Labadie, the late Mlle. de Bourignon, and William Penn, with his co-religionists, had that fault of being sectarian and condemning. Among those who had extraordinary ideas, I have hardly found anyone beside M. van Helmont who shared this great principle of charity with me and who had a true eagerness for the general good, although in other respects we often had very different opinions about different matters.⁵³

For Leibniz true piety consisted in charity towards one's fellow men – not separation from them – whatever their station in life, country of birth, or particular religion: "... to contribute to the public good and to the glory of God is the same thing."⁵⁴ Their humanitarian outlook and mutual concern for justice predisposed both men to take a tolerant view whenever possible of the opinions and actions of others. This outlook led van Helmont to the unusual conviction that a just God could not damn men eternally, whatever their beliefs or sins. He consequently rejected the orthodox conception of hell in favor of universal salvation. While Leibniz did not go as far, at least publicly, he was influenced by van Helmont's arguments, as I will argue in a later portion of this monograph.

The major impetus behind the activities of both men was their untiring effort to restore religious unity in an age of deadly and vituperative sectarian conflict. Baruzi, who has studied Leibniz's theological writings, concluded that had Leibniz dared to write out a full exposition of his views, it would probably have centered on three elements: the love of God as a sufficient condition for salvation; charity towards one's fellow man as the most important religious duty, and the cultivation of philosophy and science as a way to gain knowledge of God.⁵⁵ While in Paris Leibniz formulated a prayer which he thought the basis for a truly ecumenical religion, only to receive a shocked response from Arnauld, who rejected it outright because it said nothing about Christ.⁵⁶ Van Helmont's ecumenism went even farther than Leibniz's, to the point that he was pursued and imprisoned as a heretic. He believed that all men could be saved, whatever their religion, a sentiment that clearly undercut the unique role of Christ in salvation and embraced the Pelagian idea that an individual could be saved by his own efforts.⁵⁷ As I will show, the same Pelagian implications appear in Leibniz's mature monadology and came from van Helmont and the Lurianic Kabbalah.

Leibniz loathed the dogmatic approach and intemperate language characteristic of the philosophical and scientific debates of the time. He consistently tried to put a good spin on the opinions of others, including van Helmont's, as we shall see. In his own writings he found it impossible to be dogmatic or even systematic. As Ross has pointed out, the dialogue form seems to have suited him best.⁵⁸ This may account for the fact that his correspondence is so much richer a source for his philosophy than the relatively few works he managed to publish, for it is a continual dialogue in which he never ceases to probe and question. Given his basic quest for consensus, the tentative nature of his system is understandable and even laudable:

My system... is not a complete body of philosophy, and I do not claim to have a reason for everything that other people have thought they can explain. Progress must be gradual to be assured.⁵⁹

Van Helmont also preferred the dialogue form. Most of his books are written as questions and answers, even the one Leibniz ghosted for him, but this is to look ahead. Both Leibniz and van Helmont were able to keep up amicable relations with people of widely differing opinions and views.⁶⁰ This ability provided the basis for Russell's unfortunate charge that Leibniz was insincere and duplicitous, when it could be argued instead that he was intellectually broad-minded as well as civil. In van Helmont's case, his ability to inspire friendships among a widely divergent group of scientists, philosophers, statesmen, and theologians (which, in addition to Leibniz, included Locke, More, Boyle, all the members of the Palatine family, Lord and Lady Conway, and Prince Christian August of Sulzbach, to name but a few) has been overlooked in the general rush to dismiss him as an enthusiast and intellectual light-weight. (Hopefully, this investigation will slow down the rush, if not stop it all together).

There is one last reason that helps to explain the friendship of these two men. Both were outsiders in the sense that the universality of their vision transcended the narrow sectarian and national boundaries so fiercely defended at the time. In a century of increasing nationalism and patriotism, Leibniz clung to the universalistic ideal of the Republic of Letters. Writing to Des Billettes, a pensioner of the Academy of Sciences in Paris and an expert on arts and crafts, he emphasizes his concern for the betterment of all men:

Provided that something of importance is achieved, I am indifferent whether it is done in Germany or in France, for I seek the good of mankind. I am neither a phil-Hellene nor a philo-Roman but a phil-anthropos.⁶¹

In another letter written at the end of his life, he expressed much the same idea:

... I make no distinction of nation or party, and I should prefer to see the sciences made flourishing in Russia rather than given only mediocre cultivation in Germany. The country which does this best will be the country dearest to me, since the whole human race will always profit from it.⁶²

There were, however, those who considered his international and ecumenical efforts treachery, and by these he was given the nickname “Löve – nix,” believer in nothing.⁶³ (Leibniz took the Socratic high road in his response. Yes, he agreed he was a believer in nothing since he believed only what he knew.⁶⁴) Van Helmont also aroused the suspicion of those who saw something sinister and subversive behind his genial and generous nature. He was, for example, labeled and even imprisoned by the Inquisition as a “judaizer,” meaning that he not only failed to hate the Jews the way a normal Christian should, but that he went out of his way to defend and support Jews, even befriending the unfortunate Johann Peter Speath *after* his conversion to Judaism, an all but unheard of act for Christians, who looked upon conversion to Judaism with horror.⁶⁵ Leibniz and van Helmont were also both outsiders in that they ignored conventions, be it of dress or manners. Leibniz’s German contemporaries scoffed at him for being “Frenchified.” Late in life he became an object of ridicule for his old-fashioned, overly ornate clothes and huge black wig. The Electress Sophie’s youngest son, Prince Ernst August, once described Leibniz as an “archaeological find” and joked that Peter the Great must have taken him for the Duke of Wolfenbüttel’s clown.⁶⁶ Van Helmont cut an equally strange figure. He adopted the Quaker practice of refusing to remove one’s hat and bow to superiors, scandalous behavior in an intensely hierarchical age, but an indication of van Helmont’s deep commitment to the democratic principle of universal brotherhood. He too refused to bend to fashion and wore simple clothes from material spun, woven, and tailored with his own hands. Shortly after van Helmont’s death, Leibniz wrote his epitaph. It reveals the extent of his admiration for this friend who was his double in so many respects:

Here lies the other Helmont, in no way inferior to his father,
who joined together the wealth of various arts and sciences.
Through him Pythagoras and the sacred Cabala were reborn.
And like Elaüs, he was able to make everything for himself.
If he had lived among the Greeks,
he would now be numbered among the stars.⁶⁷

With this introduction one may be in a better position to understand why Leibniz should actually have ghosted van Helmont’s last book. As Anne Becco has shown from her examination of Leibniz’s manuscripts, Leibniz actu-

ally wrote the last work published in van Helmont's name, *Some Premeditate and Considerate Thoughts upon the Four First Chapters of the First Book of Mosis called Genesis* (hereafter abbreviated as *Thoughts on Genesis*).⁶⁸ Ghost-writing a book for a self-proclaimed Kabbalist is an extraordinary act for someone supposedly repelled by fanciful kabbalistic theories⁶⁹ and one that cries out for explanation. The explanation lies in those aspects of kabbalistic thought which Leibniz adapted to his own purposes. In what follows I suggest the key issues in Leibniz's philosophy that must be analyzed from a kabbalistic perspective, for example, his concept of monads, his attempt to defend free will, and his theories of language and causation, and I document the ways in which van Helmont's thought acted as a catalyst in the development of Leibniz's. In taking this position I am following in the footsteps of Anne Becco and Bernardino Orio de Miguel, who have both argued that van Helmont's kabbalistic philosophy influenced Leibniz, although my evidence is different and, I hope, more persuasive.⁷⁰ But before considering those who entertain the idea of van Helmont's possible influence on Leibniz, it is first necessary to discuss the work of those who reject such an influence. Since the literature on Leibniz is enormous, I mention only some of the best known and most often cited works dealing with the sources of Leibniz's thought, hoping to give the reader an accurate overall impression of the present state of Leibniz scholarship on these issues.

To establish van Helmont's influence on Leibniz, it is imperative to establish two points: first, that Leibniz's mature philosophy was not in place by the time he wrote the *Discourse on Metaphysics* in 1686 but continued to evolve between 1694 and 1698 when his contact with van Helmont was most intense; and second, that if Leibniz's philosophy did indeed evolve after 1694, enough persuasive evidence exists to show that it evolved in ways that can be attributed to van Helmont's influence. It is not always possible to keep these questions separate, but in order to bring as much clarity as possible to my argument, I have divided the remainder of this study into seven chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter reviews the arguments for and against the thesis that the *Discourse* represents the emergence of Leibniz's mature philosophy. Among those who have argued that Leibniz's philosophy evolved, I have only included in this section those authors who attribute this evolution to factors other than van Helmont or who leave the question of influence unanswered. In the second chapter, I discuss the work of those authors who have either suggested van Helmont's possible influence on Leibniz or who recognize that their thought "converged" in important respects. I then turn to Anne Becco's important discovery that Leibniz actually wrote van Helmont's last published work and to the thesis supported by her and Orio de Miguel that van Helmont did influence Leibniz in decisive ways. In the third chapter,

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I offer new evidence to show the closeness of Leibniz and van Helmont's friendship and the reasons for their collaboration. In the next three chapters I take up three key issues in Leibniz's philosophy, his concept of monads, his attempt to establish a basis for individual freedom, and his theodicy, and I offer evidence to show how the Kabbalah contributed to the development of Leibniz's mature philosophy in each of these areas. In the final chapter I discuss the ways in which Leibniz's theories of causation and language were influenced by the Kabbalah.

CHAPTER ONE

A Brief Historiography of Leibniz Studies

E. J. Aiton, who published his important and immensely informative biography of Leibniz in 1976, followed in the footsteps of Russell, Rescher, and others and concluded that Leibniz's mature philosophy was virtually in place by 1686 when the *Discourse* was published:⁷¹

That Leibniz himself regarded the *Discourse on metaphysics* as marking a decisive stage in the development of his philosophy is shown by his remark to Thomas Burnet in a letter of May 1697, that he was only satisfied with the philosophical ideas he had held from about 1685. Although many of the ideas had been germinating from his university days and are to be found in earlier works – for example, the subject-predicated logic in *De arte combinatoria*, the idea of harmony in the *Confession of nature against atheists*, the principle of sufficient reason in the letter to Wedderkopf, substantial forms in the letter to Thomasius and the idea of the best in a note written after his meeting with Spinoza – the *Discourse on metaphysics* is the first of Leibniz's writings to bind them together in a coherent system.⁷²

Aiton mentions van Helmont, but never as a possible influence.⁷³ In fact, he suggests that Leibniz derived the *term* monad while still a student from his university teacher Thomasius. In the preface to his *Disputatio metaphysica de principio individui* (1663), Thomasius describes Aristotle as dividing individuals into two sorts, the “monadic,” where each individual constitutes a species (such as the angels) and the “sporadic,” where innumerable individuals are included in one species.⁷⁴ As for the *concept* of the monad, Aiton believed it emerged either from the alchemical idea that within each substance there remains a vital center or seed from which the substance can be reconstituted, or from Leibniz's meeting with Leeuwenhoek in 1676 and his introduction to the world of micro-organisms. But whatever the direct impetus, Aiton is convinced that what essentially led Leibniz to his theory of monads was “one of his favorite themes,” the labyrinth of the continuum.⁷⁵

Yet Aiton also admits that Leibniz's philosophy continued to develop after the *Discourse*, for example, when he introduced the notion of force in his

Specimen Dynamicum, which was begun in 1689 but only published in the *Acta eruditorum* in April, 1695. Aiton further admits that in this work Leibniz still held to the Aristotelian notion that bodies consist of matter and form,⁷⁶ a far cry from the idealism and phenomenalism other commentators find in the *Monadology*. Even more damaging to his view that 1686 marks the emergence of Leibniz's mature philosophy is his admission that the second part of the *Specimen Dynamicum*, which was supposed to have been published in the May volume of *Acta eruditorum* but never appeared, contains the important new idea that space and time are relative:

Although the second part of the *Specimen dynamicum* did not appear as promised in the May issue, its contents reveal some of the new ideas that Leibniz was at that time attempting to put in order. First he emphasized that, while force was absolutely real, space and time, like motion, was not real as such but only in so far as they involved the divine attributes of immensity, eternity and activity or the force of created substances. From this he deduced that there could be no vacuum in space and time and that motion, considered apart from force, was relative.⁷⁷

Citing a letter from Leibniz to L'Hospital, Aiton says that the second part of the *Specimen Dynamicum* remained unfinished because Leibniz's philosophy was continuing to evolve: "he had been unable to finish the work, evidently envisaged by him as a definitive treatise that could complete Newton's *Principia*, owing to the new ideas which continually came to him."⁷⁸ Thus, Aiton himself admits that developments were taking place in Leibniz's philosophy during those very years after 1694 when Leibniz was in close contact with van Helmont. As I will attempt to show, crucial ideas like the essential spirituality of matter as well as the relativity of time and space were basic aspects of van Helmont's thought and far more influential in shaping Leibniz's eventual monadology than Thomasius' reference to "monadic" species, alchemy, or Leeuwenhoek's microscopic observations.

Many scholars reject the idea that the *Discourse* marked the emergence of Leibniz's mature philosophy. Loemker, for example, considers 1690 the decisive date, but he also thinks that Leibniz's philosophy continued to evolve even after this to the end of his life:

... the mature period of Leibniz's thought begins with the *Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas* (1684). It is only after his return from Italy in 1690, however, that such fundamental concepts as those of individuality, force, the intercourse between monads, and the gradations of substances are analyzed in detail. The year 1690 may therefore be regarded as the line of demarcation between Leibniz's early period of eclecticism and discovery and his mature system. Yet his thought cannot be regarded as

either complete or stable, even in his last period of about twenty-five years.⁷⁹

Loemker summarily dismisses Russell's evaluation (accepted by Aiton) of the *Discourse* as the best account of Leibniz's philosophy:

It is not even an adequate one; among other things, he had yet to perfect his analysis of *vis viva*, of the gradation of individual perceptions and appetites, and of the nature of corporeal beings. And he also later changed his argument for the existence and nature of individual substances.⁸⁰

Daniel Garber also thinks that Leibniz's philosophy changed significantly in his later years. His argues that until approximately 1704 Leibniz took the essentially Aristotelian position that corporeal substance really existed, but that after this date he verged increasingly towards idealism until he ended up embracing phenomenism. Garber considers the late 1690s as the key period in this development.

Garber began his work on Leibniz's physics with the express intention "to sharpen, expand, and carefully document" an observation made by C. D. Broad that Leibniz was basically an Aristotelian in the 1680s and 1690s and only later adopted the idealism of the monadology.⁸¹ Garber concluded that Broad was entirely right. Although few other scholars recognized this stage in Leibniz's development, tending to characterize the mature Leibniz as a consistent phenomenalist, Leibniz had indeed been a realist whose view of substance was basically Aristotelian. But sometime in the last fifteen years of his life he changed into an idealist, whose physics and dynamics could no longer claim to describe the world as it really is but only as it appears to be:

This phenomenistic interpretation of derivative force and the status that it entails for the science of dynamics is, to be sure, a genuine Leibnizian position. But, it must be emphasized, this represents a fundamental change from the thought of Leibniz's middle years. In the '80s and '90s it's the corporeal substance that's the thing, the center of Leibniz's thought and the basic building-block of his world. And it is the corporeal substance that provides a real foundation for his science of dynamics.⁸²

In Garber's opinion both the *Discourse* and the *Specimen Dynamicum* represent Leibniz's Aristotelian phase:

... in the era of the *Discourse* and the *Specimen Dynamicum*, physics is, I claim, an account of the laws that govern a *real world* of quasi-Aristotelian substances.⁸³

By the time the *Monadology* was written, however, Leibniz had become a phenomenalist:

The world of the *Monadology*, it is generally acknowledged, is a world of souls (or something analogous) *and souls alone*; everything in the world of the *Monadology* is, ultimately, grounded in the mental.⁸⁴

Garber wants to know when and why Leibniz relinquished realism for idealism, but he leaves these questions unanswered:

I have granted that the standard view of Leibniz and the foundations of his physics, a metaphysically real world of mind-like monads and a phenomenal world of physical bodies acting in accordance with the laws of physics, is indeed the picture of Leibniz's later years. But, one might well ask, *when* does Leibniz adopt this later view, and *why*? This and other important questions must be left unanswered for the moment at least.⁸⁵

I would argue that one reason Garber cannot answer the question is that Leibniz never truly embraced phenomenism. As Garber himself says, it is hard to decide exactly when this change in outlook occurred precisely because too many passages cited to support Leibniz's Aristotelianism are ambiguous and might equally well be interpreted as evidence of his idealism:

Few of the passages I have cited are entirely unambiguous; it is possible that almost every one could be given an idealistic reading, just as one could, perhaps, jam the CA [correspondence with Arnauld] itself into that procrustean bed. However, it seems plausible that the view of the world that Leibniz articulated in response to Arnauld's acute questioning, the emphasis on the corporeal substance as the basic building block of the world, the recognition of something over and above souls or forms, persists through to at least 1704 or so. But I should emphasize once again that the Aristotelianism I have been mainly concerned with is not the *only* strand of thought between 1686 and 1704. The more idealistic strand in Leibniz's thought is suggested, for example, in certain writings from 1695 and 1696; it surfaces again in 1700, 1702, and 1703, before finally *appearing* to win out in roughly 1704 or 1705. Even the *New Essays* which, I have argued, reflects the Aristotelianism of the CA, shows traces of a more idealistic metaphysics. But as unclear as its boundaries are, and as mixed up as it is with other strains of thought, it is fair to say that Leibniz's Aristotelianism, as I have developed it in the previous sections, remained a live option for Leibniz for at least fifteen years after its clear articulation in the CA.⁸⁶

Garber is right; the material is ambiguous. R. C. Sleigh, for example, has done a persuasive job of doing exactly what Garber suggests someone might, namely, of "jam[ming] the CA itself into that procrustean bed [of idealism]." In his insightful commentary on the correspondance between Leibniz and Arnauld, Sleigh carefully analyzes the various versions of the *Discourse* – Leibniz's autograph version, the fair copy prepared by his amanuensis (with

Leibniz's corrections), and several shorter versions – and concludes that the whole perplexing issue of whether corporeal matter actually exists or is simply a well-founded phenomena arises at repeated points. Sleigh believes that Leibniz was well on his way to taking the position that the only true substances were immaterial, soul-like entities in 1686–87.⁸⁷ Yet he points out how confusing and contradictory the *Discourse* is on this point: sections 11 and 12 of the *Discourse* deny that all substances are spiritual, affirming that some are corporeal in nature, while sections 14 and 15 take the opposite position (especially in the autograph version), presenting a phenomenalist account of the interaction of substances.⁸⁸ Because of this confusion Sleigh does not claim that the *Discourse* is the *Monadology*, although he thinks many of the later ideas are sketched there.⁸⁹

The debate about whether or not Leibniz was a phenomenalist is too extensive to review in this monograph,⁹⁰ although I will return to it when discussing Catherine Wilson's book on Leibniz's metaphysics. But the very fact that scholars can so radically disagree about such a basic aspect of Leibniz's philosophy suggests that there may not be a "yes" or "no" answer. The solution I propose is that the question is more meaningful from a modern point of view than it was for Leibniz. For, to expand on the idea first suggested by Butts, Leibniz was neither a realist nor a phenomenalist; he was an idealist and a gnostic idealist at that. As I will argue (especially in the last four chapters), Leibniz absorbed many ideas from the kabbalistic philosophy of van Helmont, the most important of which was that soul (or mind) and matter are opposite ends of a continuum. Soul represents activity, while matter is simply a term for whatever impedes or hinders this activity. Matter is therefore essentially a passive force, a negation of reality, rather than anything real in itself. This position was a basic aspect of van Helmont's kabbalistic thought, but it could also be interpreted as a return to the original philosophy of Aristotle, before the Scholastics interpreted him in the light of Christian mind-body dualism. For unlike Platonic or Christian vitalism, Aristotelian vitalism is not dualistic since the form of an entity (the immanent pattern or essence that brings potentiality to actuality) is inseparable from it.⁹¹ In this important way Aristotle and the Kabbalah reinforced each other. What is especially interesting is that these two strands were woven together in the thinking of Francis Mercury van Helmont. Van Helmont's father was strongly influenced by the Aristotelian concept of form when he formulated his doctrine of the *archeus*, that internal principle within each entity that determined what it would be (I will discuss the elder van Helmont's views and their influence at greater length in chapters three and seven). Thus, the changes in Leibniz's concept of substance remarked upon by Garber as occurring in the 1690s, which he interprets as indicating a move towards

phenomenalism and which I interpret as a move towards Gnosticism, could conceivably have been encouraged by Leibniz's association with the younger van Helmont. As I mentioned before, Leibniz was in close contact with him from 1694 until his death in 1698.

In her book, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: A historical and comparative study*, Catherine Wilson agrees with those who see a profound difference between the *Discourse* and the *Monadology*. Although she agrees with Garber in thinking that Leibniz was tempted by phenomenalism and even succumbed to it at times, she does not think he ever fully accepted the doctrine.

Far from being the best or even an adequate representation of Leibniz's mature philosophy, Wilson argues that the *Discourse* is not a system at all but an amalgamation of three different and often incompatible metaphysics: metaphysic A dealing with the theory of individual substance based on a logic of descriptions; metaphysic B offering a theory of bodies and corporeal substances inspired by scholastic theology but with the addition of *vis viva*; and metaphysic C presenting a theory of pre-established harmony close to Malebranche's system. Wilson comments on this hodge-podge: "... although C, despite its independent origins fits together well with A, and although A and B also show points of parallelism, the combination of A, B, C ruins the attempt at coherence."⁹² In her view, it is only in the following two decades that Leibniz arrives at his monadology, and he only does this by discarding key elements of the *Discourse*:

Leibniz's first attempt to put down his thoughts in organized form, the so-called *Discourse on Metaphysics* of 1686, is shown not to constitute a system at all, but a superposition of three independent system-fragments or semi-systems. It is a work both polemical and conciliatory, informed by natural philosophy, logic, and theology in equal measure, but it does not represent Leibniz's final scheme. It is only in the following two decades that the picture presented in the *Monadology* is worked out piece by piece, as Leibniz discards part of the *Discourse* and tries to come to terms with the implications of what is left.⁹³

Thus, Wilson sees a real evolution in Leibniz's philosophy after 1686. Arguing along lines similar to Garber, she rejects the idea that the concept of monads was implicit in the *Discourse* since in this work Leibniz still accepts the real nature of matter:

Though it is agreed that Leibniz did not introduce the term "monad" into his own writing until 1695–96, many commentators regard monads as implicitly present in the earlier treatise. This is a view we will dispute... arguing that the monad needs to be distinguished from both the individual substances and the corporeal substances of the earlier work...

For a time in Leibniz's thinking corporeal substances appear to co-exist with monads. Later his hand is forced and only monads are said to be real. For the Leibniz of the Arnauld correspondence, corporeal substances serve as a hedge against a pure phenomenism which in the end, despite a good deal of resistance, he is no longer able to avoid.⁹⁴

Although this passage suggests that Wilson agrees with Garber in thinking that Leibniz embraced phenomenism at the end of his life, in other passages, and for good reasons, she maintains that he did not. For one thing, a purely phenomenalist position is not consistent with his dynamics, which ascribes real force to bodies.

It is nevertheless impossible to suppose that Leibniz held to a pure phenomenism when he was not under severe pressure. It is true that around 1703 he stopped trying to reconcile monads and corporeal substance. But though he found unparadoxical the view that harmony demanded only a correlation of phenomena, in which case there were only minds and their contents and nothing either "external" or "internal", nor any correspondence with things outside, this view conflicted with other doctrines such as the activity of substance.⁹⁵

Another reason why Wilson objects to the idea that Leibniz embraced phenomenism is that it would have undercut his objection to Cartesian dualism, which rested on his insistence that souls are always attached to bodies. For if the two could be thought of separately, Leibniz was convinced the way was open for materialism and atheism. In addition, since perception is an essential function of Leibnizian monads, monads must have bodies, for how could they perceive without organs of perception?⁹⁶ This is a point we shall come back to because it offers one explanation for why Leibniz ghosted van Helmont's last book.

Another equally important reason why Leibniz never embraced phenomenism was that it would have undermined his theodicy, for "the best" implied a plenum, which meant that God made every conceivable kind of substance with infinitely varying degrees of perception. In other words, human perceptions were not the only perceptions and the universe was not made for man alone. As Leibniz says:

I believe that there is in every body a kind of sense and appetite, or soul, and furthermore, that to ascribe a substantial form and perception, of a soul, to man alone is as ridiculous as to believe that everything has been made for man alone and that the earth is the centre of the universe.⁹⁷

Wilson attributes Leibniz's changing view of substance from the static one of the *Discourse* to the dynamic view of his later writings to a shift in his thinking from logic and analysis to biology and dynamics. She argues that instead of

looking at the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, as he does in the *Discourse*, Leibniz altered his perspective to that of the living and constantly changing individual. Consequently, Leibniz gave up his definition of substance in terms of subject-predicate logic for a definition in terms of force and activity. She believes that this change is already noticeable by 1690, which, in her mind, effectively eliminates the possible influence of van Helmont:

... Couturat was right to stress that force plays no definite metaphysical role in the *Discourse*. Despite the hints about the importance of force for refuting the Cartesian conception of substance, the *Discourse* looks at the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, and the conception of the individual is, as a result, anything but dynamic. God sees the whole plan of the individual's life; his experiences and movements occur to him in a certain order, as a consequence of his definition. The *Monadology*, by contrast, begins with the monad and not with God. The emphasis is on the changes within it, which are said to take place according to an inner principle of development. Having dropped subject-predicate logic as a basis for a theory of substance, Leibniz has turned to other models: to the stored-up potential and released energy of seemingly inanimate objects, to the physical development of a living creature, and to the production of thought in the mind. This shift is already apparent by 1690. To Fardella, Leibniz explains that it is from the nature of substances or their "primitive power" (not their concepts!) that their "series of operations" follows. In effect, notions which are peripheral in the *Discourse*, better elaborated in the Arnauld correspondence of 1686–87, assume center-stage from 1690 onwards, and an objective comparison of the vocabularies of the *Discourse* and the *Monadology* confirms the impression that logical content has been expunged from the latter work.⁹⁸

Wilson speculates about the reason for Leibniz's change from a static to a dynamic perspective and concludes that it was a fundamental part of his rejection of both the Cartesian theory of matter and the Cartesian theory of occasionalism (represented especially by Malebranche). In Leibniz's view, both led to determinism and to the demeaning view that God must continually interfere in nature to ensure the correspondence between what is perceived and what actually happens. To avoid these dangerous conclusions, substance must be active in its own right.

But what precisely led him to his doctrine of monads? Like Aiton, Wilson thinks that Leibniz may have been influenced by the microscopic studies of Leeuwenhoek, Swammerdam, Malpighi, and others: "Very likely the idea of animal corpuscles was introduced to him as early as 1676 on the return from his brief visit in England via Holland."⁹⁹ But she admits that monads are very different from micro-organisms: "Monads... are not visible through microscopes, and not resolvable into collections of smaller bodies, so that

these small creatures are not to be identified with them.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, other influences must be sought, and Wilson turns to the Cambridge Platonists. In a passage which I obviously endorse, Wilson says:

Leibniz’s relations with the Cambridge Platonists More and Cudworth, and those connected with them such as Anne Conway, the gifted student of More’s, and F. M. van Helmont, son of the famous chemist, need... more critical attention than they have received.¹⁰¹

Wilson believes that the term “monad” came from the Cambridge Platonists – Leibniz had read More’s *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*, where the term is used, as early as 1679 – but she rejects any possible influence of van Helmont on two grounds: first, Leibniz did not take his thought seriously; and secondly, his influence would have come too late: “Thus, although the term [monad] almost certainly stems from the Cambridge group, it is unlikely that Leibniz appropriated it from F. M. van Helmont (who visited him in 1696) as is sometimes stated.” She adds in a footnote: “Leibniz was fond of van Helmont but considered him eccentric and did not believe much of what he said. In any case, 1696 is too late.”¹⁰² As I will show in chapter three, not only did Leibniz value what van Helmont said, but van Helmont’s first extended visit to Leibniz occurred in 1694 not 1696. But, even more importantly, Leibniz’s month-long stay in Sulzbach occurred in 1688. Thus Leibniz’s first emersion in the Lurianic Kabbalah occurred during the critical time he was searching for answers to the penetrating criticisms that Arnauld had raised about his notion of substance and concept of free will.

Wilson concludes that the most probable influence on Leibniz was Ralph Cudworth’s *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678). As the foremost critic of Cartesian philosophy and “the single most important medium for the transmission of Plotinian and Platonic intellectualism of the period,”¹⁰³ Cudworth’s enormously erudite work was bound to appeal to Leibniz, who read and annotated it (at least up to page 726) in 1689. Wilson thinks that Leibniz found his solution to the continuum problem in terms of a split between sensible and intelligible worlds in Cudworth. She juxtaposes passages from Leibniz *New System* (1695), where she believes the concept of monads is first fully established, with passages from Cudworth to show that Leibniz’s distinction between physical, mathematical, and metaphysical points could have come from Cudworth:

It is impossible to say whether or not Leibniz’s tripartite distinction, and his solution to the continuum problem in terms of a split between sensible and intelligible worlds, was directly affected by his Cudworth study; but this is by far the most likely source, for in the *True Intellectual System* Cudworth discusses the problem of unextended incorporeal substance and

explicitly distinguishes between physical and mathematical *minima* and metaphysical unextendeds.¹⁰⁴

Wilson quotes another passage from Cudworth which sounds as if it could have been written by Leibniz:

A *Thinker* is a *Monade*, or one *Single Substance*, and not a *Heap of Substances*: whereas no Body or *Extended thing* is *One*, but *Many Substances*, every Conceivable or Smallest Part thereof being a Real *Substance* by itself.¹⁰⁵

Wilson thinks that Leibniz may have applied Cudworth's description of the "Energie of Nature" as an "Obscure and Imperfect Sense or Perception, different from that of *Animals*... a kind of *Drowsie, Unawakened, or Astonish'd Cogitation*" to monads.¹⁰⁶ While Leibniz definitely had read this last passage before 1703, Wilson admits that it is impossible to be sure that he read the previous two before this date because the annotations he started in 1689 break off at page 726. This means that: 1) he may have read them but did not annotate them; 2) his notes were lost; or 3) he only finished the book in 1703–4.¹⁰⁷ If the latter is the case, one could use the same argument against Cudworth that Wilson uses to eliminate van Helmont, namely that 1703 is too late. But even granting that Leibniz had read all of Cudworth's book, I think there are problems with Wilson's argument, for Cudworth, like Henry More, subscribed to the concept of "plastic natures," which Leibniz specifically rejected. Both Cudworth and More advocated the Platonic form of vitalism which was dualistic, not the Aristotelian form I described above, which was monistic. For Leibniz the problem with "plastic natures" was that they still represented external causes acting on passive matter. As Wilson says, undermining her own argument, "These plastic natures were an absolute obstacle to Leibniz's considering Cudworth as having contributed to his own philosophy."¹⁰⁸ It is precisely because both More and Cudworth were Platonic dualists, while Leibniz was not, that I do not believe either philosopher exerted a decisive influence in the development of Leibniz's truly radical concept of a monad as a simple, self-activating unity. But a source was available, and that was van Helmont's kabbalistic monadology, which was far more radical than either More's or Cudworth's because it was monistic. Evidence demonstrates that a chronology of kabbalistic influence existed and contributed to the final shaping Leibniz's philosophy.

CHAPTER TWO

Van Helmont, Leibniz, and the Kabbalah

One of the first to suggest that Leibniz was influenced by van Helmont was Heinrich Ritter in 1853. Ritter argued that of all Leibniz's contemporaries, van Helmont was closest to him both personally and in terms of his thought.¹⁰⁹ R. W. Meyer also recognized "many intellectual affinities between the two men." He believed Leibniz had appropriated the term "monad" from van Helmont, but he did not think that was enough to bridge the vast difference between the philosophies of the two men. Van Helmont remains in his view an eccentric mystic and enthusiast, whose ideas form an incoherent jumble, while Leibniz is the systematic, rational, and logical thinker, who subordinates his mystical inclinations to scientific ends. Hence, van Helmont's role was to inspire in Leibniz ideas which he himself could not comprehend. Furthermore, van Helmont was only one of many contemporaries to influence Leibniz; his influence was therefore in no way special:

With Frans Mercurius van Helmont ... Leibniz had many actual interests in common, and in spite of a great difference in age there are many intellectual affinities between the two men; and thus Helmont's life and his way of thinking deserve somewhat closer attention. For in discussing Helmont's thought we hope to bring out once again Leibnitz's many affinities with the contemporary ways of thought, and to show that the only thing which distinguishes him from other contemporary thinkers is his highly conscious and urgent sense of commitment to the problems of his age. ... [Van Helmont's] adventurous life is reflected in his writings: a vast collection of inventions, plans, prescriptions, formulae and curious calculations on past and future events; violent attacks on Descartes, Spinoza and Hobbes; sketches for a mechanistic cosmology; empiricist and sensualist theories; and cabalistic and mystical theories of number – all these lie jumbled up in his countless papers. Yet everything he wrote was inspired by his enthusiastic plans for the Academies in which he hoped to see his projects executed; and all his projects were conceived with a view to their immediate practical application. His "natural" Hebrew alphabet, for instance,

was to be used for curing the deaf and dumb; he devised a mechanical method for curing scoliosis – claiming that an English woman had opened a hospital in London in which the method was used with great success; he had cures for every kind of ailment, affliction and debility. Yet the ultimate purpose of all his speculations was once again a reunion of the Churches; already he saw secret signs of the future Universal Church that would be proclaimed in the new century. Leibnitz, though more cautious and sober in his hopes, shared Helmont's belief that this future Church could only be of permanent benefit to the peoples of Europe if it were armed with all the ideas of the new science. In this belief Leibnitz founded in 1700 the Berlin Academy. In Helmont's mind (as in Leibnitz's) this scientific chiliasm was inextricably linked with philosophical doctrine. The aim was to reconcile theology with the "*philosophia reformata*".

Basing his views on the separation of the creature from the Creator, Helmont claimed that God had created only the *seeds* of all things. He saw God's work as an act of informing and cultivating of these seeds, which he called *monads*; this term Leibnitz took over from Helmont in 1696. Helmont's monadology remained little more than a "metaphysical poem"; and it was Leibnitz's ambition to solve its many inherent contradictions...

In Leibnitz's *Monadology* we shall find echoes of all these European trends of thought: of Helmont, Henry More and Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius); of the symbolical language of Plotinus and Nicholas of Cusa, whose concept of a universal centre as the point of coincidence of individual centres Leibnitz translated from theology into anthropology and biology; and of a number of earlier and contemporary German thinkers.¹¹⁰

In his book *Leibniz et Spinoza* published in 1946, G. Friedmann also recognized that van Helmont and von Rosenroth influenced Leibniz's developing concept of monads. He takes issue with Foucher de Careil's assertion that Leibniz utterly rejected kabbalistic thought because of its association with Spinoza, arguing that, on the contrary, Leibniz was extremely interested in the Kabbalah. However, Friedmann does not give especial weight to van Helmont's influence or to that of the Kabbalah; they simply provided one of the many strands of occult thought woven into Leibniz's mature philosophy. I will come back to this subject in chapter 3, where I try to show that Leibniz's connection with van Helmont was far closer and his knowledge of the Kabbalah far greater than previous scholars, including Friedmann, have recognized.

In an article published in 1979 and again in her book *The Death of Nature* published the following year Carolyn Merchant returned to the issue. But instead of arguing for van Helmont's influence on Leibniz, Merchant sees van Helmont's friend and patroness, Lady Anne Conway, as the real source

of inspiration.¹¹¹ In her article she argues that Leibniz derived the term monad not from van Helmont but from reading Anne Conway's one published book *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy Concerning God, Christ and the Creatures*.¹¹²

Anne Conway was a remarkably intelligent and well-educated English Viscountess. Before her marriage to Edward Conway, she had a close relationship with Henry More. More met her through her brother, one of his students at Cambridge, and thought so highly of her intelligence that he began to correspond with her and to treat her as "his pupil."¹¹³ In 1670 More introduced van Helmont to Lady Conway in the hope that he might be able to alleviate the painful and debilitating headaches from which she suffered. Much to More's distress, van Helmont gradually assumed the role of teacher and confidant that he himself had once played. Throughout the 1670s van Helmont remained almost constantly with Lady Conway at Ragley Hall, and More was forced to watch at a distance as van Helmont introduced Lady Conway first to the Kabbalah and then to Quakerism.¹¹⁴

After Lady Conway's death in 1679, Van Helmont arranged for the publication her book. He brought a copy of it to Hanover in 1696. Merchant argues that it is hardly coincidental that Leibniz first used the term monad, a term used by Lady Conway, shortly after this date. Although Merchant was mistaken and did not realize that Leibniz first used the term monad in 1695,¹¹⁵ her argument might still stand in as much as Leibniz had met van Helmont in 1694, and there is evidence to prove that they discussed van Helmont's philosophy, which, as I will argue, was the source for that of Lady Conway. Merchant points out the similarities between Lady Conway's and Leibniz's philosophy in terms of their vitalism, monism, and belief that within each creature there is an infinity of other creatures organized as a hierarchy of monads. Merchant does not press her case too far. She points out the important differences between Lady Conway and Leibniz. For example, Leibniz's pre-established harmony was very different from Lady Conway's belief that spirits and matter could interpenetrate and act on each other. Nor did Leibniz accept Lady Conway's belief in metempsychosis. The bottom line of Merchant's argument is that Lady Conway and van Helmont reinforced ideas Leibniz already had; they did not shape his thinking so much as corroborate it. Hence their theories "converged".¹¹⁶

The basic elements that went into Leibniz's concept of the monad had been well developed by 1686, the crucial year of synthesis in which the main tenets of his philosophy were laid out in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, the correspondence with Arnauld, and the "Brief Demonstration of a Notable Error of Descartes. ..." By then he had set out the concept of an individual substance whose essence was perception and activity, the animation of mat-

ter, the concept of the organic continuity of life, the idea of pre-established harmony, and the metaphor of each soul mirroring the universe from its own point of view. He had read the work of the Cartesians, Scholastics, microscopists, and the Cambridge Platonists. During the decade 1686–1696, he refined many of these fundamental ideas and developed his system of dynamics in more detail. In addition he read and incorporated into his philosophy ideas from Chinese Philosophy, Maimonides, and the Cabala. The writings of Francis Mercury van Helmont and Anne Conway served to confirm and buttress his vitalistic view of nature and to stimulate the coalescence of his ideas into a “monadology.”¹¹⁷

Merchant’s case is a fairly weak one because it gives too much importance to Lady Conway and not enough to van Helmont, a subject I will return to in the last three chapters.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Merchant’s analysis fails to account for why Leibniz went to Sulzbach in 1688 and why he stayed there for a full month.

In suggesting a “convergence” of ideas Merchant’s thesis anticipated that put forward by Stuart Brown both in his book on Leibniz published in 1984 and in a more recent article, “Leibniz and More’s Cabbalistic Circle,” in which he too probes a possible kabbalistic influence on Leibniz’s thought:

Convergence is a generally recognized fact of intellectual history and it is curious that Leibniz’s name is associated with one of the most remarkable cases of it in mathematics. The points of convergence I have been attempting to highlight, because they depend on shared perspectives – what Leibniz called “belles pensées” – are perhaps less remarkable. It is reasonable to expect that those who share what may loosely be called a common philosophical culture will sometimes arrive independently at strikingly similar conclusions to their thinking. That is so ... in the case of the doctrine that every particle of matter contains a world of infinitely many creatures. It is also true of certain theories of emanation. These are, however, only two examples of convergence between Leibniz’s philosophy and those of members of More’s circle. I have tried to suggest that such convergences are not necessarily reducible to the direct influence of one person on another but are what might be expected to occur when two philosophers, with similar predilections, face similar problems with similar resources and similar constraints.¹¹⁹

Although Brown argues, as Merchant does, for a convergence between Leibniz’s philosophy and the Kabbalah rather than any direct influence, he thinks that whatever convergence existed was between Leibniz and van Helmont’s thought, not Leibniz’s and Lady Conway’s or Leibniz’s and Henry More’s, which has also been suggested.¹²⁰ (I cannot help commenting here that in

denying any causal connection both Merchant and Brown speak the language of pre-established harmony!) In Brown's opinion, too much weight has been put on Leibniz's use of the word "monad" in the late 1690s. He rejects the supposed influence of Lady Conway in this regard, arguing that Leibniz could not have read her book,¹²¹ and, in any case, in Brown's opinion Leibniz's use of the term was simply a tactical ploy and not indicative of a substantive change in his thinking:

Those who have claimed that Leibniz's monadology is derivative from that of Anne Conway have usually been mistaken as to the period of Leibniz's formative development, wrongly supposing this to have been the 1690s, after Conway's *Principles* had been published. Too much significance has been attached to Leibniz's adoption of the word "monad" in the late 1690s. There is little doubt that Leibniz, in choosing this word, was aware of its use by Henry More or his Cabalistic associates and its wider use in the Neoplatonic tradition. I think it was important to him that the word already had some currency and indeed that in using it he was trading on some of its Neoplatonic connotations not only of a "true unity" but also as the kind of unity from which the *plura entia* of the material world result. But in the first published work in which he adopted the term in 1698 a monad is a substantial principle much equivalent to soul or substantial form. And at least one major reason for making more of the word "monad" in his later writings was that Leibniz came to acknowledge that he would not be taken seriously by many of his readers if he insisted on appearing to endorse discredited scholastic doctrines like that of substantial forms. But Leibniz aimed to be multilingual between the jargons of the competing philosophical sects. So his adoption of the word "monad" should not be seen as in itself a major development. It may at least betoken his perception that Neoplatonism was making something of a comeback. But he was in substance a monodologist from around 1686 onwards and showed some tendencies in that direction earlier.¹²²

Following Russell, Aiton, and others, Brown's basic position is that the key period in the development of Leibniz's philosophy is the decade between 1676 and 1686, not the 1690s, and that this virtually precludes any direct influence of van Helmont, Lady Conway, or kabbalistic ideas in general on Leibniz's thought:

Leibniz regarded the writing of his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (early 1686) as the point at which he had arrived at his system. In defense of his *New System* which was published in 1695, Leibniz claimed that he had observed a rule of Horace's in deferring publication for nine years. Although there are modifications, some of them important, to Leibniz's system after 1686,

they are mostly introduced by 1695. The formative decade for Leibniz was 1676–86, not twenty years later.¹²³

However, even in this quote, Brown admits there were some important modifications in Leibniz's thought, modifications Brown describes. For example, Leibniz's theory of substance was not fully worked out in the *Discourse*:

Leibniz's theory of substance was not fully worked out the *Discourse*... In the *Discourse* he did not set out to decide whether, in metaphysical exactness, it was admissible to speak of "corporeal substances." His consideration of these questions, as we shall see in the next two chapters, was to lead him to make significant modifications in his theory.¹²⁴

He repeats this point in his later article:

In the *Discourse*, however, Leibniz did not espouse the doctrine that in every particle of matter there is a world of infinitely many creatures. And indeed that doctrine, taken as a commitment to a monadology of sorts, is inconsistent with the assumption made in the *Discourse* that there can be corporeal substances in the ordinary sense.¹²⁵

Brown recognizes the increasingly immaterial and phenomenalist nature of Leibniz's view of substance:

The transition from the "substantial forms" (principles of substantial unity) of the *Discourse* to the "monads" (immaterial atoms) of the later writings may be partly a change to a less objectionable terminology. But it also reflects a change in priorities and indeed a significant modification of Leibniz's system. For, whereas the author of the *Discourse* attempted to explain how there could be material substance, Leibniz later came to believe that, strictly speaking, at least, there were no such substances.¹²⁶

Brown also notes that Leibniz's ideas about the continuum developed to the point that he no longer made a distinction between human and non-human souls, which in turn reinforced his evolving pansychism, and that his rejection of the reality of space and time put him firmly at odds with most scientists and philosophers, especially the Newtonians. Brown admits that in these important ways Leibniz's thinking changed "significantly,"¹²⁷ although he says that these changes are difficult to trace, and thus, by implication, difficult to account for:

Leibniz's changing views about matter, space, time and the labyrinth of the continuum after he wrote the *Discourse* are difficult to trace in detail. But the tendency of his thought is in what can be called a "phenomenalistic" direction, i.e. to explain matter, space and time in terms of the perceptions of monads. Material substances are reduced to well-founded phenomena as also are space and time.¹²⁸

As I have already suggested and will attempt to demonstrate, it is precisely in these areas that the kabbalistic theories of Francis Mercury van Helmont had a direct impact. But in order to substantiate this claim, dates are crucial. For if Leibniz's philosophy was not substantially formulated by 1686 but continued to develop through the 1690s, then van Helmont's influence is arguable. Although Brown describes the decade between 1676 and 1686 as Leibniz's formative period, he, like Aiton, undermines his own argument. We have also seen that other scholars disagree with Brown entirely and reject the idea that the *Discourse* can be taken as the first statement of Leibniz's mature philosophy. Catherine Wilson takes this position, arguing that Leibniz's concept of substance began to change substantially in the 1690s and that the basic ideas of his monadology were only in place by 1696. Daniel Garber agrees but thinks the decisive date by which Leibniz had fully formulated his mature theory of substance was later, around 1704 or 1705. Since even those who believe the *Discourse* marked the emergence of Leibniz's mature philosophy admit there were significant changes in his thought after it was written, it is clear that Leibniz's philosophy did change in the 1690s and that consequently van Helmont could have exercised an influence. By suggesting 1696 as the date when Leibniz's concept of monads was fully developed, Wilson makes my argument a bit harder to sustain, although not impossible, since she was not aware of the full extent of Leibniz's contacts with van Helmont, or that van Helmont's first prolonged meeting with Leibniz was in 1694, not 1696. And she does not take into account his earlier meeting with von Rosenroth in 1688.

Anne Becco is the first scholar in recent years to propose that Francis Mercury van Helmont had a decisive influence on Leibniz. In several articles written between 1975 and 1978 she conclusively proves from a detailed analysis of Leibniz's autograph manuscripts that Leibniz secretly wrote van Helmont's last book, *Quaedam praemeditatae & consideratae Cogitationes super Quatuor priora Capita Libri Moysis, Genesis nominati...* (*Thoughts on Genesis*), which basically restated and summarized van Helmont's cherished kabbalistic ideas.

It might be objected that even if Leibniz did ghost van Helmont's last book, this need not mean that he accepted van Helmont's ideas. It might simply offer one more example of Leibniz's interest in all kinds of ideas, even those he rejected, as well as his willingness to help his friends.¹²⁹ In the remaining chapters I will present evidence to show that this objection cannot be sustained. Leibniz spent far more time thinking about van Helmont's theories than necessary for someone simply trying to be helpful. As I hope to persuade the reader, Leibniz was interested enough in van Helmont's kabbalistic theories to incorporate certain of them into his own philosophy.

While Becco does not go as far as I do, she argues that Leibniz's collaboration with van Helmont indicates that their relationship was far closer than has been realized. In her opinion, van Helmont re-activated Platonic and vitalistic ideas about substance absorbed by Leibniz in his youth during a key period in the development of his mature system, the years between 1694 and 1696:

The philosophical interest of van Helmont is central to the work of Leibniz on account of the influence it had between 1694 and 1696, the key moment in the establishment of the definitive Leibnizian system.¹³⁰

In her opinion, Leibniz essentially "rationalized" van Helmont. Since Leibniz was fully aware of the mystical and magical uses to which various monadologies had been put in the past, he was cautious in introducing these concepts and careful to keep his distance from van Helmont, at least in public:

... the role of van Helmont, a role of re-activating the vocabulary and knowledge that Leibniz knew well in his youth ... is so important... But it was a question of rationalizing these "monadmagics"... It was precisely because the concepts of a simple substance and monad had a past loaded with irrationalism and atomism that Leibniz only timidly dared to employ them before admitting them definitively into his vocabulary.¹³¹

Like Wilson, Becco flatly disagrees with those who think Leibniz's mature philosophy was virtually in place by 1686 or 1687, either in the *Discourse* or his correspondence with Arnauld.¹³² In her view the *Discourse* is no *Monadology*. What distinguishes the two works is not simply their terminology, as Brown has suggested, because this very difference in terminology created a substantive change in Leibniz's philosophy. Becco argues that when Leibniz introduced the word "monad," he introduced a new concept of substance, and this was the reason for Leibniz's shift from realism to idealism. In the *Discourse* Leibniz still identifies being with thought. Hence only humans are actual substances. It is not until Leibniz substitutes force for thinking that his philosophy frees itself from all traces of Cartesian dualism and that his concept of universal harmony is possible. But even more importantly, Becco argues that the idea of the "simplicity" and "unity" of substance, which is such an important aspect of monads, does not appear in the *Discourse*. As Becco says:

... one can no longer see the *Discourse* as a potential *Monadology* because the idea of the simplicity of substance, with all that implies in terms of Leibnizian ontology, is not found in it. Indeed, we have known for a long time that Leibniz did not use the word "monad" there [in the *Discourse*], a word which only appeared between the years 1694–1696. But it is important to emphasize that the monad is not a "substance." It is a "simple substance." In the *Discourse*, which only speaks of "individual,"

“singular,” or “particular” substance, qualifications which are not found in the *Monadology*, the “simplicity” of substance is never mentioned. Even the unity of substance is not mentioned... In addition to the single difference in terminology, there is the assembly of monodological themes that define the concept of “simple.” The most striking omission in the *Discourse* is the rupture on the ontological plane, since the souls of animals appear as the opposite of positively radiating [i.e. thinking] spirits. In refining the qualities of substance, Leibniz overturns the *Discourse on Metaphysics*, purifies it of scholastic logic and emancipates it from these vestiges of Cartesianism.¹³³

Becco identifies 1695 as the crucial year for these significant changes in Leibniz’s philosophy, for that was the first year in which Leibniz used the word “monad,” not 1696 as is generally thought.¹³⁴ Becco identifies van Helmont as the catalyst in this significant transformation. Through his contact with van Helmont during the crucial period between 1694 and 1696 Leibniz was brought back into contact with Platonic, neoplatonic, Hermetic and, especially, kabbalistic thought. As Becco points out, from his youth Leibniz had absorbed a variety of sources which brought up the concept of monads in various ways (among these sources were Plotinus, Cusanus, Bruno, Campanella, Weigel, More, Cudworth, and von Rosenroth¹³⁵), but it was through his close personal contact with van Helmont that Leibniz rediscovered the concept of monad, which he subsequently tailored to his own purpose.

Becco significantly overstates the case. As R. C. Sleigh has convincingly argued, the issue of the unity of a substance was a central preoccupation of Leibniz’s at the time he corresponded with Arnauld (1686–87), and there were already clear signs that Leibniz was moving in the direction of a phenomenalist view of matter.¹³⁶ But, as we have seen, even Sleigh does not argue that the *Monadology* was fully in place in the *Discourse*.

This does seem to be the consensus reached by most modern scholars of Leibniz, and one I share, namely that although important elements of Leibniz’s *Monadology* can be found in his earlier work, and particularly in the *Discourse*, there are ambiguities and contradictions which show that Leibniz was still wrestling with basic philosophical issues. For example, the idea of force as the defining characteristic of substance, while suggested in the *Discourse*, is not as centrally important there as it is in the *Monadology*. It is not as important because Leibniz still defines substance primarily in terms of perception, not force, and thus differentiates between perceiving, or spiritual matter, and mindless, corporeal matter. As Wilson points out, the *Discourse* also offers the definition of substance in terms of subject-predicate logic; hence, a static definition of substance vies with the dynamic one characteristic of Leibniz’s later philosophy. Leibniz’s theodicy also seems to me to be at a

rudimentary stage in the *Discourse*. In section 30 Leibniz brings up Judas and tries to explain why God would create him fully knowing what he was bound to do. He attempts to justify God's action with several weak and unoriginal arguments: 1) that a greater good ultimately derives from evil acts; 2) that the problem of evil is simply too difficult for humans to understand; and 3) that evil comes from limitation, that it is essentially "nothingness," an argument often used by Platonists and Neoplatonists. According to many commentators, Leibniz never gets beyond these timid solutions and, consequently, never provides a viable theodicy. I will come back to this question in chapter six, where I argue that Leibniz's arguments justifying God change significantly under the impact of the Kabbalah, and that these new arguments do produce a successful theodicy. There are other ideas in the *Discourse* which point in the direction of Leibniz's later philosophy. For example, in section 14 he describes creation in terms of emanation and makes the suggestive analogy between creation and thought. As I will argue, this is a basic idea in van Helmont's kabbalistic philosophy, and it is an idea that Leibniz takes up more fully later as a result of his association with van Helmont.

For all these reasons, I agree with Becco that historians should look carefully at Leibniz's kabbalistic sources: "Leibniz's kabbalistic sources during this period of the crystallization of the terminology of the monad deserves to be carefully considered."¹³⁷ Although I believe she has overstated her case and sees too great a break between Leibniz's philosophy in the 1680s and what emerged after 1694, she raises important issues. By proving beyond a doubt that Leibniz ghosted van Helmont's last book and wrote the preface to another,¹³⁸ she produces far stronger evidence than previous historians for van Helmont and Leibniz's close relationship.

In recent years one other scholar, Bernardino Orio de Miguel, has come back to the question of van Helmont's relationship to Leibniz. He argues that van Helmont "was intellectually closer to Leibniz than any other of his contemporaries," and that it was only the strange and obscure way he presented his ideas that "unjustifiably allowed van Helmont to sink into oblivion."¹³⁹ Orio de Miguel points out the many similarities between the two thinkers. Both attempt to steer a middle course between mechanism and pantheism; both define substance in terms of awareness and perception; and harmony and organic continuity are important concepts in the philosophy of both men.

With this review of what other scholars have thought about the relationship between van Helmont and Leibniz in place, what remains to be done is to show precisely which kabbalistic ideas and which kabbalistic texts influenced Leibniz. This requires a close look at Leibniz's correspondence during these crucial years and an analysis of his involvement in van Helmont's work.

CHAPTER THREE

Leibniz and Van Helmont: Their Friendship and Collaboration

In order to establish the influence of van Helmont on Leibniz it is important to dispel the general opinion that van Helmont was something of a lovable buffoon, tolerated but hardly taken seriously by Leibniz (or by any other intelligent person). Manuscript evidence proves beyond doubt that Leibniz was a careful reader of van Helmont's books as well as an attentive listener to his conversation. He wrote extensive analyses and critical commentaries about van Helmont's opinions, mostly for the benefit of his patron, the Electress Sophie of Brunswick and Hanover. A close look at these letters and memoranda reveals that while analyzing van Helmont's various theories about God, souls, matter, the divine attributes, pre-existence, the transmigration of souls, and the rationale for sin and suffering, Leibniz modified and adapted his own theories. There are three key areas in which van Helmont's kabbalistic philosophy had a significant impact on Leibniz: 1) in the development of his concept of monads; 2) in his evolving ideas about free will and determinism; and 3) in the formulation of his theodicy. Van Helmont's views also helped to shape Leibniz's theory of causation in terms of volition. But before substantiating this influence, the reader must be persuaded that Leibniz did indeed take van Helmont seriously.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this study, Leibniz first met van Helmont in 1671, although he had read two of van Helmont's books earlier as well as the works of the elder van Helmont. I do not believe we can understand why Leibniz spent an entire month with von Rosenroth in Sulzbach in 1688 without taking into consideration his earlier meetings with van Helmont, for it was through van Helmont that Leibniz learned about the Kabbalah and gained an introduction to von Rosenroth. Leibniz described his initial meeting with van Helmont in 1671 in a letter to Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, which I cite below. Two letters dating from the following year show that Leibniz was very concerned to know exactly where van Helmont was, presumably so that he could keep in touch.¹⁴⁰ Leibniz met van Helmont

again in 1679, while both were visiting Princess Elizabeth. This was an important year for two reasons. First, Lady Conway had recently died and van Helmont had left England with the manuscript of her book, planning to publish it on the continent. Second, the first volume of the *Kabbala Denudata* had appeared two years earlier, and van Helmont was en route to Sulzbach to help von Rosenroth complete the second volume, which appeared in 1684. It is difficult to imagine that Leibniz and van Helmont did not discuss the Kabbalah or Lady Conway during their meeting in Herford in 1679. Leibniz had been in correspondence with von Rosenroth in the intervening period, and it was through von Rosenroth that he obtained copies of two of Boyle's works. The so-called mechanical philosophy would, therefore, have been a natural topic for discussion, especially since they were in the presence of Princess Elizabeth, famous for her correspondence with Descartes. Both van Helmont and Leibniz rejected the Cartesian view of matter and the mechanical philosophy on the grounds of their materialistic and atheistic implications. Van Helmont had already written a dialogue (published in 1677 in the first volume of the *Kabbala Denudata*), in which he presented a totally different concept of matter and significantly used the term "monad." As I will argue at a later stage, I believe this text had a significant impact on Leibniz. It is difficult to believe that as Leibniz and van Helmont met and talked at the bedside of the sick princess, they did not discuss these matters. The closeness of their subsequent contact (which I describe in detail in this chapter), taken together with Leibniz's long stay in Sulzbach, makes this a virtual certainty.

There is one piece of evidence from this period – a letter written by Leibniz to Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels in 1681 – that could be taken to invalidate my claim because Leibniz fails to mention meeting van Helmont in 1679 and only refers to their earlier meeting. I quote this letter because it shows how carefully Leibniz kept up with van Helmont's movements and activities – he had heard on the grapevine that van Helmont had become a Quaker, which was true – as well as his respect for him:

... I have learned that M. Helmont is presently there [Sulzbach] with someone named M. Kohlhas, who passes as an adept, which means, according the terminology of the chemists, that he knows how to make the philosopher's stone... As for M. Helmont, I am told that he is entirely Quakerized, and that he does not bare his head when he speaks to princes. I have a hard time believing this because when I used to speak to him fairly often and familiarly eight years ago, he seemed to me entirely reasonable and since then I have esteemed him highly. Indeed, it is quite enough to have been put to the test of the Inquisition.¹⁴¹

The fact that Leibniz did not mention discussing Kabbalistic theories with van Helmont two years before this letter was written does not necessarily mean

that such discussions never occurred. It could simply be that for reasons of prudence Leibniz kept certain matters to himself. Religion was an explosive issue at the time, and dabbling in such esoteric matters as the Jewish Kabbalah could be hazardous, as van Helmont's earlier imprisonment by the Inquisition on the charge of "judaizing" makes abundantly clear. Furthermore, the Landgraf was a leading Catholic and although he was extraordinarily tolerant and ecumenical in his outlook, he was anxious to convert Leibniz to Catholicism.¹⁴²

A similar sense of prudence may explain why Leibniz tends to offer a disclaimer whenever he discusses van Helmont's opinions. We have already seen one of these in the letter to Morell, in which Leibniz praises van Helmont for his interest in natural philosophy but dissociates himself from his unorthodox views. It is this which has led scholars to assume mistakenly that van Helmont's influence was minimal. A typical example of such a disclaimer appears in a letter written to Thomas Smith (1638–1710), the English divine and biblical scholar, in February, 1695. It is clear from what Leibniz says that he likes and respects van Helmont, but he makes a point of dissociating himself from van Helmont's more extreme ideas:

Among the Dutch wonderful things concerning religion and philosophy are being published, thanks to the zeal and work of Helmont, who appears to wish to surpass the unusual medical theories of his father with paradoxes based on other evidence. He takes many things from the Jewish Kabbala and the marvelous tales of the chemists. To these the strange opinions of your Quakers and those of Holland are added, as well as certain unusual thoughts of your Henry More and our Christian Knorr and many other famous men, whom he has known for a long time. From these he now puts together a new body of teachings. He has determined that all things are created by the Messiah as the medium between God and his creatures. He reckons astonishingly in terms of chronology that the souls of ancestors will re-enter the bodies of their descendants. He says that the original soul of Adam was taken on by the Messiah. He has other ideas no less unusual than these, which do not disagree with the opinions of a certain shrewd countryman of yours [Robert Fludd], who thinks that the poisonous and corporeal seed of the serpent scattered among us is corrected and destroyed by some irradiations or balm of the body of Christ. These are the fruits of a corrupt free thinking. How difficult it is to hold a middle course between persecution and license...¹⁴³

To my mind it is significant that in this last sentence Leibniz mentions "persecution," for he knew all the details of van Helmont's two-year imprisonment by the Inquisition. Every thinking person in the Counter-Reformation period was fully aware of how dangerous it was to express or appear to condone

opinions that might be considered heretical (from a wide variety of denominational perspectives!). Prudence might therefore be the simple explanation for why such disclaimers appears in virtually all of Leibniz's public references to van Helmont. Another example is given in a letter to Thomas Burnett, written in March 1696:

For the past few days M. Helmont has been here with us. He and I meet every morning at about 9 o'clock in the study of Madame the Electress. M. Helmont takes the desk and I am the listener. From time to time I question him because he has difficulty explaining himself clearly. He has some very extraordinary opinions. But for all that I find he has very good ideas about practical matters and that he would be overjoyed to contribute to the general good, in which I entirely agree with him. He was a close friend of Madame, the Countess of Kennaway [Anne Conway], and he has told the history of this extraordinary lady. He has also spoken to me often about M. Henry Morus, who was also one of his friends.¹⁴⁴

Leibniz obviously thought highly enough of van Helmont to arrange daily meetings with him in the presence of the Electress Sophie so that he could question van Helmont more carefully about his opinions. And yet he adds that some of van Helmont's opinions are "extraordinary," a rather mild comment to be sure. Again, one might well ask to what extent Leibniz was simply protecting himself?

Even with this expressed reservation, these morning meetings impressed Leibniz sufficiently to mention them in two other letters, one to Adam Kochanski, the other to Vincent Placcius. I quote the one to Kochanski because it specifically refers to van Helmont's reputation as an alchemist. According to Becco, it was the belief that van Helmont possessed the secret of transmutation that largely accounts for the interest shown in van Helmont, even by Leibniz.¹⁴⁵ But as this letter makes clear, van Helmont did not profess special alchemical knowledge. Furthermore, during the period of his closest contact with van Helmont (between 1694 and 1698) Leibniz was well aware of the fact that van Helmont neither possessed the philosopher's stone nor the universal medicine, or so-called elixir of life.¹⁴⁶ In fact, judging from a letter Leibniz wrote in 1680, he had known from his first meeting with van Helmont that van Helmont was himself sceptical of alchemical claims.¹⁴⁷ This did not, however, lessen his respect for van Helmont's skill in chemistry or medicine.

It has been almost two weeks that Franciscus Mercurius Helmont, whom I've known for nearly twenty-five years, has been here. I conferred with him almost daily in the study of the Electress of Brunswick about various matters. He spoke about alchemy modestly, not promising great things and suggesting that whoever believed in this should rather turn his attention to

something else. As for the rest, he has very extraordinary notions and his company is very agreeable to me. He hopes to visit again when he returns, which would be most welcome to us, but he is so old that the world of men can scarcely promise him strength for much longer, for he is nearly eighty.¹⁴⁸

Leibniz's description of some of van Helmont's ideas as "extraordinary" explains why most scholars have taken van Helmont as a unstable enthusiast, whose ideas either baffled or amused people. Even Anne Becco says that most people rightly dismissed van Helmont as a "farfelu sans grande valeur."¹⁴⁹ She gives the example of Baron Dobrzenski, who confided to Leibniz that had it not been for the excellent truffles sent by the Electress of Hanover, van Helmont's visit and conversation about the soul would have sent him to sleep.¹⁵⁰ According to Becco, even Leibniz was not immune to the same sentiments. In her view, Leibniz "reveals himself as a biting critic" of van Helmont. She remarks on Leibniz's propensity for making sarcastic comments and jokes at van Helmont's expense, particularly about the theory of transmigration:

Leibniz reveals himself as a biting critic when, for example, he says how happy he is that van Helmont has found in Buchius a man who can explain his ideas in an intelligible manner; he willingly jokes about the "reveries of the deceased M. van Helmont." Transmigration especially excited his sarcasm. These "extraordinary and perhaps allegorical thoughts" which we "owe to him" lend themselves to laughter.¹⁵¹

Becco even suggests that the epitaph Leibniz wrote for van Helmont may have been ironic.¹⁵² This is hard to believe in as much as Leibniz sent his epitaph to both Eric Benzelius, with the specific request that Benzelius pass it on to the editor of the *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres* for inclusion,¹⁵³ and Thomas Burnett.¹⁵⁴

As for Leibniz's other remarks about van Helmont, admittedly much depends on how one interprets them. I interpret them in one of two ways. First, by taking a jocular tone when discussing van Helmont's most radical theories – for example his belief in universal salvation and rejection of the orthodox notion of hell as a place of eternal torment – Leibniz could sound out the opinions of his correspondents on controversial issues without having to reveal his own positions, which, as I will argue, were in some cases extremely radical precisely because they agreed with those of van Helmont. Second, if one takes into account the tone of Leibniz's remarks, they seem to me to convey affection and respect, not ridicule and contempt, for a man Leibniz genuinely liked and revered. But it will be up to readers to make up their own minds.¹⁵⁵ For this reason I have included a considerable number of substantial quotations from Leibniz's letters to make a decision possible.

In my opinion, the essential point to keep in mind when assessing Leibniz's relationship with van Helmont is that, while he did take van Helmont's views seriously, he was acutely aware of van Helmont's reputation for eccentricity and unorthodoxy. As a mediator and conciliator, Leibniz could not afford to appear too closely associated with any kind of extremism. Hence his tendency to applaud van Helmont's character yet mention his opinions with just enough distance so that if anyone should object, he could plead disbelief. Stuart Brown recognizes this aspect of the relationship between the two men. As he says,

Van Helmont ... was a cause of scandal to the religiously orthodox and Leibniz's diplomatic sensibilities would have made him aware of the dangers of appearing to associate himself with van Helmont in such a way as to be tarred with the same brush. ...¹⁵⁶

But, for all the ... somewhat unkind remarks about his friend, it was van Helmont who had by far the greater influence on Leibniz.¹⁵⁷

The fact that Leibniz came to van Helmont's defense on occasion also suggests that he took more than a casual interest in both the man and his opinions. In response to Vincent Placcius' confession "that I have been able to gain little or nothing from the kabbalistic ideas of Helmont and Knorr. I do not see any solid foundation for these matters," Leibniz replies:

I have praised Francis Mercury van Helmont and Knorr of Sulzbach to you not because of their kabbalistic meditations, but for many other good and honest (as it seems to me) opinions and notions. I make it a practice that wherever I seek and to whatever I turn my attention, I look at what I find praiseworthy rather than what I censure.¹⁵⁸

Admittedly, Leibniz has not rushed to the defense of the Kabbalah in this response, but few people did at the time for perfectly understandable reasons, whatever their actual view of the Kabbalah might have been.¹⁵⁹ In a letter to André Morell, Leibniz also defends van Helmont, this time against the charge of being a misanthrope:

Your letter gives me reason to add something. M. van Helmont returned here on his way to Sulzbach, and I hope he will come back soon. He is in no way a misanthrope; on the contrary he is a very honest man [honnête homme] with very good opinions. But he is extraordinary and not to everyone's taste at first. Besides, age has weakened him a bit, because I think he is over eighty. Nevertheless he travels in a mail coach without a valet.¹⁶⁰

Years after van Helmont's death Leibniz was still defending him. In his review of Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, which Leibniz wrote in 1711, he pays the following tribute to his old friend:

I believe that on page 287 there is a reference to the late Mr. van Helmont, the son, who was in the prisons of the Inquisition at Rome and who took advantage of that solitude to examine the usage of the organs [of speech] in the pronunciation of letters, believing that he had found there how their written characters were formed. I knew this same person uncommonly well, and I must do him the justice to say that he was not as ignorant in questions of morality as one seems to portray him here. It was he who was responsible for reprinting the *Lycurgus* of Octavius Pisani, which advised the public on how to shorten legal proceedings. His conduct was without reproach, his actions full of charity and unselfishness, and with the exception of several fanciful ideas which stayed with him from the impressions of his youth like an hereditary sickness, he was an excellent man whose conversation was very instructive for those who knew how to profit from it. His writings only reveal what was least praiseworthy about him.¹⁶¹

The passages quoted should establish the fact that Leibniz took far more interest in van Helmont than has generally been realized. As we have seen, Leibniz tended to distance himself from van Helmont's kabbalistic theories, while praising him for his character, his concern for the general good, and his knowledge of practical matters. But this reticence about the Kabbalah must not be taken as proof of Leibniz's disinterest or disbelief. The entire thrust of my argument is that the Kabbalah left its mark on Leibniz's thought. To substantiate this, there is no better place to begin than with Leibniz's month-long stay in Sulzbach, from December 31, 1687 to February 1, 1688 (Aiton says Leibniz returned again later in February¹⁶²).

Leibniz was obviously impressed by von Rosenroth's tremendous erudition as well as by his interest in languages, an interest Leibniz shared. In addition to his study of theology, law, philosophy, philology, and history, von Rosenroth became a proficient linguist in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Arabic, French, Dutch, English, Spanish, as well as German and Latin. But Leibniz's admiration for von Rosenroth was based on more than an appreciation of his keen intellect. They had many mutual interests, interests also shared by van Helmont. Von Rosenroth was a dedicated natural philosopher and kept up with the latest scientific developments. He corresponded with Henry Oldenburg, the Secretary of the Royal Society in London, and was asked by the Society's President, Lord Brouncker, to contribute observations suitable for publication in the *Philosophical Transactions*.¹⁶³ Yet, like van Helmont and Leibniz, von Rosenroth did not confine himself to an ivory tower of speculation, as many intellectuals of the period did expressly to avoid religious and political controversy. On the contrary, he entered the political arena with the intention of improving religious and social conditions. As a result of van

Helmont's friendship with the Prince of Sulzbach, von Rosenroth became a privy counselor and eventually Chancellor of the territory, advising Christian August in the same way that Leibniz advised the Electress Sophie. At the same time, von Rosenroth was a poet and dramatist of considerable stature.¹⁶⁴ This aspect of his work would have interested Leibniz in as much as Leibniz also wrote poetry and shared von Rosenroth's interest in turning German into a viable literary, philosophical, and scientific language.¹⁶⁵ Von Rosenroth's German translations of scientific, alchemical, and philosophical works are especially interesting in this regard because of the clarity of his style and his refusal to introduce foreign words and terminology into German, as was routinely done by most German authors. Like both van Helmont and Leibniz, von Rosenroth was steeped in Renaissance Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and the natural magic tradition. Under the pseudonyms Rautner and Peganus, he translated into German J. B. van Helmont's works as well as works by G. B. della Porta, Thomas Browne, and Henry More. In one of these translations he even included a youthful work by Leibniz (Leibniz only found out about this later – to his annoyance – but without ever realizing that von Rosenroth had been the perpetrator¹⁶⁶). Von Rosenroth also shared Leibniz's and van Helmont's distaste for Cartesian philosophy and the mechanical philosophy, and like them he was a vitalist and a practicing alchemist. In his translation of Porta's *Natural Magic*, von Rosenroth describes searching a Parisian cemetery for the proper materials for making the philosopher's stone.¹⁶⁷ Von Rosenroth also acquired a reputation as an adept. Like van Helmont, he was believed to possess miraculous medicines, and he was reputed to have supernatural powers which enabled him to predict the hour of his own death and to return from the grave for a visit to his daughter (Leibniz read the description of this encounter, which had been sent to the Duchess of Hanover by van Helmont).¹⁶⁸ These unusual characteristics may explain a contemporary's description of von Rosenroth as "selzam, doch lieblich."¹⁶⁹

Von Rosenroth also aroused Leibniz's mathematical interest by showing him a magical square. Leibniz still remembered this four years after his visit to Sulzbach. He describes the square in a letter to Loubère (4 February 1692):

The late Mr. Knorr, who gave us the *Zohar* of the Jews and the *Kabbala denudata*, and who was perhaps the most knowledgeable man in Europe about the most hidden matters of the Jews, showed me a magical square from memory, which harkend back to your Indian method, as I remember. I looked for the sketch I made of it because I have been too distracted by other matters to have thought of it since. I believe that he learned this method from some Jews or Arabs.¹⁷⁰

Loubère wrote to Leibniz asking for more information. The following June Leibniz sent it to him:

I can... satisfy your request about the magic square. I have finally found the method which the late Mr. Knorr von Rosenroth communicated to me. I imagine it can be found in some kabbalistic books.¹⁷¹

The circumstances of the two men's lives also had much in common. Von Rosenroth shared Leibniz's frustration at living in a kind of intellectual exile. This is one reason why, like Leibniz, he spent so much time on his correspondence. And like Leibniz, he too felt constantly pressed for time and unable to travel or devote as much energy as he wished to intellectual matters because of his public duties. In a letter to Henry More von Rosenroth laments the fact that he is "compelled to live in a place so remote" and that "official business and economic affairs prevent [me] from traveling." Because he feels so isolated, he implores More to send him a list of the best recent books dealing with philosophy and theology.¹⁷²

Von Rosenroth took the pseudonym Rautner from his birthplace, Raudten, a city in Silesia, from which his family had been forced to flee during the Thirty Years' War. This catastrophic war had a lasting impact on him, fostering a life-long commitment to peace and religious unity. His fervent desire for religious concord motivated him to undertake what he often described as the arduous task of editing and translating the texts that went into the *Kabbala Denudata*. Van Helmont shared his ecumenical vision and helped von Rosenroth collect, edit, and publish these texts because he also believed that the Kabbalah provided the basis for implementing it. Following in the footsteps of their Renaissance predecessors, these two Christian Kabbalists were certain they could free Christianity from the corruptions accumulated over centuries by rediscovering the so-called *prisca theologia* imparted by God orally to Moses on Mount Sinai.¹⁷³ They were convinced that the kabbalistic writings of the Jews offered a far more authentic source for rediscovering this *prisca theologia* than the *Hermetica*, the *Sibylline Prophecies*, or the *Orphica*, for all these were pagan sources and hence suspect. Von Rosenroth made this point in defense of his kabbalistic studies – and it should be noted that even he, a well recognized scholar and linguist, felt the need to defend this interest in such an esoteric study of Jewish sources (Hans Joachim Schoeps has described the Baroque period as an age of philosemitism, but he overlooks the very real antisemitism prevalent at the time¹⁷⁴):

I hoped I would be able to discover in the cabbalistic writings of the Jews what remained of the ancient Barbaric-Judaic philosophy... . I had no greater wish than that I might be permitted to enjoy the sun itself and its brighter light once all the clouds of obstructions and hindrances were scattered. I scarcely hoped I would be able to catch sight of this light unless I followed in the footsteps of that river and arrived at the spring itself, which I believe will be discovered in these very ancient books.¹⁷⁵

In their philosemitism, von Rosenroth and van Helmont attributed the discord plaguing Christianity to Greek philosophy, and they looked for a remedy in the Jewish Kabbalah. As von Rosenroth says in the *Kabbala Denudata*:

As often as I lamented that detestable discord within the Church – and it is possible to show that these evils have arisen chiefly from that begetter of dissention, our pagan philosophy – I thought that at some time or other a way could be found to bring back the divided Churches into Christian accord.¹⁷⁶

Van Helmont and von Rosenroth were convinced that the Kabbalah provided answers to all the many problematic features of Christianity. For example, how could a just and merciful God create men and then damn them to eternity when, in his omniscience, he was bound to know they would sin? Even more problematic was the Protestant doctrine of predestination, which in the eyes of many people made God an unjust tyrant and the author of sin and evil. Finally, how could Christianity claim to be a universal religion relevant to all men when salvation rested on a belief in Christ, who lived during one short historical period and consequently remained unknown to the vast majority of the world's population? All these problems could be solved by the kabbalistic doctrines of *tikkun*, or restoration, which postulated that human beings were continually reborn until they finally purged themselves of all sin and returned to their original state of perfection. Everyone would therefore have the opportunity at some point to be saved, even if they had lived long before the birth of Christ and in areas where the Scriptures had not penetrated.

Besides solving these problematic features of Christian doctrine, van Helmont and von Rosenroth were convinced the Kabbalah had the additional advantage of offering a single, sure method of Scriptural interpretation which would not only lead to the reunion of Christians but to the conversion of pagans, Moslems, and Jews. Such ecumenical visions inspired von Rosenroth to keep toiling away at the *Kabbala Denudata* in the face of personal tragedy, persecution from both Christians and Jews, and considerable financial strain. As he writes in the preface to his monumental work:

From this you may know with how much devotion, indeed, with what danger to my own health and life I am motivated – I say nothing about the expenses. I did not allow myself to be discouraged when, towards the beginning [of my work] two of my teacher's children died (my teacher, who was already old and whose name I omit on account of the hatred of his relatives and co-religionists, otherwise he ought not to be deprived of praise). Soon the same number were lost to me, which my teacher interpreted as a punishment for the publication of this doctrine. Neither was I deterred by so many warnings of all my family and my friends. I

persevered with one aim alone, that I might be of service to you, so that the knowledge of Hebrew matters should no longer be concerned with mere ritual, still less with grammar but should reach to the things themselves, which should then be compared with the phrases and doctrines of the New Covenant to see if by chance by this means it would be possible to facilitate the conversion of the Jewish race to the faith of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁷

This poignant passage reveals the very real obstacles facing anyone who ventured to study the Kabbalah, and it offers further support for thinking that Leibniz's hesitant public reaction to kabbalistic ideas may have been a matter of self preservation rather than a sign of rejection.

Leibniz, of course, shared von Rosenroth's ardent desire for a truly ecumenical Christianity. He too believed in the existence of a *prisca theologia*.¹⁷⁸ From 1671, when he obtained his first position with the Elector of Mainz, to the end of his life Leibniz was concerned with the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants as well as with the conversion of Jews and Moslems to Christianity.¹⁷⁹ This was the basis for his writing the *Discourse* as well as for his correspondence with Arnauld. Arnauld's criticisms of his philosophy and categorical rejection of his overtures for reconciliation produced an impasse in his thought. Is it so surprising, then, that at the very time this impasse became apparent, 1688, Leibniz should have traveled to Sulzbach and shown such interest in the Kabbalah?

Leibniz's interest in kabbalistic doctrine is revealed by the record he kept of his conversations with von Rosenroth, which I quote below. These notes are fascinating because they include kabbalistic ideas Leibniz modified and included in his later writings. Leibniz specifically says that he has "read over the *Kabbala denudata* with [von Rosenroth]" and that he noted down those points he found most memorable. Among these the following should be especially kept in mind because of the impact they had on Leibniz's mature philosophy: 1) that God is an indivisible point and creation occurs through the emanation of light; 2) that there is a hierarchy of "creatures," "souls," "intelligences," or "substantial forms" – these words are used interchangeably; 3) that the inferior intelligences have "fallen," become "obscured," and experience "suffering"; 4) that these fallen souls are enclosed in "husks" from which they will be slowly "extracted" through repeated "generation"; 5) that man is the "microcosm"; 6) that after all "souls" are eventually "extracted" from their "husks" [i.e. perfected or saved], the millennium will begin; 7) that all souls sinned in Adam and Eve, in other words that all souls were originally contained in Adam and Eve and therefore shared in original sin. As I will argue in the last four chapters, these kabbalistic ideas played their part in shaping Leibniz's concept of monads, his argument for free will, his theodicy, and his theory of causation as volition. Because of the significance

of this document and the relative difficulty of obtaining it, I quote it in full, highlighting the most relevant sections:

M. Rosenroth has published different things without his name, such as the *Kabbala denudata*, part one and two. The first contains a procedure for dyeing fabric taken from some Jews and which should be excellent. The second part has several extracts from the *Zohar*, the *Zohar* published in Hebrew, with ancient glosses. Guillaume Prostel [Postel] began a translation of the *Zohar* from what someone sent him from Oxford, but he did not understand it sufficiently. He was deprived of the help we now have. At this moment the Jews are publishing a harmony of the Gospels. Luther's translation is printed in German characters. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are designated by the letters a, b, c, d. Whatever is found in one of them is marked by a single letter; whatever is found in several is marked by several letters. He has some fine oriental books, which are listed at the end of the *Kabbala denudata*. He has translated from English certain questions concerning the preexistence of souls, which contains opinions he does not accept. He is attending to the publication in German of the works of Helmont with certain commentaries. *The New Helicon* is a collection of sacred songs printed, I believe, at Frankfurt and which one can find at Nuremberg at Felsekern.

I have read over the Kabbala denudata with him, from which I have taken what follows:

The infinite being consists in an indivisible point and the emanated light, or the sphere of activity, sends forth its light at its pleasure.

The first born of the creatures, the Messiah, in as much as he is a creature, is called Adam Kadmon. He receives the first rays of light and sends them to the other creatures.

The second class is Adam, or the body of souls.

The third class is that of the intelligences superior to souls.

The fourth is the *microprosopon* or the passions.

The fifth class is that of the inferior intelligences which have fallen and are called *Adam Belial*.

The last class is that of the kingdom or the sephirs [the *sefiroth*], in which the spirits or *substantial forms* are contained. Seized with disgust for the supreme light and *obscured by their fall, the six classes contained in Adam Belial, experience a certain suffering as inferior creatures*. It is to this that St. Paul refers when he speaks of the suffering of the creatures. This corruption reaches all the way to the superior classes. But the Messiah descended and put the superior classes in the place of the fallen ones. *From the fallen angels he made the husks, that is the obscured [darkened] lights*. These are those who afterwards lead the souls in captivity, and it is thus

that the souls are enclosed in the husks from which they will be extracted little by little by generation, which supposes... they have no choice. The souls are divided into the soul of the head, the neck, etc. The body is eight times the length of the head, and this has a cabbalistic meaning: it signifies the eighth millennium.

Man, who is at the same time the summation and the consummation of the creation is a little world or microcosm. When the husks are consumed, that is to say, when all the souls are extracted, it will be the end. All souls sinned in Adam and Eve, from whom came original sin. The Messiah took a body. One must therefore distinguish three things in him: his divinity, his rank, the first born of the creatures, and finally that which was born in time and of a virgin. There are different interpretations of the divine persons. The son corresponds to the class of the Messiah and the Holy Spirit to that of the souls. St. Paul appeared to make a distinction between God and the father of our Savior Jesus Christ. He appoints the coming of the Messiah and his reign on earth about 1832.¹⁸⁰

While he was still in Sulzbach, Leibniz wrote to Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, expressing his admiration for von Rosenroth and his Kabbalistic studies. Even in this totally laudatory letter, one can detect some defensiveness on Leibniz's part and his need to justify his interest in the Kabbalah by emphasizing its potential for converting the Jews. Once again, I would suggest this indicates how difficult it was to support potentially controversial religious views at this time:

I find again a very capable man at Sulzbach named M. Knorr von Rosenroth, who is the Chancellor. He spends what time his duties allow in investigating nature by way of chemistry and in bringing to light the kabbalistic antiquities of the ancient Jews. He has found some very excellent things concerning the Messiah which the modern Jews do not know about or try to suppress or turn away from their true meaning. Their chief book on the Cabala is called the *Zohar*, and it is totally different from the Talmud. Few Christians have seen it or can understand it. Many still make fun of such undertakings, but I think otherwise. I value at all times what is good and am well pleased with that difference in dispositions and intentions which cause nothing to be neglected and the honor of God and the good of men to be advanced in a number of ways.¹⁸¹

In another letter written to Gerhardt Molanus (1633–1722) a month after his departure from Sulzbach, Leibniz returns to the subject of von Rosenroth and the Kabbalah. Once again he emphasizes von Rosenroth's knowledge of chemistry and the Kabbalah, but in this letter he mentions his skill as a poet as well:

... In Sulzbach I spoke to the Chancellor, Mr. Knorr, a man of great erudition. Among German poets he has few equals, but that is the least of the things he should be praised for. As for chemistry and mathematics I will say nothing. There is scarcely anyone today among Christians more versed in the hidden knowledge of the Jews. He has taken trouble to publish many excerpts from the book the *Zohar*, by means of which he has established many Christian truths. For it appears that the traditions of the ancients give proof of the existence of Christ. He has many kabbalistic books of the Jews brought from the East, which are detested in Europe but serve as commentaries on the *Zohar*. It appears that the Cabala of the Jews is a certain kind of more lofty metaphysic, which, divested of its covering of words, reveals certain very splendid matters, although some less valuable notions are interspersed. They observe magnificent things about the Messiah as being beyond the measure of a human being, nor do they think of him as a mere boy, like the common people of their nation. In this way the history of Christ, from his conception up to the dispute in the Temple, will be beautifully embellished with many passages taken from the Kabbalists.¹⁸²

The following September Leibniz was still thinking about von Rosenroth and the Kabbalah. Writing to Hiob Ludolph (1624–1704), the German statesman and philologist who wrote a history of the Ethiopian language, he again praises von Rosenroth, his knowledge of the Kabbalah, and the Kabbalah's potential usefulness in converting the Jews. He describes von Rosenroth as a polyglot and tells Ludolph that he wants to establish a correspondence between them. This letter makes it clear that Leibniz considered von Rosenroth a serious and significant scholar, which could not have been the case if he had dismissed the Kabbalah as either unimportant or worthless.

In Sulzbach I had many conversations with the most impressive Knorr, the Chancellor, a great Hebreophile, who is not unknown to you. He is versed beyond most Christians in the most profound part of the language of the Jews which they call Kabbala. He has bought many important manuscripts, some found in the East, others elsewhere, from which he digs out the secrets of their teachings, which are for the most part metaphysical and examples of which appear in the *Kabbala denudata* and elsewhere. He showed me an almost completed work, the title of which is *Messias puer*, in which the history of Christ from the annunciation to his baptism, which is handed down by the Evangelists and others, is then wonderfully illustrated by passages from the ancient Cabbalists. He received with pleasure the continuation of your Ethiopian [history], which he had hoped for, as well as those things concerning the letter of the Samaritans, which I told you about, and your method for the comparing of different alphabets. For he is a

polyglot, and I would therefore like to establish a correspondence between you.¹⁸³

The letters and texts quoted up to this point should give the reader the sense that Leibniz took far more interest in van Helmont, von Rosenroth, and the Kabbalah than has generally been realized. But it is in his correspondence with the Electress Sophie and the various memoranda he wrote for her as well as for her daughter, Sophie Charlotte, the Electress of Brandenburg, and her niece, Elizabeth Charlotte, the Duchess of Orleans, that the full measure of Leibniz's interest in van Helmont's kabbalistic ideas becomes apparent. Van Helmont was a figure of great interest to these three women. He himself was deeply attached to both Sophie and her daughter, visiting them in Hanover and Berlin. In one letter to the elder Sophie, he says he regrets the fact that he cannot divide himself in two so that he "could wander in the garden with my two gracious Sophies while the weather is still so nice."¹⁸⁴ The affection he felt for them was returned, as one can see from a letter Leibniz wrote to van Helmont in March, 1696. Leibniz had been sent a letter addressed to van Helmont by Knorr von Rosenroth's son, who clearly thought Leibniz would know where van Helmont was. Leibniz did and sent the letter on to van Helmont in Berlin with the following letter of his own:

... The letter which I send to you, Monsieur, is from Monsieur Knorr von Rosenroth, the son of the late Chancellor of Sulzbach, who was your worthy friend as well as mine. The young Mr. von Rosenroth is a gentleman at the court of Wolfenbüttel, as I see from the letter he wrote to me thinking that you were still in Hanover. He informs me by order of His Highness, Duke Anton Ulric, that his Electoral Highness wishes to see and speak with you. I remember telling you when you were here, Monsieur, although on my own, that you would give singular pleasure to that Prince if you visited him. And I see that my guess was not amiss. However, since your trip to Berlin in such good company did not allow you to go to Wolfenbüttel this time, I hope that you will go there when you return here. I hope you will do this in good health as soon as it is convenient and that we can enjoy your conversation for years on end. Madame, the Electress of Brunswick, could not receive a greater pleasure since the memory even of the little time you were here pleases her. It is true that she is always willing to share the pleasure with Madame the Electress of Brandenburg, who has an equal taste for excellent people and ideas.

As for the rest, I recall our conversations and I am glad to learn that you have resolved to communicate before long to the world some of your fine and important ideas.¹⁸⁵

The younger von Rosenroth's letter to Leibniz, which initiated Leibniz' to van Helmont, is further evidence that van Helmont was not the intellectual non-entity he has been made out to be:

Monsieur,

I take the liberty of sending you the enclosed for Monsieur Helmont, not knowing how else to make sure he receives it. I suspect that you do not know a man whose name and virtues are better known in the world. He is presently in Hanover and his Serene Highness the Duke, my master, is interested in meeting a man whose reputation speaks so well. If you could persuade him to come here, you would oblige His Highness appreciably. As for me, I would be no less obliged to you. Since he always honored my late father with his affection and they were the most intimate friends and since I have had the honor of his acquaintance for a long time, I hope I can find favor in his eyes.

As for the rest, I am, Monsieur,

Your very humble and obedient servant,
H. Knorr de Rosenroth¹⁸⁶

Van Helmont received the two letters and wrote back to the Electress, telling her how much he looked forward to seeing her again:

I cannot forget either your illustrious Grace nor the company at Hanover. So, if my health and affairs allow me, it is my intention to return from Sulzbach to Hanover so that way I can see also see my dear Electress. Then the harmony will be perfect. I hope to kiss the hand of Herzog Anton Ulrich, following the request in the letters of Herr Leibniz and Herr Knor de Rosenroot. I remain as I always have been, wishing that the Lord's blessing be with your illustrious Grace. H.¹⁸⁷

Van Helmont's ease and familiarity with the Electress is revealed in the following letter as well. Here he mentions the pleasure he had seeing Sophie's daughter in Berlin and he describes how much his cousin, with whom he was staying, would benefit from conversations with the Electress. He says that he has arranged for his cousin to send the Electress a description of a strange dream had by Knorr von Rosenroth's daughter, both for her own and the Duchess of Orleans' amusement. Van Helmont would often write to the Electress about strange or amusing things, which she could then pass on to her niece, the Duchess. He ends the letter by offering his services:

After my departure from Hanover to Amsterdam to find the illustrious Electress of Brandenburg, I eventually found her in Bielefeld, where I left her with sadness, especially because she would have taken me back to

Hanover. My departure affected me very much, especially seeing that I could not divide myself in two so that I could walk in the garden with my two gracious Sophies while the weather is still fine there.

Since I arrived here I have wished many times that I was in your presence with my cousin to hear her speak with intelligent people and priests about the dispute in religion. She has read the Bible with diligence. She is good hearted, wants to do good, and is free from vain fantasies, so that in a subtle way she can make people admit that Scripture is given to men and has to make sense for different people in different ways. Like music she can end disputes in harmony and love.

My cousin told me this along with other things that she has written in French at my request, judging that they could be copied and sent to France for Madam, along with the dream of the daughter of von Rosenroth, who translated the poems of Boethius out of Latin and into German.

I think I will stay here for several days in order to have my writings copied with some changes before I think of traveling back to Amsterdam. If there is any service I can do for your illustrious Grace here or there, letters can be addressed to me at the house of Madam the Baroness of Merode, called Mutzfelt, in Emmerich in the vicinity of Ter Borg.¹⁸⁸

Van Helmont did perform various services for the Electress, both practical ones, such as sending medicines and even shoe patterns for Sophie Charlotte,¹⁸⁹ and diplomatic ones. He had provided such services for the various members of the Palatine family (as well as others) for years. For example, he mediated between Sophie's brothers, the Elector Karl Ludwig and Rupert, during their bitter property dispute, and he helped Sophie's sister, Elizabeth, famous for her correspondence with Descartes, obtain a pension from the English government as the granddaughter of James I. Van Helmont received his patent of nobility from Emperor Leopold in 1658 in recognition for such good works.¹⁹⁰

The following December the Electress received an intriguing letter from a certain Abbé de Lessing, who was actually writing on behalf of a third party, a Princess de Chimay. The letter reveals the extent of van Helmont's reputation as an adept and doctor with miraculous medicines. I quote the letter in full because it provides such a vivid picture of the magical, even demonic, powers associated with anyone thought to have exceptional healing skills:

Having found myself lately, Madam, in Brussels in a group among whom was the Princess de Chimay of the Bossu family, someone began talking about Sr. de Helmont, why I don't know. She led me apart and began to give me – I do not know if it was a eulogy or a critique of the life of that man. The conclusion is that she told me in detail what she knew of this man, who has marvelous secrets in medicine and other things. But she told

me that this made him a wanderer for fear that someone would steal his secrets. There was one to which the Princess told me he gave different names, but which all those who have seen its miraculous effects baptize Diaphoretic Mercury, which is a skin-colored powder.

As for me, Madam, I am a man of the world, perhaps, who believes very little in these sorts of secrets. Besides, it could easily be that I write nothing to your illustrious Electress which you wouldn't know without this. But the Princess de Chimay asked me so insistently to write to you and to assure you that this powder is a treasure which has no price, the prodigious effects of which she has seen, and to implore you not to lose the chance to have the secret from Sr. de Helmont, or at least the powder, that I could not refuse this good lady's request to take this liberty ...¹⁹¹

Shortly after the Electress received Abbé de Lessing's letter, Leibniz wrote to van Helmont on her instructions. Although much more of a skeptic than the Princess of Chimay, Leibniz did not dismiss the possibility that such a medicine might exist:

You see, Monsieur, from what I just told you about the letter which Madam the Electress received from Brussels, that Madam the Princess of Chimay infinitely esteems your secret. Madam the Electress directed me to write to you about what is said about this, and you tell us what you judge appropriate and what you would have us say. It is not always necessary to disabuse people. On the contrary, the good opinion that they have about a remedy augments its effect. Besides, I readily believe that you have singular things both in medicine and in other matters which merit esteem. Madam, the Princess of Chimay, wishes that one might have at least some of the powder, even without the secret. She doesn't ask so much for herself but she advises us not to lose the opportunity to obtain secrets and remedies of importance. I admire the curiosity of the lady, and I prefer people of this character to those who are both ignorant and suspicious of things they know nothing about.¹⁹²

Upon receiving Leibniz's letter, van Helmont wrote to the Electress, protesting that because he was not a doctor he could not send the medicine. But he says that he will give the recipe to a doctor, who can presumably then give it to her:

The reason that I write this letter to you is because I received a letter myself from Mr. Leibnitz. He wrote that the Princess of Simay had written him about a medicine that I was supposed to send. I've already told the person whom it was for that this was impossible for me to do, not being a doctor. I've let him know that via his Excellency, Mr. Diest, your husband's ambassador in Brussels, who has been asking me for a year now to impart

the medicine to the Prince of Vaudemont. But now, working together with my cousin from Merode, he has come up with the idea of sending over an intelligent doctor to whom I should give the recipe, which I agreed to do.

The rest of the letter is interesting because it once again shows how close van Helmont's friendship was with the Electress. He informs her that his cousin has given birth to a daughter, who has been named Sophie, after the two Electresses. He describes the painful cramps he has in his hands and a recent illness, from which he has recovered. He then asks the Electress to intervene in a family property dispute.¹⁹³

In addition to these personal ties of friendship and mutual assistance, the Electress was interested in van Helmont's views as a philosopher. Although she freely admitted that she could not follow everything van Helmont said – and was not sure he could himself –¹⁹⁴ she thought seriously about his ideas, asking Leibniz for clarification when necessary. In providing this service, Leibniz was forced to formulate his own ideas on these matters more clearly. In this sense van Helmont was both a foil and a catalyst for Leibniz in the development of his own philosophy. Several entries in the journal Leibniz kept during August and September of 1696 makes this aspect of van Helmont's influence clear:

August 3, 1696

The illustrious Electress gave me a letter to read from Madame the Duchess of Orleans in which, given the occasion by Herr Helmont's thoughts about the soul, she reasons and supposes that we accept the soul's immortality only from faith, but to natural reason it would seem that everything returns to elements in order to be reborn. Therefore, from the rules of justice one cannot judge accurately about the doings of God, since such rules are for men and do not constrain the highest Being. I should give my thoughts on this. The occasion for this letter came from Herr Helmont's speculations, which the Electress sent to Madame, so that, although she does not agree with him, yet she praises and wishes for his tranquillity.

August 4

I have put down some brief thoughts for the Electress about the letter from Madame.

August 6

With the Electress in her study in Herrenhausen. I outlined what she could

answer to Madame about the soul and van Helmont. I kept a copy.¹⁹⁵

Clearly, van Helmont's ideas stimulated Leibniz to develop his own.

A letter written by Leibniz to Sophie two years earlier, on September 3, 1694, reveals van Helmont in the same provocative role. I quote this letter in full because it shows how carefully Leibniz read van Helmont's books and illustrates the kind of important issues van Helmont's work raised in his mind. As one will see, there were many points of agreement between Leibniz and van Helmont. They both reject the corpuscular philosophy of the Cartesians and Gassendists for a vitalist philosophy that endows matter with force and activity; they both believe that animals have souls, again rejecting Cartesian dualism; they are equally critical of Quietists and reject the idea of a universal spirit; and they both agree that there is an infinity of created things. The major areas of disagreement between the two men lie in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, which Leibniz rejected in favor of the idea that souls are continually transformed – the two ideas are really not that different as I will suggest – and van Helmont's denial of the eternity of hell, which Leibniz says he does not accept, although, as I will show, he eventually does. The reference to Peter Serrarius in this letter is interesting in this connection. He was a Dutch Chiliast who had accepted Sabbatai Sevi's claim to be the Jewish Messiah. He belonged to a circle of philosemitic millenarians, with whom van Helmont was in contact.¹⁹⁶ In all probability, Leibniz learned about Serrarius and his radical views from van Helmont. An especially important section of this letter deals with van Helmont's conviction that all creatures will arrive at greater perfection. Leibniz incorporates this idea in his later theodicy. This marked an important evolution in his thought and can be directly attributed to van Helmont (this will be more fully discussed in chapter six). This long and detailed letter indicates that Leibniz was thoroughly conversant with van Helmont's and von Rosenroth's kabbalistic ideas. He admits that he finds some of these "incontestable," even though he describes them as "extraordinary and perhaps allegorical." As for the rest, he is willing to suspend judgment until van Helmont has a chance to explain them more fully. This point should be stressed: Leibniz does not dismiss these ideas out of hand; he asks for more evidence to support them. Once again I have highlighted those phrases and sentences that I believe stimulated the development of Leibniz's own philosophy.

I have read with pleasure and profit the two books that M. van Helmont sent to Your Electoral Highness. He could not have better addressed the sublime thoughts that are found there. I wished that there had been joined there the third entitled *The Spirit of Diseases* cited in the book of Mr. Buchius about God. *I found there many things that come back to me often enough; but*

there are also others that I cannot follow without seeing sufficient proofs. Many people only notice in books what they believe and can remember; but I, on the contrary, give all my attention to what appears to me to be the most solid.

I am very glad that Mr. van Helmont has found in Mr. Buchius a man who explains his opinions in an intelligible manner. I have often wished that the late Mr. Knorr from Sulzbach, who was such a capable man, had wished, or could have taken the trouble, the way he began to do in his book on the kabbalistic science of the Jews. But I hope even more that someone conserves for posterity the quantity of fine discoveries that Mr. van Helmont has made in many different arts and sciences.

As for the two books, I see that one does not include the name of its author. That is why I wonder if Mr. van Helmont wants to claim it. It is true that the eternity of punishments that is denied there does not conform to the ancient theology of pagans and that it was not completely received among the Jews, or even among Christians. The great Origen did not believe it. It seems that St. Gregory of Nyssa took the side of the Platonists, who believed that all God's punishments were only medicines with the object of improvement. St. Jerome and several other fathers were not far from believing that all Christians would be finally saved, after having passed through the fire. Thus hell became for them a purgatory. In the past century a learned man Celsius Secundus Curio¹⁹⁷ wrote a book about the magnitude of the celestial kingdom in which he tried to prove that the number of saved is incomparably greater than the damned, notwithstanding what is said about the narrow path. *In our age Peter Serrarius from Amsterdam already wished to announce to men that new, alleged Gospel, or that good news concerning the extinction of hell.* It is said that St. Louis (if I am not mistaken) met a young girl carrying a lighted torch in one hand and a pitcher filled with water in the other. The king asked her what this meant. She replied: to burn paradise and to extinguish hell so that men might serve God henceforth without servile fear or mercenary interest. That's well and good for the fear of hell, but for paradise, that's another matter. Since that consists in a vision of God, how can one love God with all one's heart without hoping to see him as much as possible? It is said that when the Swiss were deliberating about whether it was necessary to keep purgatory, one member of the company got up and proposed that since they were there, that they cashier the devils and the whole of hell. *But to speak seriously, it is my opinion that punishment can only be eternal because of the eternity of sins. Those who will always sin will always be punished with justice.*

But I pass to the other book, the subject of which is more extensive since it contains the principles of the theology of Mr. van Helmont put in order by Mr. Buchius. *I was delighted to see that the preface took up those things that separate theology from philosophy. That sufficiently justifies Mr. van Helmont against those who accuse him of enthusiasm because Enthusiasts have this in common with Libertines, they both say things against reason.*

I also share the opinion of Mr. van Helmont when he reproves the Gassendists and Cartesians who attach themselves solely to a corpuscular philosophy, which explains every natural thing by means of matter or extension. And I myself have shown that it is still necessary to bring in the principle of force, in which consists, so to speak, the connection between spiritual and corporeal things. Because I maintain that the laws of nature and the principles of physics can only be explained by employing metaphysical principles, which one needs to fully understand what force is.

I also agree that all substances always remain and do not perish, which I hold true not only in regard to human souls but also in regard to those of other animals. I have disputed strongly about this in letters to the celebrated Mr. Arnauld. It is not that I believe in the transmigration of souls; but I believe in the transformation of the same animal, who is at one time large and at another small and assumes diverse forms, as we see in the case of silkworms when they become butterflies. This conforms more to the order of things than transmigration. There is then the appearance that there is strictly neither generation nor death but that the animal is only enveloped [eveloppé] or developed, remaining always united to an organic body, although this body can become incomparably more subtle than the objects of our senses. This is what the ancient author of a book attributed to Hippocrates has already said. And also the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that visible things are produced from invisible things. However, I do not wish to extend this doctrine to man nor to the human soul, being persuaded that because the soul contains the image of God within itself, it is governed by special laws, the details of which can only be learned by revelation. And since it appears that Scripture did not wish to explain this matter as much as we might wish, I doubt than we can hope to find in this life as much detail concerning the next life as Mr. van Helmont seems to give us.

I am strongly of his opinion when he refutes those who believe that our soul loses itself in the universal spirit. It seems that this is the opinion of several Mystics and Quietists. But it is a chimera that has no sense; besides which it is contrary to immortality.

*When he [Helmont] composes everything of fire and water and takes these for spiritual principles, I believe that he understands these allegorically, and that he wished to signify by this an active and a passive principle. Most of all I approve of his opinion about the infinity of things, and I have already said in the *Journal des Savants* that each part having parts to infinity, there is no little portion of matter that does not contain an actual infinity of creatures (and apparently living creatures). It is in this way that nature bears the character of her Creator. And it is reasonable enough to believe that each one of these creatures, however little it is, will have its time to arrive at a greater perfection. He speaks further of the envelopment of all things in the first man; of the individual humanity of Adam united to the Messiah; as well as of our continual dependence on Adam; and of his formation from the blood of the earth or from the terrestrial life; likewise that Adam and Eve were each one male and female and consequently four in all, for which reason the Messiah came at the end of four thousand years in the fullness of time; how men will all be reunited in Adam when at the end of the century, each will come to his perfection and will have also spiritualized and perfected with himself the corporeal creatures attached to him; finally concerning the revolutions of the worlds to come. As for all that and quantities of other extraordinary and perhaps allegorical thoughts that Mr. van Helmont yields to us, I excuse myself from going into them. I believe that a part of these tenets are incontestable. But before judging them, we must wait for much greater enlightenment from him, assuring him of our docility in all that is neither against reason, Scripture, nor the everlasting tradition of the Catholic Church. I am content to know in general that because of the wisdom and immense goodness of the author of things, everything is so well ordered and will go so well, even after this life, for those who love God. We would be overjoyed to know more. And I do not doubt that he judges your Electoral Highness as worthy as anyone in this universe to be instructed in these mysteries. I am with devotion ...¹⁹⁸*

The second paragraph of this letter, in which Leibniz says how glad he is that van Helmont has found an expositor of his thoughts in Buchius, is taken by Anne Becco as an example of Leibniz's sarcasm. I must admit that I fail to see the sarcasm, but I leave it up to the reader.

Leibniz clearly thought van Helmont had important things to say. During van Helmont's visit to Hanover in August, 1696 Leibniz spent a great deal of time with him, discussing both practical and philosophical matters, just as he had the previous March in those meetings in the Electress' study. Leibniz's journal entries, which only cover the period between August 3 and September 26, when the journal unfortunately ends, show how frequently he was in van Helmont's company. These entries deserve to be quoted in full because they

present such a vivid picture of both men's enormous curiosity and their wide range of interests – from the making of wheelbarrows and shoes with springs to biblical chronology:

August 7

I spoke at length with Herr von Helmont this evening about transporting earth and about a good wheelbarrow. Through the motion of a man with the barrow much time and energy is wasted. It would be preferable that a man move without so much of his own motion. About beating gold, and roasting and cooking with ironware. About how to straighten those who grow crooked, which he wrote about in the tract concerning the Microcosm and the Macrocosm, which was not completely translated into German under the title *Paradoxa*. About printing with feet, spinning with two hands. About flax combs.

August 8

I told Herr Helmont about my idea about fast get-aways on shoes with springs and about the carriage that always runs on a flat surface. He thought copper and mercury could be made.

August 9

Herr Helmont spent the afternoon with me. He spoke a great deal about his speculations. Among them are some good ones. I remonstrated with him about his *Seder Olam*, that sacred chronology is generally uncertain because the seventy translators and the Samaritan codex differs from the Hebrew text used today and for more than one hundred years. He thought he could justify it by finding a loophole in the 7 times of Cain and 77 times of Lamech, from which the year of the Flood could be derived.¹⁹⁹

As this entry shows, Leibniz was critical of the *Seder Olam*; he had actually written several critiques of it, probably in 1693 or 1694.²⁰⁰ Leibniz realized that van Helmont was not the author of the book, although it did contain many of his kabbalistic ideas. This is one of the reasons why, when speaking of van Helmont, Leibniz distinguishes between the man and his writings. Van Helmont had even told him that his books only partially represented what he really thought, and Leibniz seemed quite willing to believe him. It is important to look at these critiques carefully – particularly the second one which is longer and more detailed – because Leibniz's remarks offer yet another example of the way in which van Helmont's ideas acted as a catalyst

in the formation of his own. Leibniz's basic criticism is precisely the one mentioned in his journal entry, that too many uncertain things are included in the book. Leibniz is also careful to distance himself from the Kabbalah, but, as I have argued, this was a necessary and prudent thing to do at the time:

I read this book a while ago, and I find in it some good thoughts but mixed in with a quantity of fancies which are not supported either by reason or by sacred Scripture. The opinions and expression of these ancient Hebrew Cabalists cannot be taken as solid proof, although some people do imagine that they represent the traditions of Moses and the ancient sages since in effect *cabala* signifies *tradition*.²⁰¹

But having begun with this caveat, Leibniz continues by describing kabbalistic ideas which, if interpreted slightly differently, would make good sense. For example, as he says of the “shocking” kabbalistic notion that God acts by necessity – an idea that was bound to resonate in his mind – one can give it a “good meaning.” Since, as I argue at a later point, van Helmont’s kabbalistic theories offered an escape from determinism, the reference to the issue here is significant. However, at this time Leibniz basically repeats what he has already said to Arnauld and therefore is nowhere near his final position on this issue.

The author begins speaking in a way that is somewhat shocking, because he says that God is a necessary agent. However, I think that one can give this a good meaning, and that is what charity demands, since fundamentally God is always determined to make the best and most perfect, and that is not contrary to freedom since true freedom consists in the most perfect use of one’s abilities.²⁰²

In his second series of remarks he makes the similar point that while the author’s speculations “are not completely according to the rigor of true philosophy,” they can be given a good sense. This is another example of the way in which Leibniz “rationalizes” the mythology of the Kabbalah.

I quote the second critique in full because it provides further proof of how closely Leibniz read van Helmont’s books (or those written for him) and how detailed his knowledge of kabbalistic thought was. It also gives an indication of the important issues brought to mind by his analysis of kabbalistic texts. At the time Leibniz wrote this analysis, he was still a dualist, positing a world of matter distinct from that of spirit, and he still differentiated between spirits with minds and those without. He was therefore a long way from his mature monadology. And while he believed that souls can become better or worse, he had not yet embraced the idea that the entire world will eventually become perfect. But there are intimations in this text of ideas that will become more pronounced, such as the basic similarity of all souls and of their difference

consisting in the clarity of their perceptions. In this regard, it is interesting that Leibniz mentions the author's belief that fallen souls have been overwhelmed by a kind of "stupidity" or "death." It is this kind of mytho-poetic phrasing that Leibniz "rationalized" in developing his concept of monads. There is the further interesting idea that Leibniz took up at length when he wrote van Helmont's last book, namely that creation begins with divine thoughts and occurs through their articulation, or as he says, "projection." I will come back to this in chapter seven. I have again emphasized those passages that are important for the purposes of my argument:

The opinion of the ancient cabalists appears to have been that the Messiah, following his humanity, or in as much as he is a creature, was always the friend of the creatures. *This is what the late Monsieur Knorr Rosenroth showed in his Cabala denudata.* This author sometime follows these same principles. They are good enough thoughts, but without assured proof.

The author speaks strangely enough when he says on page 28 that all created spirits are corporeal. *He should have said with more justice that all created spirits are embodied [incorpore]. That was also the opinion of the ancient Platonic philosophers, and most of the Church Fathers believed that even the angels had subtle bodies. Following that opinion, souls will never be separated from all body, only gross bodies. If this is the opinion of the author, it is in no way blameworthy.*

It appears also probable enough that there is no corporeal substance in nature that is not endowed with some kind of life, soul, or perception, or at least with some entelechy or force of acting, which is the lowest degree of form, and if it does not have the entire nature of the soul, at least it has something similar that corresponds to perception and appetite.

If the author had been content with such well understood generalities, one would have been satisfied with him, but he moves on to details that cannot be known either by reason or revelation. However, he gives free rein to his imagination and produces ideas that are amusing enough. He posits a world of creation from which the double world of formation comes, a superior world for the souls which have remained in the purity of creation, whose place is in paradise, and an inferior world for those which have fallen as a result of sin and which remain outside of paradise in harmful places. Finally, from the inferior world of formation comes our world, which he calls the world of faction, *where a stupidity or kind of death overcomes the souls, so that they act mechanically rather than from a vital principle. This should however only be understood comparatively, because there is life and corporeity everywhere.* He holds that this visible world was not created but results from pre-existing acts; that the souls of this world were not created; that our bodies with its life, which is called *nephesh*, do not

belong properly in the world of factio[n]; that our spirit, which the Hebrews call *ruah*, which is intermediate between the body and the soul, comes from the world of formation; that *neshama*, or the soul, alone remains with us from the world of creation; and finally that the most gross [of these souls] is the vehicle for the others, thus *nephesh* for *ruah*, *ruah* for *neshama*, and that, on the other hand, the most subtle penetrates and illuminates the other by its rays.

These thoughts are not entirely exact according to the rigor of true philosophy, because in truth there is only one world that God continually creates, and this world is animated everywhere and extends everywhere. But one can think of it in terms of two kingdoms, one of spirits, which God governs as a prince, as a person governs other people, and one of bodies, which he governs like an architect or a mechanic, the way a skillful master takes care of his machines. These kingdoms penetrate each other and respond to each in the most profound sense, without one worrying about the laws of the other, but each one carrying out what is in the ideal world of the divine word. *It is however true that there is some difference between spirits or intelligences and between souls and that one could perhaps join to them souls or entelechies inferior to them. But all that only makes up one world which continues and contains all these different entities endowed with organized bodies according to their abilities.* Whether all these entelechies are of one kind, as our author supposes, with the result that the lowest could arrive at the condition of the most noble, is not yet decided. The difference between visible and invisible bodies corresponds to our way of thinking but does not in any way mean there is a change of kind. Thus if *ruah* is nothing else but a subtle body, one should not distinguish it from other bodies, except as specks of dust which flit about in the rays of the sun are distinguished from pebbles.

Following the cabalists, the author calls the world of creation *briah*, that of formation *jezhirah*, and that of factio[n] *asiah*, words that are found in Isaiah, chapter 43. He goes even higher and conceives of a world which the Hebrews call *azilah*, which signifies that which is closest to God, or to the best and supreme Being. But this world only belongs to a Being who is intermediate between God and his creatures, that is the Messiah. Later the author says (question 24 on the Apocalypse), that, besides *psyche* or *nephesh*, drawn from the world of *asiah*, and *ruah* from *jezirah*, and *neshama* from *briah*, there is a fourth life named *chaja*, which comes from the world of *asiah*, and which consequently must be the intermediate place for the spirit of Jesus Christ. Thus the world of *azilath* is that of the Messiah, that of *briah* of the souls, that of *jezirah* of the unfallen angels, and that of *asiah* of men clothed in visible bodies. It is true that

the Hebrews counted twelve further emanations in the world of *asiah*, but their difference is only modal. This world lasts forever, but there is an infinity of *briatic* worlds, or worlds that God creates from time to time, which continually bring forth new *jeziratic* and *aziratic* worlds. This is why Salomon said, “that one could not fathom the works of God.” *If by the world of asiah the author understands the intelligible world which is in God’s thoughts, one could allow it*, but it must not be said that it holds a middle position between God and the creatures, since it belongs to God himself. As for the other world, I have already said what one should think about them. *One should also further distinguish two spheres, or, if you wish, two intelligible worlds in God, namely that of simple ideas, which is the world of the divine understanding and that of the decrees, that is to say, of the ideas decided upon and projected, which is the world of the divine will.* This world is in the universe of nature, composed of two kingdoms which are that of spirit, the laws of which are moral and tend to the best, and that of bodies, the laws of which are mathematical and tend to the greatest, and this combination constitutes the perfection of things because what is accomplished is always the greatest good possible.

The author should not deny the present creation of souls under the pretext that nothing is created here. It is the exact opposite. He should rather say that everything is continually created. Thus it is useless to dispute about the pre-existence of souls because whether they existed before or not, it is always true that God creates them at present. *To say that souls descend from a superior world to an inferior world is to use metaphysical expressions, and the only truthful thing about them is that a soul may change its condition and increase or decrease in perfection without anyone determining the details* since revelation does not explain anything about this; and, following reason, if the different degrees of creatures formed different worlds, there would be nothing that obliged us to stop at the three worlds of the author. And if, above the world of *jezirah*, there is the world of *asiah*, why would there not be yet another above that, and this to infinity? *Thus, it is more reasonable to recognize an infinity of degrees in the perfections of the creations in the same world than to make different worlds, which only serves to astonish people with the novelty of the opinion.* If the author wishes to call different worlds different kingdoms which interpenetrate, he will only find two real worlds among the creatures, the moral kingdom of spirits and the mechanical kingdom of bodies. It is true that subtle bodies pass through gross ones, but they only penetrate the body, while both subtle and gross bodies are equally penetrated by the souls and entelechies that are intimately connected to them.²⁰³

Perhaps these rather lengthy comments provided the basis for Leibniz's discussion with van Helmont about the *Seder Olam* on August 9. For all his criticisms, Leibniz was interested enough in van Helmont's theological speculations to continue the discussion over the following days, as the next journal entries reveal:

August 10

Speculated with M. Helmont. His interpretations of Holy Scriptures are often peculiar, but inserted among them are some good thoughts with which I agree. We spoke almost the whole afternoon about this. About metempsychosis I cannot get an adequate proof.

August 12

I thought about Herr Helmont's ideas this morning so that I can give him my opinions about them.

August 16

With M. Helmont. He spoke for several hours about his ideas, among which I find not a few good ones with which I agree, but I have many doubts and especially some peculiar interpretations of Holy Scripture do not suit me. I find his intentions and character very good and praiseworthy; his tranquillity is also to be highly esteemed.

Leibniz left Hanover on August 17th and returned the afternoon of the 27th. The very next day he was back visiting van Helmont.

August 28

Most of the afternoon spent with Herr Helmont.

This week I have been distracted by many business matters, visitors, foreigners, and letter writing, so that I abandoned my journal. I will note down several things to keep them in mind. I considered many mechanical-physical and other arts, manufactures, and trades with Herr Helmont and filled up several sheets of paper with them.²⁰⁴

The next two entries in the journal dealing with van Helmont concern Leibniz's role in the publication of van Helmont's and von Rosenroth's works. In

the first, Leibniz refers to the negotiations he had undertaken at the request of van Helmont involving the publication of the second edition of van Helmont's and von Rosenroth's translation of Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy*. This appeared in Lüneburg in 1697 and Leibniz wrote the preface for it. The second describes his involvement with two works of von Rosenroth, *The Harmony of the Evangelists*, which was published, and the manuscript of *Messias Puer*, which appears to have been lost.

September 8

To Herr Lipper at Lüneburg about the German version of the *Consolation of Philosophy* of Boethius which he wants to delay ...

September 12

Friday I should have the copy of the *Harmony of the Evangelists* which is attributed to Ussher [Usserio]. There are some 3 or 4 pages in print, which are omitted. It is by Herr Rosenroth. It should be sent to the illustrious Herzog Rudolph August, but what is left of *Messias Puer* [should be sent] to Herzog Anton Ulrich ...²⁰⁵

Leibniz's preface for the new edition of Boethius appears among his papers. It is dated June 9, 1696 and offers fulsome praise for von Rosenroth's skills as a poet. This preface was signed with van Helmont's name in the published text and may therefore simply reflect van Helmont's views. However, as something of a poet himself, Leibniz would have been interested in von Rosenroth's translation of Boethius's Latin poetry. It is hard to believe that he would have been so complimentary if he had really not admired von Rosenroth's verse. One of the reasons van Helmont wished to have the book republished was because the two Electresses had asked for further copies to give to their friends. The interest of the Electresses may have provided an additional incentive for leibniz's involvement in the project.

... for many years I looked for someone who could really give the meaning of the author's [Boethius] aforementioned verse in every place without any additions or departures [from the text]. Finally, in Sulzbach in the Upper Palatine I met Herr Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, a man very knowledgeable in all branches of philosophy, who translated the Latin verses into German at my request. He was so skillful that many learned people did not find any difference between the original text and the translation, so that it was justifiably said that if both had been published at the same time,

it would be difficult to distinguish which was the original and which came from it and which should be given preference.

Now it recently happened that I came to Hanover and found that the Electresses of Brandenburg and Braunschweig were there, and as an old and well-known servant, I paid my respects. It happened that the two Electresses asked me some Christian and intelligent questions, indeed, question after question, so that they could increase the knowledge they have received from God, which accords with the meaning of the name of both Electresses, Sophia. For in the same degree that they shun hypocrisy and sham, so they are dedicated to the true reverence for God, which is the beginning of wisdom, and apply their minds to recognizing the true light and the source of all good. They do not seek to do this with empty words but with deeds. In doing this they rely on their God-given nobility to do many good things for others. And their favorite topic concerns how one may contribute to their primary goal of knowledge and love.

Among other things, this small book of Boethius called *The Consolation of Philosophy* was mentioned. The illustrious Electress of Branschweig said that not only did she read it with great pleasure but that she helped others with it, and that when she gave the copy she received from me to a person who had fallen into melancholy, this person was completely cured by reading the book. Therefore, at my departure, I was reminded to find and to send a number of copies of this book when I returned to Sulzbach. But because, as I have already said, no more were to be found, I wanted to have it reprinted on my return, hoping that it would edify and refresh many well-meaning people.²⁰⁶

In his journal entry for September 13 Leibniz records that van Helmont has departed for Cleve and Holland. On the 23rd he describes a letter from a Herr Krafft dealing with the distillation of brandy. Herr Krafft had apparently hoped that van Helmont was still present and could provide some practical advice. In this same entry Leibniz records that van Helmont is staying with Christian Messman, a businessman in Amsterdam. Finally, on September 26 he mentions a watchmaker in Hildesheim who taught his deaf and dumb stepson to make “good, small” watches. He remarks on the fact that the boy can make himself understood with signs. Van Helmont’s first book, which is in so many ways like the last book written by Leibniz in his name, claims that the deaf and dumb can be taught to speak and read with great speed and ease by using van Helmont’s *natural* Hebrew alphabet. Leibniz must have been thinking about these issues.²⁰⁷ Sometime after van Helmont’s departure on September 23, Leibniz wrote a memorandum about van Helmont’s philosophy for The Electress, which she then sent on to her niece, the Duchess of Orleans.²⁰⁸ Leibniz later wrote to van Helmont, passing on Herr Krafft’s

request along with some other queries about other manufacturing processes and various alchemical matters. From van Helmont's reply, one can see that he had a very poor opinion of Mr. Krafft. He offered Leibniz his own recipe for making brandy from wheat instead. This letter reveals the close relationship and mutual interests of the two men. Besides discussing distillation methods, van Helmont describes how to make large mirrors and the kind of furnace one would need in order to do this. He returns to the subject of the Princess de Chimay, saying that he never pretended to have a "universal medicine," but that the medicine the Princess asks for is "good" and that he does know how to prepare it. He closes by thanking Leibniz for his suggestions about how to write more easily and by asking him to translate into Latin the Dutch preface to one of his books:

The reason for my silence was my illness, which was so violent that I was declared dead, as I reported to her Highness, Madam the Electress, in my letter of last month.

To answer your letters, the first of which discusses the way to make from wheat an amount of eau de vie equal to that of wine, and what I could say about this to Mr. Krafft.²⁰⁹ I would say to you that I would distance myself voluntarily from such people. But to you I can say that if I were to try this comfortably and without expense, I would take strong and clear beer of different kinds and distill two or three pots of each kind to see if in the second distillation I could produce an eau de vie without a bad taste, so that on the second distillation, having added lees of wine (what one calls wine dregs), it would acquire the taste of spirits of wine.

I take into account the fact that the wheat that one distills does not have the same properties [as wine] and that one claims to give them these qualities from the violence of the heat and by means of a sudden fermentation without considering that grapes ferment gently for two or three weeks before one presses the said juice and not the wine. After that one lets it ferment a long time until it becomes wine which is clear and ready to be distilled to make spirits. In the same way one can say of beer that it must have the time to ferment gently so that it becomes clear and strong enough to give good spirits, etc.

The second question concerning my advice or opinion about how to make big mirrors or glass. If it were up to me to experiment, I would do it in a natural manner after carefully considering what is necessary to arrive at the end without difficulty and expense. I would take a fine glass suitable for making mirrors and grind it in a mortar of iron, which will make the glass good and blackish, and not spoil it as copper would.

When I have several times made optical glass, I have put this powder in a mold made of white chalk, ground very fine and squeezed into circular

mold of iron, and I have put this in a reverberating furnace and this melts easily and very suddenly and the glass is not thick. The whole skill and difficulty consists in finding a furnace big enough for the glass. My advice would be to use the same kind of furnace one uses to refine some hundreds of marks of silver, when one can easily remove the entire coupelle [bottom receptacle in a refining furnace].

As for the judgment of the Princess of Chimay, I gave my opinion last month to her most serene Highness, Madam the Electress. Many people think that I have the universal medicine, and the more I deny it, the more they believe it. But people of intelligence are entirely convinced that such a medicine does not exist in this world, because it is against nature: certain things are in our power, while certain things are not. Many people have asked me for remedies for this sick person, but not being a physician, I do not have the authority nor would I wish to have it in order not to fool the world. In regard to the said person, who is it who could say or assure me that she would be perfectly cured? Besides I suspect that an illness befell Boethius without cure.

I am obliged to you for the good advice you have given me in regard to the way I might write easily, and to this end I send you a draft of several brief responses to the questions of a gentleman born deaf and dumb but who now speaks, which make up the preface of the book. I ask you to translate them as soon as possible into Latin, if you know enough Dutch. I would hope to have them no later than three weeks from now because then I would like to go to Holland. In the same way you will find the beginning of the same book. I remain as you know,

H

N.B. The medicine that Madame, the Princess of Chimay and many others ask for is not universal. But it is good and is prepared from cinnabar found in Hungary and also by the Neckar in the Palatine. I learned about this from Dr. Faust, the elder, a professor at Heidelberg. I have found it in the past for sale in Amsterdam, where one sells it in the manner of Holland for a great price. If it could be obtained from the Neckar it would be convenient. I have used mine up. I will be able to tell you how to prepare it and its effects at our meeting.²¹⁰

To my mind these letters and journal entries reveal that the intellectual relationship between Leibniz and van Helmont was far closer than scholars have previously realized. Further evidence of Leibniz's interest in van Helmont's ideas appears in other letters Leibniz wrote directly to him. In these letters Leibniz repeatedly encourages van Helmont to jot down his thoughts. As we

saw, in March, 1696 Leibniz wrote to van Helmont in Berlin, saying, “I recall our conversations and I am glad to learn that you have resolved to communicate before long to the world some of your fine and important ideas.”²¹¹ Van Helmont took Leibniz at this word. As the following letter shows, he not only sent Leibniz copies of his newly printed works, but he fully expected Leibniz to help in their writing and publication, as indeed Leibniz did with the second edition of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* as well as *Thoughts on Genesis*. In this letter van Helmont asks Leibniz to act as a middle man between himself and Professor Herman von der Hardt, who was apparently adding material to one of von Rosenroth’s books:

Monsieur and very dear friend,

You will have here the 150 Aphorisms together with the book about the return of the soul.... .

You will find attached to the said book the promised English title with the name of the author of the Book about hell.

As for the other writings for Professor Hart, which should be added to the book of the concordance of the New Testament, of which Mr. Knorr von Rosenroth is the author, I entreat you to send them to him safely with my respects and to tell him that he can arrange for them to be printed with freedom as he sees fit, since I recognize that he is wise and discreet.

As for the writings of Mr. Knorr von Rosenroth which his Serene Highness Monsieur the Duke Anton Ulrich of Brunswick asks for in order to have them printed, I have decided that since I hope to go to Amsterdam in a few days to take them with me to see if I cannot have them better printed there. That done, I will give a portion of them to you as well as to his Serene Highness. I remain as you know, Monsieur,

H

Letters can be sent to me at the house of Madame the Baroness of Merode, called Mutzfeld, at Emmerich, near Ter Borg.²¹²

In his response to this letter Leibniz renews his request for more writings from van Helmont, suggesting further ways to make the process painless. Aside from this bit of practical advice, Leibniz’s letter provides additional evidence of his interest in and knowledge of van Helmont’s published writings, and it demonstrates once again Leibniz’s personal involvement in the publication of both van Helmont’s and von Rosenroth’s kabbalistic books. This letter demonstrates that Leibniz read van Helmont’s book with great attention – great enough to notice that one of his aphorisms had been marked through by a line, possibly to negate it. One can see that Leibniz is still mulling over van Helmont’s radical view of hell as well as his theory of transmigration,

the principal subject of the second book van Helmont had sent him. His comments show that neither he nor the Electress have dismissed the theory out of hand; they simply want more proof. Leibniz adds an objection made by the Duchess of Orleans to van Helmont's belief that everything that dies will eventually be reborn.

I thank you, Monsieur, for the *Chemical Aphorisms*, the English title of the book about hell, and for the *Two Hundred Problems in Favor of the Revolution* [of souls]. I was careful to send to Professor Hart, for Monsieur the Duke Rudolph August, the supplement to the *Harmony of the Evangelists* by Monsieur Rosenroth, and I informed Duke Anton Ulrich about what you wish to do with the other work, whose title is *Messias Puer*.

I see that the aphorisms that require that iron and copper should be joined with cinnabar are marked by a line which seems to cross them out. I believe that this is not unintentional.

I hope the quantity of fine thoughts that you still have in metaphysics, mechanics, and ethics will be published in your lifetime. Although nothing perishes in the world, nevertheless, if they are published they can bear more fruit.

Since almost all of your two hundred problems [concerning the transmigration of souls] are based on Scripture, Madame the Electress, who would like to see how one could confirm your ideas even further by reason, wishes one or two hundred proofs based on reason, order and experience. And since the problems have no connections between them but are as good as separate entities, she would be happy to see something similar in regard to the arguments from reason. I remember, Monsieur, that I already spoke to you about this. It would be sufficient if you would take a piece of paper without endeavoring to fill it all at once with a coherent meditation, which would tire you as much as the readers little used to meditations. On this paper you could write down from time to time separate proofs or clues as they come to mind without worrying about their order or connection. These would be easy for you to arrange afterwards, if there was need, after you had amassed the material, and it would be all the easier since there is no hurry.

Madame the Duchess of Orleans alleges against your example of rabbits a contrary experience in the areas she knows where one has destroyed them as a result of hunting. But everything should be understood with moderation. The Spanish have certainly destroyed the men in several islands in America. *The real question is, if it is true according to your opinion that when enough of a species is left to propagate the race, the births are more frequent after a great number of deaths. This fact needs to be verified more exactly... .*²¹³

In suggesting that van Helmont jot down his ideas as they come to him without trying to organize them into a coherent treatise, Leibniz was in fact advocating exactly what he himself did. As Couturat says,

Since he was always thinking, he noted down on paper, no matter where he was, even while traveling, the ideas that constantly came to him. Then he put aside these drafts and never reread them. In effect, their very accumulation hindered him from finding the ones he needed, and he had to begin again.²¹⁴

The question of whether the number of births equals that of deaths is not as abstruse as it may at first appear. For van Helmont, the belief that the dead were reborn, coupled with his conviction that the punishments of hell were temporary and only designed to encourage repentance, was an important aspect of his justification of God's goodness and justice, a subject bound to interest Leibniz in terms of his own theodicy (see chapter six).

The reference to Professor von der Hardt in this letter, as well as in van Helmont's previous one, is significant. Hermann von der Hardt (1660–1746) was the Duke of Brunswick's secretary, professor of oriental languages and librarian at Helmstedt. He was a distinguished scholar, known for his *Historia Consillii Constanini*. He was also a great admirer of van Helmont, as the following excerpt from a letter to Leibniz reveals:

I marvel at the genius of Helmont. I have learned many things from this man that could not be known except from him. In this old man I have observed not the traces but the every essence of the ancient first philosophy of Pythagoras, Plato, and the Cabbala. I have used the self-same ancient moral and symbolic philosophy, so clear is it for our deformed age. Two principles supply the foundation for the building: the pre-existence of souls and their revolution and transmigration. From these all other things flow. Nor is he churlish, as is everyone at present everywhere.²¹⁵

Testimony from such a man (and there were many more) should help further to dispel the charge that van Helmont was an intellectual lightweight.

In 1697, a year before van Helmont's death, the young Swedish scholar and linguist Erik Benzelius came to visit Leibniz. According to Marsha Schuchard, Leibniz immediately sent Benzelius to see van Helmont, which suggests yet again that Leibniz held van Helmont in high esteem. Schuchard says that Benzelius recorded conversations he had with van Helmont about the "Pythagorean Cabala," the very subject that Professor Hardt found so stimulating. Apparently it was through van Helmont that Benzelius was introduced to the Philadelphian Society in London, a mystical group combining elements of Rosicrucianism with Boehme's philosophy. But what is even more extraordinary is Schuchard's assertion that at this very time, when he was in close

personal contact with van Helmont, Leibniz told Benzelius about “his plans for a learned society which would combine Cabala and calculus, mysticism and mechanics.”²¹⁶

Shortly before van Helmont’s death Leibniz wrote to him suggesting yet another way to make writing easier. While joking about van Helmont’s theory of transmigration, or the revolution of souls, Leibniz again shows how much he valued van Helmont’s company and conversation. Anne Becco cites this letter as evidence of Leibniz’s willingness to make sarcastic jokes at van Helmont’s expense,²¹⁷ but I leave it to the reader to decide if this is sarcasm or a sign of concern and genuine affection:

We were seriously afraid, Madame the Electress and myself, that you might have been kidnapped once again to be sent to the Inquisition for a second time. You have the important task, Monsieur, of taking care of your health and of giving yourself a rest until the revolution of springtime, when we hope you will return with the swallows. That return would be worth more for the moment than that of souls. I truly believe that the good intentions that we cannot achieve in this present life do not perish for all that, neither for the world nor for ourselves. But it is always better to achieve as much here as one can to make good use of our time, so that I would be very pleased to see many more of your works. It would not be bad to write them in the form of questions and answers. Thus, those with whom you talk would give you the opportunity to write. I wish you would use more ink and paper than Mr. Hübener has used thus far.²¹⁸

Presumably Mr. Hübener was Leibniz’s amanuensis. In the copy of this letter preserved in Hanover his name is followed by an asterisk with the following note at the bottom of the page: “This served admirably well to reveal adroitly to Mr. Helmont that Madame the Electress did us the grace to read this letter.” This note gives a further indication of the interest the Electress took in van Helmont.

Van Helmont never did make it back to Hanover. He died in December, while staying with his cousin, Madame de Merode. On learning of van Helmont’s death, Leibniz wrote immediately to Madame Merode, expressing his and the Electress’ sorrow. It was at Madame Merode’s request that Leibniz composed the epitaph quoted at the beginning of this work. The letter reveals once again the strength of Leibniz’s feeling and admiration for van Helmont:

I did not fail to take your letter to Madame the Electress of Brunswick, who will reply to you at once. But she expressed most emphatically her sorrow at the death of such an excellent and great person as the late Baron of Helmont, whom she honored with her friendship in an entirely uncommon manner. You may judge, Madame, how much this touching news must

have affected me, since I was imagining with very great pleasure his return during the year we are entering. But God has ordained things otherwise. The solid virtue that he showed on every kind of occasion and the great zeal he had for the general good, which I consider as an effect of the love of God for everything, makes me hope that he is happy. And I even believe that the seeds of truth that he sowed throughout the world will not be unprofitable.

If he added some things that were not entirely certain, it does not matter. It is permissible for great geniuses to propose their conjectures. It is to be hoped that none of the thoughts perish, of which he may have left some traces. You will judge, Madame, if it is appropriate to send his papers to some place where one can guarantee them from loss. Above all, inquiries should be made [to see] if any [papers] were left with people he knew.

I wrote the enclosed epitaph to carry out your orders and to show my feelings about the deceased. But a more skillful man would have been needed to speak of him as he deserved. For the rest, I remain,

Leibniz

PS. I hope that his last written work, which he began with you, will contain something essential.²¹⁹

Leibniz passed on the news of van Helmont's death to various of his correspondents. To Lorenz Hertel, for example, he wrote, "I must in spite of myself send you news of the death of Monsieur van Helmont."²²⁰ The very phrasing indicates a far from perfunctory reaction to van Helmont's death. A little more than a week later, Leibniz wrote again to Hertel, lamenting the simplicity and lack of ceremony with which van Helmont had been buried: "Ceremonies are for Princes. Our good Monsieur Helmont was buried without trumpet or carillon."²²¹ This remark seems uncannily prescient when one thinks about Leibniz's own simple and unattended burial.

In her reply to Leibniz Madame de Merode says that, following his advice, she has gone to Holland to search for any papers van Helmont might have left with his friends and that she has also written down what she can remember of his conversation during the last seven weeks of his life. She makes the interesting comment that she has had to respond to many attacks on her cousin's philosophy made by both Jews and Christians who do not really understand his views. She concludes by asking Leibniz if he knows the whereabouts of a Latin book containing four hundred passages from Scripture supporting the doctrine of transmigration. The way Madame Merode describes this book makes it seem that it had been written for van Helmont by someone else in

exactly the same way that Leibniz had written van Helmont's *Thoughts on Genesis*:

... Following your advice, Monsieur, I myself made a trip to Holland to find one of his friends fitted to the task of collecting what is found of his papers. I have also written down what he told me during the last seven weeks of his stay with us. His last writings were scattered prefaces, but for all that they contain some profound thoughts. And so that nothing will be lost and so that one might look everywhere to unearth still other papers kept by one or another, I have found one of his great friends, who, being honest and discreet, is willing to take on this task in case I do not survive my confinement, which is fast approaching. But if it pleases God and the master of life for me to continue mine, I will do this myself.

I have received many attacks, as much from Jews as from other people, concerning the opinions of the late Baron of Helmont. But I replied as best I could by showing the contrary by well founded proofs. And since most [of his critics] do not understand his ideas, I had the occasion to present them with his true thoughts, which are not contrary to the facts but only to the opinion of our Theologians. But these authorities does not prove anything in my opinion. I believe that the opinions of the late Baron van Helmont, having the support of Scripture, nature, and reason on their side, are much more probable.

I am looking for a book written in Latin, containing four hundred passages from sacred Scripture proving the Revolution [of souls], which the late Mr. van Helmont was about to have printed. Since I cannot learn anything about it here, I thought it might be with you, Monsieur, or at least that I might know if you saw it anywhere. In making his last trip through Germany, my cousin received it from an illustrious person on the condition that he would return it to its owner, who is now asking me for it. Besides, I have at present a very good chance of getting it translated and printed for the usefulness of many people who eagerly inquire about the opinions of the late Baron van Helmont. You would do me a great favor, Monsieur, if you know about the book and can give me any information. I remember having heard my cousin talk about the printing of this book, but I have forgotten the name of the place.²²²

Leibniz's reply shows that he is still genuinely concerned with preserving van Helmont's papers and had not suggested this out of mere politeness. He praises Madame Merode for her efforts but says that van Helmont had never shown him the book she described. He suggests that it might be found in Sulzbach. He tells her that he would like to publish van Helmont's memoirs because he thinks they are unusual and instructive, but he thinks they too may be in Sulzbach. He also says that he would like someone to make a list

of the books van Helmont had printed. Leibniz seems clearly to regret his friend's death and the fact that his books only revealed a part of what he really thought. He closes by reiterating his wish that van Helmont's scientific and mechanical inventions be preserved:

What you are doing to try to save the thoughts of the late Monsieur, your uncle, comply with his last wishes, although he never told you them. He never showed us the book of passages from Scripture which you speak about. It will be necessary to look for it elsewhere, rather than here with us. Perhaps it will be found in Sulzbach.

I would like someone to publish his memoirs, which are unusual and instructive, but I think they too must be looked for in Sulzbach. I would also like someone to make a collection of what he had printed. The trouble is that, as he himself admitted to me, most of his books do not entirely, but only partly, conform to what he really believed. I also hope that his scientific and mechanical discoveries will not be lost, and that one would give, for example, a description with an illustration of his implement to spin with two hands, as well as of other similar things.

When Monsieur van Helmont was with us the last time he found a man from Danzig who appeared to be very taken with his opinions. He did not tell us his name. Perhaps this person, if one knew who it was, could give you information about the work in question.²²³

Even after his death, Leibniz still hoped to learn more about van Helmont's ideas from his remaining papers.

There is one further letter that should be mentioned because it could be taken as evidence of Leibniz's sarcastic opinion about van Helmont's belief in the transmigration of souls. Writing to the Electress Sophie Charlotte of Brandenburg on April 27, 1699, Leibniz tells her he has been asked by curious people about van Helmont, and he speculates that if van Helmont had lived longer he would have provoked a formal war with the theologians. He mentions a recent dissertation attacking the religion of the elder van Helmont. The author apparently was threatening to direct a similar attack against the son, and Leibniz muses about the battle that van Helmont's death has made unnecessary. Once again it is up to the reader to decide whether or not Leibniz shows himself to be a "mordant" and "sarcastic" critic of van Helmont, as alleged:

Several curious people have asked me about the details of Mr. van Helmont's life. I think they should go to Monsieur the Prince Regent of Sulzbach, who knew him longer.

If the good man had continued to live and write, there would have been a formal war with the theologians, one of whom has already produced

a *Helmontian Theology* in a dissertation printed in Helmstadt, where he speaks, however, only of the religion of the father, Jan Baptista van Helmont, the famous doctor and chemist, who also mixed religion and science. But since he [the younger van Helmont] does this incomparably more, this same author, who has written against the father, threatens the son with a similar dissertation. In this case I would have advised him to make an alliance with Monsieur the Raugrave.²²⁴ As for the other side, I would procure allies for Monsieur Helmont, because not long ago a little book was printed in Paris with the title *Metaphysical Meditations* which tries to establish the transmigration of souls. It is too bad that this great war, which would furnish us with an opera, is fallen by the wayside because of the death of the good man. I do not know if it is a revolution of his soul, as he would say, but I always know that it is his idea that still gives us pleasure.²²⁵

One last document concerning Leibniz and the Kabbalah must be discussed, a document published by Foucher de Careil under the tendentious title *Réfutation inédite de Spinoza par Leibniz*. Foucher de Careil's concern with defending Leibniz against the charge of Spinozism led him to give this manuscript a title which it did not originally have and which does not accurately reflect its contents. As Friedmann has emphasized – and as anyone reading the text can see – Leibniz is not primarily concerned with refuting Spinoza; he is more interested in pointing out the ways in which Spinoza's philosophy distorted the Kabbalah and in relating both Spinoza's ideas and those of the Kabbalah to his own philosophy.

What provoked Leibniz to write this work was the publication in 1706 of *Elucidarius Cabalisticus seu de Recondita Hebraeorum philosophia (An Exposition of the Kabbalah, or the Secret Philosophy of the Hebrews)* by Johann Georg Wachter. In this book Wachter modified the position he had taken in his earlier work *Der Spinozismus im Jüdenthumb, oder die von dem heutigen Jüdenthumb und dessen geheimen Kabbala vergötterte Welt (Spinozism in Judaism, or contemporary Judaism, or the pantheistic world of contemporary Jews and their secret Kabbala)*. In the later book, while reiterating the view that there were similarities between the Kabbalah and Spinoza's philosophy, Wachter defended both against the charge of pantheism. He took an astonishingly positive – all the more astonishing because he expressed himself publically – view of the Kabbalah for the time, concluding that it should be tolerated and even taught in schools and universities because it had no more failings than other philosophies routinely included in the curriculum, including those of Aristotle and Descartes.

The fact that Leibniz bothered to annotate Wachter's book indicates that the Kabbalah still very much interested him. This is the conclusion Fried-

mann reached in his excellent book *Leibniz et Spinoza*. He goes as far as to say that “Leibniz took the Kabbalah under his protection” in these annotations and that they offer confirmation of “the singular interest Leibniz had in the Kabbalah and the Kabbalism of Spinoza.”²²⁶ Leibniz also defends von Rosenroth against Wachter’s accusation that he did not reveal the true Kabbalah: “The author declares that Knorr did not unveil the real Kabbalah or secret philosophy of the Hebrews, but only empty formulas. Knorr revealed everything as he found it, good and bad.”²²⁷ Leibniz’s annotations are much more of an analysis, or even meditation on the Kabbalah, than a refutation. As his repeated use of such phrases as “Quant à moi” (p. 39), “Je blâme” (p. 15), “à mon avis” (p. 25), “je réponds” (p. 29) reveals, he first notes down an opinion and then reflects upon it. Reading Wachter’s book made Leibniz think further about the major philosophical issues which preoccupied him. For example, in the following paragraph, he describes both the Kabbalists view of substance and Spinoza’s and then compares both to his own. What is important here is that he does not refute either view, but simply says neither has attained the full truth:

The Cabalists seem to say that the creation or existence of matter is impossible because its essence is so vile and that, therefore, there is absolutely no matter, or that spirit and matter are the same thing, as Henry More maintains in his cabballistic theses. Spinoza also declares it impossible that God created some corporeal mass and material as the stuff of this world, “because,” he says, “those who have the opposite opinion do not know what divine power could create [such a thing].” There is some truth in this, but I do not believe it is understood sufficiently. In effect, matter exists but it is not a substance since it is an aggregate or composite made up of substances. I mean, it is secondary matter, or extended mass, and not a homogenous body. But what we conceive of as homogeneous and what we call primary matter is something incomplete since it is pure potential. On the contrary, substance is full and active.²²⁸

The surprisingly mild tone of Leibniz’s comments about Spinoza throughout these annotations is explained by the fact that they were not intended for publication. When Leibniz mentions Spinoza in a letter or work intended for publication, his tone is much sharper and more critical. After the publication of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* in 1670, Spinoza had become the philosopher most people loved to hate, and the degree with which an author reviled Spinoza’s philosophy became a measure of his own orthodoxy. Leibniz, no less than anyone else, felt the need to criticize Spinoza in public, as the following excerpt from a later letter to Bourguet indicates. Here he mentions Wachter’s book, but what is particularly interesting is that while he criticizes

Spinoza, he expressly defends the Kabbalah and accuses Spinoza of misusing and misunderstanding it:

It is utterly true that Spinoza abused the Cabala of the Hebrews. And a certain person, who converted to Judaism and called himself Moses Germanus, followed his perverse opinions, as is shown in a refutation in German written by Dr. Wachter, who knew him. But perhaps the Hebrews themselves and other ancient authors, especially in the East understand the proper meaning. Indeed, Spinoza formulated his monstrous doctrine from a combination of the Cabala and Cartesianism, corrupted to the extreme. He did not understand the nature of true substance or monads... .²²⁹

From all the evidence adduced, it seems accurate to say that Leibniz did indeed value van Hemont's friendship and his kabbalistic philosophy. It is the purpose of the remaining chapters to show the precise ways in which van Helmont's ideas acted as catalysts in the development of Leibniz's own.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Kabbalah and Monads

Most commentators are willing to agree that Leibniz's substitution of "force" for "mind" as the defining characteristic of substance represented an evolution in his thinking that ultimately banished the last traces of Cartesian dualism from his system and led to the concept of monads. In the *Discourse* substances are divided into two essentially different classes, those with minds which are imperishable and those without minds which, although they continue to exist, essentially perish as individuals because of their lack of mind and memory:

[Paragraph 34]... no substance perishes, although it can become completely different. They also express the whole universe, although more imperfectly than minds do. But the principal difference is that they do not know what they are nor what they do, and consequently, since they do not reflect on themselves, they cannot discover necessary and universal truths. It is also because they lack reflection about themselves that they have no moral qualities. As a result, though they may pass through a thousand transformations, like those we see when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly, yet from the moral or practical point of view, the result is as if they had perished; indeed, we may even say that they have perished physically, in the sense in which we say that bodies perish through their corruption. But the intelligent soul, knowing what it is – having the ability to utter the word "I," a word so full of meaning – does not merely remain and subsist metaphysically, which it does to a greater degree than the others, but also remains the same morally and constitutes the same person. For it is memory or the knowledge of this self that renders it capable of punishment or reward.

The next paragraph is entitled "The Excellence of Minds and that God considers them preferable to Other Creatures. That Minds Express God Rather than the World, but that other Substances Express the World rather than God." Here Leibniz again stresses the discontinuity between substances with and without minds: "... the difference between intelligent substances and substances that have no intelligence at all is just as great as the difference between a mirror

and someone who sees.”²³⁰ This discontinuity between minds and mindless substances still appears in the *New System* of 1695,²³¹ but it entirely disappears in the *Monadology*, where all monads are defined as having perceptions and the only thing that differentiates them is the clarity of these perceptions: “... if, in our perceptions, we had nothing distinct, or, so to speak, in relief and stronger in flavor, we would always be in a stupor. And this is the state of bare monads.”²³²

Thus, between the writing of the *New System* in 1695 and the *Monadology* Leibniz developed a philosophical system in which substance is defined in terms of activity, perception, and unity, and no substance perishes, they simply experience transformations. It is during this period that Garber sees Leibniz moving away from Aristotelian realism to phenomenism. But as I suggested earlier, it is more plausible to argue that Leibniz was eliminating the last remnants of dualism from his system and embracing an essentially gnostic conception of matter based on a theory of emanation. Leibniz was cognizant of many different emanationist theories, just as he was aware of the many different incipient monadologies of such thinkers as Nicoloas of Cusa, Cardano, Bruno, Paracelsus, and the elder van Helmont. Since it has been suggested that Leibniz’s monadology emerged from these theories, especially those presented by Bruno, it is important to review them and weigh their influence in comparsion to that of van Helmont’s.

Many characteristics of Leibniz’s monadology appear in Nicolas of Cusa’s (1401–1464) descripion of individual substances. For example, Cusanus attributes a unique principle or internal law of development to each existent being, which acts as a kind of force shaping its development. In his view the universe is a harmonious whole, to which every individual contributes. In a late work, the *De beryllo* (1458), he draws an analogy between “beryl”, a mineral used from Roman times to enhance reading vision,²³³ and creation, suggesting that the divine unity produces diversity in the same way that light is refracted through a lens. Such ideas anticipate Leibniz’s conception of monads as “mirrors,” which develop through their own inner force and coexist in a harmonious whole. Girolamo Cardano (1501–1614) also envisioned the universe as wholly animated and existing as a unity of vital forces. Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), however, is the philosopher who is most often cited as the source of Leibniz’s monadology. Like Leibniz, Bruno was an animist and he described the universe as infinite in space and time. He used the term monad, and it has been suggested by several scholars that Leibniz derived the word from him.²³⁴ Like Leibniz’s monads, Bruno’s are immaterial and characterized by spirit and force. They are both physical and psychic, and they all reproduce in their own individual way the divine monad. Like Bruno’s monads, Leibniz’s can evolve to a higher state or sink

to a lower one, but while Bruno's monads constantly rise and fall, Leibniz's eventually reach perfection, as I will argue in chapter six. Bruno's philosophy was also pantheistic; each monad was essentially a part of God. Leibniz consistently rejected pantheism, although how successful he was in banishing it from his own philosophy is debatable. Thus, while there are similarities between Bruno's concept of monads and Leibniz's, there are also important differences, which suggest to me that one should look for other more accessible and more contemporary sources. Among these, both Paracelsus and the elder van Helmont are clearly important, but, while Leibniz knew both these sources – in fact, he had read their works at an early age – he became reacquainted with them through his contact with the younger van Helmont. As we have seen, Francis Mercury van Helmont's philosophy was an amalgam of Renaissance occultism and Paracelsian and Helmontian philosophy, but it had the additional and very important element of the Lurianic Kabbalah. In my opinion, the kabbalistic theories of the younger van Helmont provided the catalyst that shaped Leibniz's monadology. The considerable number of letters and notes dealing with van Helmont's ideas which Leibniz wrote between 1694 and 1698 reveal the subtle but important ways in which Leibniz's thinking changed and developed as he became increasingly aware of van Helmont's kabbalistic philosophy.

After van Helmont left Hanover in March of 1696, Leibniz wrote a summary of what he and the Electress Sophie had heard in those daily morning meetings in her study. This document, which was given the heading "Leibniz's gentle opinion about the doctrines of Francis Mercury van Helmont" by Leibniz's copyist, is important because it brings up some of the ideas that will become fully elaborated in Leibniz's *Monadology*. Leibniz begins by questioning once again the factual basis of van Helmont's argument that the dead are replaced by equal numbers of new births (which to van Helmont proved the transmigration of souls). While reaffirming his agreement with van Helmont that animals have souls, he moves closer to the *Monadology* by blurring the sharp distinction between souls with and without mind. All souls, he says, are "similar" and equally immortal. An interesting statement follows to the effect that each soul progresses until it reaches perfection and that all men should work to better the world. I will return to these ideas in chapters five and six when discussing Leibniz's theory of individual freedom and his theodicy. After a break in the text, an extremely important paragraph appears in which Leibniz discusses the concept of "unity." Because Leibniz was writing in German, he was forced to devise a German term for unity. As the text shows, he came up with the term "Einigkeiten." In a footnote, which he added later to the copy of this document written out by his amanuensis, he comments that "Einheiten" would have been a more suitable term. This

change in word choice indicates that during this period his philosophical ideas were in the process of development. The document breaks off with a further discussion of how everything will eventually reach maturity and perfection. I have once again highlighted the sections relevant for my argument:

I am not disputing that in my judgment many of Mr. van Helmont's opinions still remain vague and unproven, especially, indeed, his principal theory concerning the transmigration of souls, namely that souls go immediately from dead bodies into new bodies and that the same souls always play on this stage. Indeed, he thinks that there remain at all times approximately both the same number of people on earth as also of all the animals of both sexes. But I should almost doubt this from history and believe that the world has not always been inhabited in the same way. And I don't know if one could say with good reason that therefore somewhere else the number of wolves increased because the wolves in England were exterminated. It will also be found in the printed baptismal and death registers of the city of London that after the great plague, the departed were hardly replaced by such an exceedingly large number of births but by the influx of new residents. Nor am I disputing that more and earlier marriages occur since after such a decimation [of the population], the people have more room to find food and thus multiply. Meanwhile *I am in agreement with him in many things about which neither common teaching nor the new opinions of the Cartesians can agree.* In general it is said that animals have soul and life but that the souls die with the destruction of their bodies; human beings alone are excepted, which might be suspicious to some, especially if one appeals to faith, which appears to be a crutch. The Cartesians, seeing this and concerned that, if the souls of animals can die, then even the souls of men may run the same risk, have professed that only human beings really have a soul, but animals, on the other hand, are nothing but artificial clockwork mechanisms driven by fire and wind and without feeling. According to their opinion, when animals scream they feel no more than an organ pipe. The whole of nature itself strongly argues against them, [nature] which in many ways shows that animals do feel and that they are not mere puppets or marionettes. One clearly sees that the Cartesians do not base their opinion on reason or experience but on their own self love because they only love themselves and will only accept those things which elevate human nature, as if what man likes must be true. However, in the meanwhile they are not wrong if they take all souls as similar in this matter and understand that they must all either be mortal or immortal. *I consequently agree with the general teaching about this, that animals really have souls and feeling.* Indeed, *I agree with many ancient and wise teachers that everything in the whole of nature is full of power, life, and souls. It follows that the more*

virtues one has and the more good one has done the greater will be his happiness and pleasure. Concerning this I could mention a great many other reasons to prove that one already has reason to be pleased not only because everything that will be must be but also because everything that happened is so well ordered that if we understood it correctly, we could not wish for anything better. *And here lies the difference between souls endowed with reason and other souls; those able to care about learning and government act on a small scale in their province and little world as God does in the whole world – just as little Gods make little worlds which cannot fade away or disappear like the large world (of which they are the image).* Rather, with time they near their purpose as does the greater world with them. Therefore the remaining souls and all bodies have to serve those souls which alone are united with the great God in a kind of society and association for the sake of their own eternal happiness. For at the same time through this service they themselves reach their perfection. The whole world is like one body which proceeds to its goal without being hindered because nothing in itself can be hindered and there is nothing beyond it that can hinder it.

As to what concerns the sun, I do not dispute that we belong to its realm nor that the earth itself, which we inhabit and dominate, is anything other than one of the planets which goes around the immovable sun. But that the pagans take the sun as the seat of the All Highest is a mistake because they did not know the structure of the universe. Nowadays one knows that each fixed star is its own sun which, by all appearance, has its planets, or assigned worlds, as our sun. I do not doubt that each sun is equally subject to a higher authority and that all such regents will, in turn, be ruled. At some time eventually everything will be under the All Highest ruler. Men have only begun to understand the secret of the small as well as the large world in our time after both the circulation of the blood was discovered and the true revolution of the planets (by means of the telescope). If men continue as far as they have in the last hundred years, they will reveal further wonderful and beautiful aspects of nature and give always more reason to respect the creator and to take pleasure in his creation. *One would have wished that for the past thirty years the great King of France would, or could, have further increased human happiness by advancing knowledge (as he did at first) instead of [promoting] the war which made Europe unhappy. Thus we would already have experienced much that our descendants will be the first to see. Nevertheless I am of the opinion that high-ranking persons, especially, who can produce much good must not neglect to do so, even if the usefulness may not appear for a long time. [They should do this] not only for the sake of glory but also because those*

who plant but do not see the growth, nevertheless will one day enjoy the fruit thereof to their greater glory, since such an act brings with it the immutable highest order. [A break in the text occurs here]

... Lenses also exhibit countless living but otherwise invisible creatures so that there are far more souls than grains or dust particles in the sun. However, I lean towards the doctrine already held by Plato (which Pythagoras before him brought from the East) that no soul disappears, including the souls of animals. Herr Helmont agrees with my opinion on this matter, although I have not yet been sufficiently able to see his evidence or reasons. As for my reasons, I once exchanged letters on this subject with the famous Herr Arnauld, formerly head of the Jansenists, and I mainly emphasized that all bodies have parts. Consequently they are nothing but a swarm or multiplicity, like a herd of sheep or a pond full of drops of water and fish or a clock full of wheels and attachments. *But just as all numbers are derived from one plus one, so must all multiplicity be derived from unity.*

For this reason unity is the proper root and seat of all existence, of all force, and of all sensation; and these constitute the soul. From this one has irrefutable proof that souls exist, that everything must be full of souls, what the nature of a soul is, and, finally, why each soul is indestructible. For unity has no parts, otherwise it would be multiplicity. But what has no parts is indestructible. Herr Arnauld himself, as acute as his intelligence was, after he understood this properly, he did not know what to say against it but that the matter appeared to him wondrous strange and new. I find that a very famous doctor of the Catholic Church called St. Thomas Aquinas was not far from this opinion because he said that the souls of animals were also indivisible. Their indestructibility follows from this, which he may not have wished to say as clearly, but he allowed himself the pleasure of laying the foundation.

One might object that, indeed, everything that I say might be true but that it is little consolation; for although our souls and other souls remain, yet the memory of the present is lost. I have a different opinion about this. I do not dispute that we do not perhaps remember all of our present actions immediately after death, which is neither natural nor proper. *Yet it happens that everything that has ever happened to us remains eternally imprinted on the soul, even if it does not come to mind every moment.* In the same way we know many things which we do not remember unless a special reason gives us the opportunity and makes us think about it. Who can always think of everything? But, nevertheless, *nothing in nature is in vain or is lost. But everything reaches its perfection and maturity. So every picture received by our soul will someday form a whole with its further body so*

that finally one will survey everything as in a bright mirror and be able to take the best of them for one's greater pleasure. From this it follows ... [the text breaks off at this point].²³⁵

A year after this summary was completed, Leibniz collaborated with van Helmont on his last book, which indicates that he was conversant enough with van Helmont's ideas and arguments to write as if he were van Helmont. He neither would nor could have done this unless he found value in van Helmont's theories. That he did appears from the oblique comments he makes about the book. For example, in 1698 Leibniz wrote a letter to André Morell, mentioning that van Helmont had given him a copy of his book on the four first chapters of Genesis, which had been translated into Latin from an English original. Leibniz comments on the book briefly, adding his usual disclaimer about not accepting all of van Helmont's ideas:

He (Helmont) has given me a copy of his book on the beginning of Genesis. He is also of the opinion of Origen. I remember that he told me that M. Wetstein in Amsterdam printed it in Latin from an English version. There is also one in German. He has many very good thoughts, but also some for which I do not see any proof, particularly his metempsychosis. For the rest, I have a very high opinion of him for many reasons...²³⁶

Leibniz's letter was disingenuous to say the least. As we now know through the excellent detective work of Anne Becco, the book was not written by van Helmont and it had not been originally written in English. It was written by Leibniz in Latin, as the photocopies of Leibniz's original draft make perfectly clear.²³⁷ And while many of van Helmont's most cherished ideas appear in the book, it is hard to say precisely where van Helmont's thought ends and Leibniz's begins. As Leibniz says in a note at the beginning of the manuscript, "Although I wanted to express the opinions of my friend, nevertheless... I have also added many thought of my own, which agree with not a few of my friend's ideas."²³⁸

As I mentioned earlier, the very fact that Leibniz wrote this book for van Helmont cries out for an explanation. At the very least it would seem to show that Leibniz took van Helmont's ideas seriously. But I would go even further and suggest that there are certain key ideas in this text that point to the changes in Leibniz's notion of substance that eventually led him from Aristotelian realism to monadological idealism. The text opens with a commentary on the phrase in Genesis 1:1, "he created." Leibniz denies that creation could be *ex nihilo* in the way that term is commonly understood. He argues instead for some kind of emanation of visible things from invisible, likening this process to the production or "hatching" of seeds. The denial of creation *ex nihilo* and the analogy between creation and the hatching of "seeds" are both key

concepts in the Lurianic Kabbalah, and they have important implications for Leibniz's fully developed notion of monads and his theodicy, which I will return to later in this chapter.

... And so creation *ex nihilo* is not based on sacred Scripture but rather on a certain tradition and can be accepted in a reasonable way. But as commonly received, it is not without error. Indeed, it is true that chaos or atoms did not exist or any other matter coeternal with God from which the world was made. But, nevertheless, it is false that the world was strictly speaking made from nothing, as if from some material. It is an eternal truth that nothing can be made from nothing. Therefore it is more correct to agree with the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, cap. 11, v. 3, that visible things are made from invisible. That is in the lofty realm of Aelohim himself the seeds of this corporeal world were hidden in an ideal or spiritual fashion. At some time these seeds were finally produced and hatched.²³⁹

Further interesting points occur in Leibniz's commentary on Genesis 1: 3, "And God saw that it was good." He reiterates one of van Helmont's principle ideas, namely that God created by thinking, an idea I will come back to in the final chapter. Leibniz also includes an idea that became absolutely central to his philosophy, that there is no such thing as time for God; time is merely relative:

... He saw, he considered, he thought within himself, but nevertheless as if there were some object apart from himself: a certain genuine idea is produced through a word in the mind, as has already often been observed. Nor should the passage be taken as it commonly is, as if Elohim had created light first and then had seen that it was good by observation. This way of perceiving the goodness of things is unworthy of God, whose nature is to see things *a priori*. Indeed, it is unworthy of the omniscient to make things first and then consider whether it was done well. "Act first and think afterwards," as the Italians say. Truly, therefore, while he saw, he created, or while he saw that it was good, he wished, and while he wished, he created.²⁴⁰

It is my opinion that behind this text written by Leibniz in van Helmont's name lies another text written by van Helmont, a text that first appeared in the first volume of the *Kabbala Denudata* (1677) expressly as a refutation of what van Helmont took to be the caricature of genuine kabbalistic ideas presented by Henry More in his *Cabala of the Eagle, the Boy, and the Bee*.²⁴¹ Brown admits that van Helmont's concept of monads is far closer to Leibniz's than that presented by More. But because Brown does not believe Leibniz came into contact with van Helmont's kabbalistic ideas until *after* his mature philosophy had been formulated, he rejects the possible influence of this text.

But if Brown is wrong about the key decade in Leibniz's development, as I think he is, and if we can say that decade occurred from 1688 to 1698, then it is plausible to argue that this text is significant. As we have seen, in the notes Leibniz made describing his visit to von Rosenroth in 1688, he specifically says he "read over" the *Kabbala Deundata* and therefore read this text. And since Leibniz had read and annotated More's work,²⁴² this dialogue may have especially interested him because it contained some of the same criticisms that Leibniz launched against both Cartesians and those like More who believed in "vital principles." In his view both were essentially dualistic and consequently, if inadvertently, promoted atheism and materialism, while at the same time undermining a viable theodicy. As the notes Leibniz took at Sulzbach make clear, he was especially interested in kabbalistic ideas of creation as a process of the emanation of divine light, an idea that appears in axiom 47 of the *Monadology*. These ideas were basic to van Helmont's philosophy and reappear in his books, all of which were read by Leibniz during these key years in the development of his own monadology. These same ideas were bound to come up again during the numerous occasions between 1694 and 1698 when Leibniz saw and spoke with van Helmont. But because we were not privy to van Helmont's conversations with Leibniz, except as they were filtered through Leibniz's own mind, it is critical to turn to van Helmont's dialogue because it provides a succinct summary of his kabbalistic philosophy.

Van Helmont categorically denies that More had given an accurate summary of kabbalistic ideas. He is particularly eager to refute More's claim that the kabbalistic doctrine of emanation conflicts with the orthodox Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* and consequently smacks of atheistic, pantheistic, and Spinozistic materialism, as More claims. He expands on ideas that Leibniz alluded to briefly in the first sections of his commentary on Genesis quoted above, namely that creation cannot occur *ex nihilo*, but must have occurred through some kind of emanation, much as the mind produces a thought or seeds a plant, the very same analogies used by Leibniz. Van Helmont makes the somewhat ingenious distinction between the use of *ex* and *ab* in Latin: the first refers to the creation of something from a material entity, the second to the agent of creation, an agent that is in no way diminished by the act of creating:

the preposition *ex* is only used in regard to matter; it cannot properly pertain to spirit, which is the cause of creation, strictly speaking. Concerning this [creation], it is in no way possible to say that anything is or is not made out of [*ex*] something but only that it is made by [*ab*] something. Similarly, we cannot say that an idea is made out of [*ex*] the soul or mind but by [*ab*] a mind, etc.²⁴³

To my mind this longer explanation lies behind Leibniz's brief and otherwise incomprehensible comment quoted above to the effect that "it is false that the world was strictly speaking made from nothing, as if from some material."

During the same time that Leibniz was writing van Helmont's *Thoughts on Genesis*, he interpreted his discovery of the binary system as the only way truly to understand the otherwise incomprehensible notion of creation *ex nihilo*, since it explained how numbers were generated out of 0 and 1. As a new year's gift in 1697 he sent Duke Rudolf August of Wolfenbüttel a design for a medal illustrating this analogy between the binary system and the biblical account of creation. As Aiton points out, Leibniz found in the binary system an image of his view that "creation was continuous, in the sense that God conserves created monads and produces them continuously by a kind of emanation, as we produce our thoughts."²⁴⁴ How much this sounds like van Helmont will become increasingly apparent.

In subsequent passages van Helmont goes on to say that matter is not really a substance, only a modification of an originally spiritual substance. He describes matter as "sluggish," "dead," "contracted," or "asleep," adjectives which were also used to describe matter in the notes Leibniz took of his conversations with von Rosenroth:

Matter, as such, is not a spirit; but only that very substance itself, which appears under the form of matter in its blindness, dull rest, and privation of its former happiness, that was in some time past a spirit and as yet is fundamentally and radically such and will some time hereafter be such again formally... I would maintain that matter is made from the joining together of sluggish spiritual monads... Indeed, no single positive term should ...enter into a definition of this matter.²⁴⁵

Because matter results from "privation," which van Helmont metaphorically describes as "death," it really cannot be said to exist. For him this is the ultimate answer to materialism and atheism. Since the only truly existing realities are God and spirits, there is no basis upon which one can argue for either materialism or atheism: "Matter, strictly considered, not only does not exist in itself but does not exist positively but as privation, just as darkness, rest, etc."²⁴⁶ When it comes to describing the process of creation, van Helmont employs the kabbalistic doctrine of emanation, adding something of an alchemical twist – one must remember that alchemy is an essentially gnostic doctrine²⁴⁷ – for he envisions emanation in terms of the process of separation, one of the key alchemical processes. He makes the further interesting point that the various monads change their condition either by "contraction," which he describes metaphorically as "sleep" or "death," or by "awakening":

We do not admit that the divine essence ... may be divided, but we respect its unity exceedingly. Just as, for example, in a very clear spring, when some earthy and rocky particles lie hidden and later those particles separate and become solid, no one says that the spring is divided into pebbles but that the pebbles are separated. Thus, the Creator first produces an infinite myriad of spirits, united in this highest, most happy grade of perfection ... so that God is all in all. But, then, having made judgments according to various degrees, the separation of these things is made, as many grades as thoughts, to the extremist point, which is the privation of him, namely death, which will be brought back [to God] again at some time ... These particles, out of which the material world is made, cannot be said to be of the divine essence, but of that nature which had been produced, constituted, created, and set apart by the divine essence. The contraction can be called a sleep ... or death. And the awakening ... which is called by us the separation of the sparks, has so many degrees of ascent as of descent. The extremes which are nothing but the furthest opposition to God in the state of death and the highest union with God (unity is impossible) ...²⁴⁸

There are many startling ideas in these passages which appear to me to fit extremely well with Leibniz's own views about monads and matter as they developed during the 1690s. Leibniz essentially rationalizes van Helmont's metaphors. Instead of characterizing matter in terms of "blindness," "dullness," "sleep," or "death," he translates the basic idea behind all these nouns – namely that matter represents a state of privation – into a more readily acceptable philosophical vocabulary. Monads are "unified" and "active." They have "perception," and can "think;" whereas matter is "passive," "inert," "impenetrable," and bereft of thought. Wilson made much the same point when she suggested that Cudworth's description of the "Energie of Nature" as "obscure," "drowsie," and "unawakened" influenced Leibniz's evolving conception of monads. But I would argue that van Helmont was the more important and more direct influence.

While in some passages Leibniz appears to separate monads from matter, in others he seems to collapse the two into one entity, suggesting that all substances are essentially both active and passive, their activity being designated under the rubric of monad, their passivity under that of matter. This is what leads Garber and others to argue that Leibniz moved from a realist to a phenomenalist position. An example of the first and supposedly realist way of looking at matter appears in a letter to Burnett, which Gerhardt thinks was written in 1699:

In bodies I distinguish corporeal substance from matter, and I distinguish primary matter from secondary. Secondary matter is an aggregate composed of many corporeal substances, just as a herd is composed of many

animals. But each animal and each plant is also a corporeal substance, having in itself the principle of unity, which makes it truly a substance, and not an aggregate. And this principle of unity is that which one calls a soul or indeed something analogous to a soul. But leaving aside the principle of unity, the corporeal substance has its mass or its secondary matter, which is again an aggregate of smaller corporeal substances, and this goes to infinity. However, primitive matter or matter considered in itself is that which one conceives to be in bodies when all principles of unity are put aside, that is, that which is passive from which arises two qualities: resistance and inertia.²⁴⁹

While Garber takes this passage as an example of Leibniz's continuing commitment to Aristotelian realism,²⁵⁰ I see implicit in it the gnostic and Helmontian view that matter strictly speaking is merely privation. As I mentioned earlier, Garber admits that many of the passages he cites to support Aristotelian realism could be given an idealist or phenomenalist interpretation. And as I proposed earlier, this either/or approach misses the mark. Viewing Leibniz's theory of matter in terms of a gnostic theory of emanation resolves the problem, for in that case spirit and matter are simply extremes on a continuum and Leibniz does not move from Aristotelian realism to phenomenism but from an essentially dualistic position to a monistic one. This is the way I would interpret the following statement from an earlier letter to Burnett, rather than taking it as Garber does as a sign of Leibniz's continued commitment to the Aristotelian distinction between matter and form:

My opinion is thus that matter is only something essentially passive. Thought and even action cannot be modes of it, but only of the complete corporeal substance, which is completely constituted by two constituents, the active principle, and the passive principle, the former of which is called form, soul, entelechy, primitive force, and the second called primary matter, solidity, resistance.²⁵¹

In my view there is no basic difference between these two passages and the following one from a letter to De Volder (20 June 1703), which Wilson, for example, regards as phenomenalist.²⁵²

I regard substance itself, being endowed with primary active and passive power, as an indivisible or perfect monad – like the ego, or something similar to it – but I do not so regard the derivative forces, which are found to be changing continuously. But if there were no *true one*, then every *true being* would be eliminated. The forces which arise from mass and velocity are derivative and belong to aggregates or phenomena. When I speak of a primitive force as enduring, I do not mean the conservation of the total motive power, which we discussed together earlier, but an entelechy which

always expresses this total force as well as other things. Derivative forces are in fact nothing but the modifications and echoes of primitive forces.

So you see, esteemed Sir, that corporeal substances cannot be constituted solely out of derivative forces combined with their resistance, that is, out of vanishing modifications. Every modification presupposes something permanent. Therefore when you say, "Let us assume that there is nothing in bodies but derivative forces," I reply that such a hypothesis is impossible and that it again gives rise to the error of taking incomplete notions for the completely determined concepts of things.

I do not admit any action of substances upon each other in the proper sense, since no reason can be found for one monad influencing another. But in appearances composed of aggregates, which are certainly nothing but phenomena (though well founded and regulated), no one will deny collision and impact. Meanwhile I discover that it is further true in phenomena and derivative forces that masses do not so much give new force to other masses as they give determinate direction to the force already existing in them, so that one body is repelled away from another by its own force rather than being propelled by the other...

If you think of mass as an aggregate containing many substances, you can still conceive of a single pre-eminent substance or primary entelechy in it. For the rest, I arrange in the monad or the simple substance, complete with an entelechy, only one primitive passive force which is related to the whole mass of the organic body. The other subordinate monads placed in the organs do not make up a part of it, though they are immediately required by it, and they combine with the primary monad to make the organic corporeal substance, or the animal or plant. I therefore distinguish: 1) the primitive entelechy or soul; 2) primary matter or primitive passive power; 3) the complete monad formed by these two; 4) mass or secondary matter, or the organic machine in which innumerable subordinate monads concur; and 5) the animal or corporeal substance which the dominating monad makes into one machine.²⁵³

Sympathizing with the confusion that De Volder experienced reading passages like this, L. J. Russell comments:

entelechy, *materia prima*, *materia secunda*: *vis primitiva*, being modified by *materia prima* and producing complete substance or *materia secunda* which possesses *vis derivativa* and motion: while yet entelechy develops by itself independently of *materia secunda* and *materia secunda* develops independently of entelechy, and yet entelechy acts on *materia secunda* and is the source of the mass and the forces in it – how on earth can we get all this into one consistent picture?²⁵⁴

My answer would be that this apparent confusion makes sense if viewed from a kabbalistic perspective. Is the following statement by Leibniz really so different from the one made by van Helmont and quoted above, in which he denies that matter “strictly considered... exists in itself”?

Indeed I do not take away body, but I reduce it to what it is, for I show that corporeal mass which is believed to have something beyond simple substances is not a substance but a phenomenon resulting from simple substances which alone have unity and absolute reality.²⁵⁵

From 1698 on Leibniz makes many similar statements in both his correspondence and published writings. I quote a number of them to substantiate my claim that Leibniz’s conception of matter as the “passive” aspect of “active” substance is very like van Helmont’s, only stated in more philosophically acceptable terms. For example, in a letter to Johann Bernoulli (18 November 1698) Leibniz writes:

When I say that *primary matter* is that which is merely passive and separated from souls or forms, I said the same thing twice, for it would be the same if I had said that it is merely passive and separate from all activity. *Forms* are for me nothing but activities or entelechies, and substantial forms are the primary entelechies. I have prefered to say that the active is *incomplete* without the passive, and the passive without the active, rather than to speak of matter without form and form without matter, in order to use terms already explained rather than terms still to be explained – and also somehow to apply your advice before you give it, for our moderns will popularly take less offense at the term “activities” than at that of “forms.”²⁵⁶

A monistic view comes out even more clearly in a later paragraph from the same letter:

You are ... entirely right in thinking that all the bodies in the world arise from an interaction of internal forces, and I have no doubt that these forces are coeval with matter itself, for I believe that matter cannot subsist in itself without forces. I think, nevertheless, that primary or living entelechies are different from dead forces, which themselves probably arise from living forces, as is apparent when a centrifugal tendency, which must be considered a dead force, arises from the living force causing rotation.²⁵⁷

In May, 1699 Leibniz writes in a similar vein to De Volder, stressing the idea that a complete body consists of both active and passive elements:

Thus the resistance of matter contains two factors: impenetrability, or antityp, and resistance, or inertia. And since these two factors are everywhere equal in a body or are proportional to its extension, it is in them that I

locate the nature of the passive principle or of matter, even as I recognize, in the active force which exerts itself in various ways through motion, the primitive entelechy or, in a word, something analogous to the soul, whose nature consists in a certain perpetual law of the same series of changes through which it runs unhindered. We cannot dispense with this active principle or ground of activity, for accidental or changing active forces and their motions are themselves certain modifications of some substantial thing, but forces and actions cannot be modifications of a merely passive thing such as matter. It follows, therefore, that there is a primary active or substantial being which is modified by an added disposition of matter or of passivity. Hence secondary or motive forces and motion itself must be ascribed to a secondary matter or to the complete body which results from the active and the passive together.²⁵⁸

Statements such as these led up to the famous letter to De Volder (30 June 1704), which is cited as evidence for Leibniz's phenomenism:

Accurately speaking, however, matter is not composed of these constitutive unities but results from them, since matter or extended mass is nothing but a phenomenon grounded in things, like the rainbow or mock-sun, and all reality belongs only to unities. Phenomena can therefore always be divided into lesser phenomena which could be observed by other, more subtle, animals, and we can never arrive at the smallest phenomena. Substantial unities are not parts but foundations of phenomena.²⁵⁹

In my opinion it is more useful to think of statements like this in the context of gnostic emanation theories than in terms of the modern distinction between realism and phenomenism. Without mentioning a gnostic source, Ross suggests as much:

Form and matter represent... two complementary aspects. A monad is a form or spirit in so far as it is spontaneous, active and purposeful; it belongs to the realm of material bodies in so far as it is accommodated to the actions of other substances through the laws of mechanics. For all created beings, the bodily dimension is inescapable. Without it, they would be wholly active and perfect, which is a privilege reserved for God alone.²⁶⁰

Gnostic and especially kabbalistic theories that the world was created through emanation and exists as a plenum fit extremely well with Leibniz's concept of infinity and infinitesimals. As he wrote in *Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit* (1702):

It is... known that there are degrees in all things. There is an infinity of degrees between motions of any kind whatever and perfect rest, between hardness and perfect fluidity without any resistance, between God and

nothing. Thus there is likewise an infinity of degrees between an active being as great as it can be and pure passivity. It is unreasonable, therefore, to recognize only a single active being, that is, a universal spirit, and a single passive one, that is matter.²⁶¹

Thus, in the *Monadology* he envisions monads existing within this infinite continuum, differentiated solely by the clarity of their perceptions:

[60] ... Monads are limited, not as to their objects, but with respect to the modifications of their knowledge of them. Monads all go confusedly to infinity, to the whole; but they are limited and differentiated by the degrees of their distinct perceptions.²⁶²

The idea of continuity was a basic aspect of gnostic conceptions of a plenum, as was the idea that matter is a limit defined as a privation of spirit. This seems to me to be the position that Leibniz takes from the late 1690s – after his prolonged contact with van Helmont – to the end of his life, and it is the position which appears in the *Monadology*:

[47] Thus God alone is the primitive unity or the first [*originale*] simple substance; all created or derivative monads are products, and are generated so to speak, by continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited.²⁶³

Created souls or monads are inseparable from bodies in as much as bodies represent the limitation distinguishing creatures from their creator. Thus, towards the end of his life Leibniz can make the startling statement – startling in a Christian context – that imperfection is part of the very nature of being a creature and precedes sin: “there is *an original imperfection in the creature* before sin, because the creature is limited in its essence; whence ensues that it cannot know all, and that it can deceive itself and commit other errors.”²⁶⁴ This is not a view that fits with orthodox Christian notions of original sin and individual accountability; it is, however, a perfectly acceptable gnostic and neoplatonic view and one which lays the basis for the optimism of Leibniz’s theodicy.

The idea that monads are created from “fulgurations” of divine light which are limited to their individual capacities brings to mind the first point that Leibniz noted down from his reading of the *Kabbala Denudata*, namely that “the infinite being consists in an indivisible point and the emanated light, or the sphere of activity, sends forth its light at its pleasure.” It also brings to mind a doctrine central to the Kabbalah in the Lurianic form propagated by van Helmont, namely “the breaking of the vessels.” According to this mythopoetic concept, the divine light was too powerful to be contained by the “vessels,” or spiritual substances originally created by God; their shattering

resulted in the creation of matter proper when sparks of light “fell” and became emeshed in the “shards” or “husks” of the broken vessels. I will come back to this Lurianic doctrine in the chapter on freedom and determinism.

In the *Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit* (1702) Leibniz combines the gnostic idea of a plenum with the kabbalistic idea that bodies originate from seeds which contract and expand as they become more or less material. He offers scientific proof for both these ideas in terms of microscopic observations and the theory of preformation:

... I see no reason, either religious or philosophical, which compels me to abandon the doctrine of the parallelism of soul and body and to admit a perfect separation. For why cannot the soul always retain a subtle body organized after its own manner, which could even some day reassume the form of its visible body in the resurrection, since a glorified body is ascribed to the blessed, and since the ancient Fathers have ascribed a subtle body to angels?

Furthermore, this doctrine conforms with the order of nature established through experience, for the observations of very capable observers have convinced us that animals do not begin when they are popularly believed to begin and that seminal animals or living seeds have existed from the beginning of things. And both order and reason demand that what has existed since the beginning should no more have an end and that, since generation is thus merely the growth of a changed and developed animal, death will be nothing but the diminution of a changed and developed animal but that the animal itself will always remain throughout these transformations, just as the silkworm and the butterfly are one and the same animal. And it is appropriate to remark here that nature has this tact and goodness in revealing its secrets to us in small samples and thus making us infer the rest, everything being in correspondence and harmony. It is this which nature shows us in the transformation of caterpillars and other insects, for flies too come from worms, to help us grasp that there are transformations everywhere. Our experiments on insects have destroyed the popular notion that these animals are reproduced through nourishment, without propagation. Nature has likewise also given us, in birds, a sample of how all animals are generated by means of eggs, a fact which the new discoveries have now made us accept.

There are also microscopic observations which have shown that the butterfly is merely a development of the caterpillar, but especially that seeds already contain the formed plant or animal, although it still needs transformation and nourishment, or growth, to become an animal of the kind which our ordinary senses can observe. And since even the smallest insects reproduce by the propagation of their kind, one must conclude the

same to be true for these little seminal animals, that is, that they themselves come from other still smaller seminal animals, and thus have originated only with the world. This agrees well with the Holy Scripture, which suggests that there were seeds in the beginning.²⁶⁵

Leibniz's suggestion that monads can experience "diminution" or "development" is very like van Helmont's idea that monads "contract" or "sleep" and "awaken." The reference to "seeds" as the origin of all things appears in *Thoughts on Genesis*, as we saw earlier.

Both Aiton and Brown suggest that the alchemical belief that every substance contains a seminal core or "flower," which can be reconstituted even from ashes, fits nicely with this way of thinking and could have influenced Leibniz in the formulation of his *Monadology*. One could go farther and suggest that alchemical assumptions were an important source for Leibniz's monadology since Leibniz was himself an alchemist and fully cognizant of the alchemical view of matter and spirit as two aspects of a single thing – an idea embedded in Leibniz's concept of monads as having a "passive" and an "active" component. Perhaps the most famous alchemical treatise ever written was the *Emerald Table*, one of the 36,000 texts supposedly written by Hermes Trismegistus, or "thrice-great Hermes," the legendary founder of the art (his portrait can be found in good Christian company on the beautifully inlaid floors of the cathedral in Sienna). The basic message of the *Emerald Table*, an enigmatically brief document containing thirteen gnomic precepts, is that all things emerge from one originally divine and spiritual nature. To quote the second precept: "What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing."²⁶⁶ This basic world view was enshrined in the alchemical motto "All in One" or "One in All," which was ceaselessly repeated and symbolized by the gnostic symbols of an egg or the tail-eating serpent (*ouroboros*).²⁶⁷ The two alchemical processes that intrigued alchemists the most and offered tangible proof for their gnostic view that matter was essentially spirit were distillation and sublimation. Alchemists themselves were more likely to designate these procedures "rarefaction," "exhaltation," or "condensation," which indicates their tendency to interpret them from a gnostic perspective. These two processes convinced them that matter could be refined and brought back to its originally pure spiritual state.²⁶⁸ But there is one single source for all these variations on the single theme of the convertibility of spirit and matter: Francis Mercury van Helmont. Van Helmont was a practicing alchemist and he was a Lurianic Kabbalist, but he was also the disciple of his father. The elder van Helmont was an alchemist and a vitalist, who advocated a form of Aristotelian monism which has great affinities with the kabbalistic theories of his son. It also has astonishing similarities to Leibniz's mature monadology.

The similarities between Leibniz's monads and J. B. van Helmont's concept of substance have been pointed out by Walter Pagel. For the elder van Helmont spirit and matter are "the two convertible faces of the same coin, the individual unit, in which they are inseparably interwoven. The spirit is not additional but intrinsic to the body of the object."²⁶⁹ Leibniz notion of a monad as containing "active" and "passive" forces is extraordinarily similar; the only real difference is in terminology. Pagel has shown how van Helmont's discovery of "gas" contributed to his monistic view of the inseparability of form and matter. J. B. van Helmont considered the gas released by a substance its pure essence, freed from the coarse material "husks" that had coagulated around it. The very use of the word "husk" is suggestive for its similarity with the Lurianic doctrine of "the breaking of the vessels." Pagel argues that the elder van Helmont's discovery of gas convinced him that there was an intrinsic force in matter that was inseparable from it. He describes this in a way that reveals the common ideas linking the philosophy of the elder van Helmont with both the Lurianic Kabbalah and Leibniz's monadology:

If Aristotle's realisation of perfection (*entelecheia*) stood for the driving force that is intrinsic and specific to an individual object, this likewise epitomises van Helmont's main tenet, namely that the object is not composed of "form" superadded to "matter," but that "form" is the force intrinsic to and inseparable from "matter." Neither has any precedence: primacy is instead attributed to the individual unit, in van Helmont's terms matter specifically "disposed." This he found empirically confirmed by his attempt at making visible the essential kernel of an object. It appeared to be demonstrable in the test-tube, *per ignem*, by burning away the object's coarse material "husks." What remained was a smoke with particular object-specific properties. This was the *gas* of the object, or, rather, the object itself divested of deceptive shapes and coverings and reduced to its pure essence. Van Helmont believed he had by chemical manipulation penetrated to the prime *ens* of the object, its seminal essence; that is, its *entelecheia*.²⁷⁰

Following Aristotle, the elder van Helmont believed that there was a principle within each material object that determined its life history. Aristotle had called this the "form." Borrowing from the vocabulary of Paracelsus, van Helmont preferred the term *archeus*:

the seminal efficient cause containeth the Types or Patterns of things to be done by itself, the figure, motions, houre, respects, inclinations, fitnesses, equalizings, proportions, alienation, defect, and whatsoever falls in under the succession of dayes, as well as in the business of generation, as of government.²⁷¹

The similarity of this idea with Leibniz's notion of monads as completely self-motivating hardly needs to be stressed. But it is worth pointing out that in appropriating the term *archeus* from Paracelsus, van Helmont followed him in thinking that complex organisms like the human body contained many *archei*, one for each organ, distinct part, or limb. In describing how this worked in practice both van Helmont and Paracelsus used the analogy of soldiers under a general. Leibniz used similar analogies to describe the relationship between the innumerable monads within a single organism.

There is another way in which the elder van Helmont may have influenced Leibniz. Van Helmont rejected the common view of time as a continuum of infinite indivisible moments or points of duration on the grounds that infinity is incompatible with indivisibility. In his view time was not an absolute concept. It was relative and intrinsic to each individual. Van Helmont consequently arrived at the idea of "biological time," which proved so fruitful for later biologists.²⁷² Leibniz's view of time as relative is remarkably similar.

Leibniz developed his concept of monads over a long period and he drew from many sources, from alchemical notions about "seeds" and the "flower" of substances, from neoplatonic and kabbalistic theories of emanation, and from J. B. van Helmont's concept of the *archeus*. It took the genius of Leibniz to transform these mytho-poetic insights into an extraordinarily daring metaphysical physics that defied the comprehension of even his most intellectually able contemporaries.²⁷³ At the very beginning of his book on Leibniz, G. MacDonald Ross stresses how radical Leibniz's ideas are, so radical in fact that they have only really been understood in the twentieth century. By reducing matter to a complex of forces Leibniz anticipated modern physics:

Leibniz saw that if the only function of matter was as a passive carrier of forces, then it had no role to play in scientific explanation. Its only role would be the metaphysical one of satisfying the prejudice that forces must inhere in something more substantial than themselves. He maintained that matter was nothing other than the receptive capacity of things, or their "passive power," as he called it. Matter just was the capacity to slow other things down, and to be accelerated rather than penetrated (capacities which ghosts and shadows lack) – in other words, inertia or mass, and solidity. So, taking also into account "active powers" such as kinetic energy, Leibniz reduced matter to a complex of forces. In this he was anticipating modern field theory, which treats material particles as concentrated fields of force – an anticipation duly recognized by its founder, the Italian mathematician Ruggiero Giuseppe Boscovich (1711–87).²⁷⁴

I am not arguing that the younger van Helmont was Leibniz's intellectual equal or even that his influence was paramount in the development of Leibniz's

monadology, but the assembled evidence surely suggests that van Helmont's ideas must be taken into consideration in any account that claims to describe the development of Leibniz's mature monadology.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Kabbalah and Freedom and Determinism

The problem of individuality and freedom within a larger framework of order and stability was a basic issue in the seventeenth century.²⁷⁵ Although Leibniz tried to carve out an area of freedom for the individual in his philosophy, most of his contemporaries as well as his critics (right up to the present) agree that he failed.²⁷⁶ That he started out a determinist seems fairly clear from the letter he wrote to Magnus Wedderkopf in May, 1671, succinctly analyzing the dilemma involved in arguing either way:

Fate is the decree of God or the necessity of events. Those events are *fatal* which will necessarily happen. Both views are difficult – that a God who does not decide everything, or that a God who does decide everything, should be the absolute author of all. For if he does decide everything, and the world dissents from his decree, he will not be omnipotent. But if he does not decide everything, it seems to follow that he is not omniscient. For it seems impossible that he should suspend his omniscient judgment about anything. If we frequently suspend our judgments, this happens out of ignorance. Hence it follows that God can never be purely permissive. It follows also that there is no decree of God which is really not absolute. For we suspend our judgments with conditions and alternatives because we have insufficiently explored the circumstances of the problem.

Is this conclusion hard? I admit it. What of it? Pilate is condemned. Why? Because he lacks faith. Why does he lack it? Because he lacks the will to attention. Why this? Because he has not understood the necessity of the matter (the utility of attending to it). Why has he not understood it? Because the causes of understanding were lacking. For it is necessary to refer everything to some first cause – or it must be admitted that something can exist without a sufficient reason for its existence, and this admission destroys the demonstration of the existence of God and of many philosophical theorems...

But this is said to you; I should not like to have it get abroad. For not even the most accurate remarks are understood by everyone.²⁷⁷

The last two sentences reveal Leibniz's dissatisfaction with this position.

In the years between this letter and the writing of the *Discourse*, Leibniz tried to modify his view but without success. Arnauld's horrified reaction to what he considered "a more than fatal necessity" in the *Discourse*, forced Leibniz to rethink the issue.²⁷⁸ A note Leibniz wrote on the copy of the letter to Wedderkopf at a later date shows that he thought he had solved the problem by distinguishing between contingent and necessary truths: "I later corrected this, for it is one thing for sins to happen infallibly, another for them to happen necessarily."²⁷⁹ But most critics are not as happy with Leibniz's solution as he apparently was and reject this distinction as meaningless.

Whatever the inadequacies of Leibniz's philosophical position on the issue of freedom, it is obvious that Leibniz could not stomach determinism or the fatalism it engendered. The hours he spent with van Helmont devising practical projects to improve social and working conditions and to help the poor and sick are not the work of a fatalist or even of a stoic, the position Ross thinks he eventually embraced.²⁸⁰ Around the same time he wrote the letter to Wedderkopf, Leibniz wrote the following passage advocating a kind of activism which is totally inconsistent with his philosophical position at this point:

... those who appraise this matter truly understand that the sciences of the just and the useful, that is of the public good and of their own private good, are mutually tied up in each other and that no one can easily be happy in the midst of miserable people.²⁸¹

Throughout his life Leibniz criticized any group or individual turning away from an active life to one of pious resignation. This is an important aspect of his criticisms of Islam²⁸² and Quietism. Even in the *Discourse*, the abridgment of which so troubled Arnauld on account of its determinism, he makes the point that one must do good works at all costs:

[4] ... I hold... that... in order to act in accordance with the love of God, it is not sufficient to force ourselves to be patient; rather, we must truly be satisfied with everything that has come to us according to his will. I mean this acquiescence with respect to the past. As for the future, we must not be quietists and stand ridiculously with arms folded, awaiting that which God will do, according to the sophism that the ancients called *logon aergon*, the lazy reason. But we must act in accordance with what we presume to be the *will of God*, in so far as we can judge it, trying with all our might to contribute to the general good and especially to the embellishment and perfection of that which affects us or that which is near us, that which is, so to speak, in our grasp. For although the outcome might perhaps demonstrate that God did not wish our good will to have effect at

present, it does not follow that he did not wish us to act as we have. On the contrary, since he is the best of masters, he never demands more than the right intention, and it is for him to know the proper hour and place for letting the good designs succeed.

Even more surprisingly for a supposed determinist, Leibniz was well aware of how adverse social circumstances affect an individual's behavior and actions:

Above everything else, one must seek means of obviating public misery. Conscience, honor, duty and interest equally oblige me to do it. For extreme poverty is mother of crimes and also the source of sickness... From which it follows that one must furnish the poor with the means of earning their livelihood, not only by using charity and [charitable] foundations to this end, but also by taking an interest in agriculture, by furnishing artisans materials and a market, by educating them to make their productions better, and finally by putting an end to idleness and to abusive practices in manufactures and commerce.²⁸³

On the basis of this kind of reasoning it would be impossible to say that someone's character is determined at birth. In fact, Leibniz denies that character is a given, arguing that it is formed through experience:

Good disposition, favourable upbringing, association with pious and virtuous persons may contribute much towards... a propitious condition for our souls; but most securely are they grounded therein by good principles. I have already said that insight must be joined to fervour, that the perfecting of our understanding must accomplish the perfecting of our will. The practices of virtue, as well as those of vice, may be the effect of a mere habit, one may acquire a taste for them; but when virtue is reasonable, when it is related to God, who is the supreme reason of things, it is founded on knowledge.²⁸⁴

He gives a vivid example of twins separated at birth and subject to very different experiences to illustrate the way external circumstances shape character, even to the point of determining who is saved and who damned.

... the chances to which, in spite of ourselves, we are subject, play only too large a part in what brings salvation to men, or removes it from them. Let us imagine twin Polish children, the one taken by the Tartars, sold to the Turks, brought to apostasy, plunged in impiety, dying in despair; the other saved by some chance, falling then into good hands to be educated properly, permeated by the soundest truths of religion, exercised in the virtues that it commends to us, dying with all the feelings of a good Christian. One will lament the misfortune of the former, prevented perhaps by a slight

circumstance from being saved like his brother, and one will marvel that this slight chance should have decided his fate for eternity.²⁸⁵

Leibniz rejects the possible rejoinder that God may have ordained that all this should happen in conformity with the innate disposition of the two children, together with the implied argument that one's situation cannot excuse one's behavior:

Someone will perchance say that God foresaw by mediate knowledge that the former would have been wicked and damned even if he had remained in Poland. There are perhaps conjunctures wherein something of the kind takes place. But will it therefore be said that this is a general rule, and that not one of those who were damned amongst the pagans would have been saved if he had been amongst Christians? Would that not be to contradict our Lord, who said that Tyre and Sidon would have profited better by his preaching, if they had had the good fortune to hear it, than Capernaum?²⁸⁶

Leibniz's wide-ranging philosophical interests, not to mention his attempts at religious conciliation, are only comprehensible on the assumption that he believed men were free to determine and change their behavior. His life-long work on the *ars combinatoria*, for example, makes absolutely no sense unless Leibniz sincerely believed that by learning to think more clearly and accurately, men would begin to act more rationally and consequently live together more amicably. A passage such as the following might be interpreted to suggest that Leibniz accepted the Stoic position that all we can do is use our reason to understand how everything is for the best, even though we are powerless to do anything about it; but I think it suggests much more than this, namely that man can and must use his reason to *change* his life for the better:

We are free insofar as we reason properly, and slaves insofar as we are mastered by the passions which come from internal impressions. But to reason well (you say) does not depend on us. I respond that it is in our power, since we have an infallible method for reasoning properly, provided that we wish to make use of it. It is necessary only to will.²⁸⁷

A passage from his *Theodicy* emphasizes the point that error and even evil are the result of confused, inaccurate thinking. There is therefore a remedy and it lies within the power of the individual to find and use it:

... For there is in the soul not only an order of distinct perceptions, forming its dominion, but also a series of confused perceptions or passions, forming its bondage: and there is no need for astonishment at that; the soul would be a Divinity if it had none but distinct perceptions. It has nevertheless some power over these confused perceptions also, even if in an indirect manner. For although it cannot change its passions forthwith, it can work

from afar towards that end with enough success, and endue itself with new passions and even habits. It even has a like power over the more distinct perceptions, being able to endue itself indirectly with opinions and intentions, and to hinder itself from having this one or that, and stay or hasten its judgements. For we can seek means beforehand to arrest ourselves, when occasion arises, on the sliding step of a rash judgment; we can find some incident to justify postponement of our resolution even at the moment when the matter appears ready to be judged. Although our opinion and our act of willing be not directly objects of our will (as I have already observed), one sometimes makes measures nevertheless to will, or belief, now. So great is the profundity of the spirit of man.²⁸⁸

The last sentence of this quotation is especially worthy of comment, for it echoes the optimistic view of man characteristic of Renaissance Humanists like Pico della Mirandola. So profound is the spirit of man that he can indeed change his destiny and improve himself! In taking this position, Leibniz appears to accept the Platonic view that evil is basically a matter of ignorance. It is consequently a state of privation which can be altered. The equation he makes between evil, ignorance, and faulty apperception in the following quotation is not what one would expect from a Lutheran, or even from an orthodox Christian, because it so carefully avoids any mention of original sin as the ineradicable source of man's evil deeds:

Evil is ... like darkness, and not only ignorance but also error and malice consist formally in a certain kind of privation. Here is an example of error which we have already employed. I see a tower which from a distance appears round although it is square. The thought that the tower is what it appears to be flows naturally from that which I see; and when I dwell on this thought it is an affirmation, it is a false judgement; but if I pursue the examination, if some reflexion causes me to perceive that appearances deceive me, lo and behold, I abandon my error. To abide in a certain place, or not to go further, not to espy some landmark, these are privations.

It is the same in respect of malice or ill will. The will tends towards good in general, it must strive after the perfection that befits us, and the supreme perfection is in God. All pleasures have within themselves some feeling of perfection. But when one is limited to the pleasures of the senses, or to other pleasures to the detriment of greater good, as of health, of virtue, of union with God, of felicity, it is in this privation of a further aspiration that the defect consists. In general perfection is positive, it is an absolute reality; defect is privation, it comes from limitation and tends to new privations. This saying is therefore as true as it is ancient: *bonum ex causa integra, malum ex quolibet defectu*; as also that which states: *malum causam habet*

non efficientem, sed deficientem. And I hope that the meaning of these axioms will be better apprehended after what I have just said.²⁸⁹

The manifest contradiction between what seems to be Leibniz's philosophical position of determinism and his practical activism and belief in the human potential for improvement seems insoluble. But I would suggest one possible way out of this impasse. If we look at the solution proposed by van Helmont to the same problem, we can see that the Lurianic Kabbalah provided the basis for a truly impregnable theodicy. While Leibniz did not accept all the mytho-poetic details of van Helmont's Lurianic theodicy – for example, that each individual would have twelve reincarnations (and thus ample time to achieve salvation) or that greater souls could be reborn in lesser ones to help them achieve salvation – he was profoundly influenced by van Helmont's essentially gnostic and neoplatonic view that because sin and evil originated in privation, both could and would be eliminated as the universe was restored to its original perfection. The strongest statements to this effect come from Leibniz's *Theodicy*, which he wrote towards the end of his life. In my opinion, Leibniz's exposure to the Lurianic Kabbalah was a critical factor in the development of his increasing optimism.

The Lurianic Kabbalah was predicated on the vision of a restored and perfected universe. Gershom Scholem has argued that Isaac Luria (1534–1572) created an optimistic philosophy out of pessimistic gnostic elements at a particularly difficult time for the Jews, during the century after their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula.²⁹⁰ In Luria's thought exile became the preliminary stage in a drama of universal redemption in which all souls would eventually return home to their divine creator. Luria accepted the gnostic belief that man was in exile on earth, but unlike pessimistic, world-renouncing Gnostics, this did not lead him to denounce the material world as vile and worthless. On the contrary, for him spirit and matter were the ends of a single continuum, and matter would be restored to its essentially spiritual state by a process of restoration, known as *tikkun*. Though the process was long and arduous, each material entity was allotted repeated reincarnations or transmigrations during which it would slowly move up the spiritual ladder. Exile was therefore a necessary, though transitory, stage in a process which would end in universal salvation. Pain and suffering were inevitable, but as a result of human actions in the form of *tikkunim* (positive redemptive acts) every individual would eventually be purged of the “husks” or “shards” which, according to Lurianic mythology, enveloped them when they fell from heaven into earthly exile.

Luria's thought is obscure. He delighted in allegories which invited a variety of different interpretations. In describing created souls as enveloped in “husks” or “shards,” Luria elaborated on an earlier Kabbalistic doctrine

known as “the breaking of the vessels” (*shevirah-ha-kelim*), as I mentioned earlier. According to this doctrine, after the creation of the primal man, *Adam Kadmon*, the ten *sefiroth* (those attributes of the hidden God such as knowledge, strength, justice, mercy, etc. which were revealed through the process of emanation) burst from his face in an undifferentiated mass. This disordered state was only temporary because creation involved the formation of finite beings with their allotted place in the divine order. It was therefore necessary to separate the *sefiroth*, which, according to Luria’s mythology, should have been kept apart in separate bowls. The lights of the first three *sefiroth* were contained in bowls, but the lower *sefiroth* proved too strong, and the bowls or vessels shattered.

With “the breaking of the vessels” evil entered the world in as much as souls became sunk in matter – or, as Luria explains more poetically – the shards of the shattered vessels fell down and became the dregs of the material world, trapping sparks of divine light. These sparks were the souls in exile. The work of redemption, or restoration (*tikkun*), consisted in freeing these sparks from their exiled state immersed in material prisons and reuniting them with the divine light.

Luria’s vision of a restored and perfect universe rested on his monistic philosophy. Luria believed that everything created is alive and full of souls at different levels of spiritual awareness and development. One of Luria’s disciples, Hayyim Vital, explained Luria’s ideas in a treatise included in the *Kabbala Denudata*: “There is nothing in the world, not even among silent things, such as dust and stones, that does not possess a certain life, spiritual nature, a particular planet, and its perfect form in the heavens.”²⁹¹ A later Kabbalist describes Luria’s theory that souls rise up the ladder of creation, becoming progressively more spiritual until finally freed from the cycle of reincarnation:

And God gradually raises these [souls] from step to step. In *gilgul* [reincarnation] he first brings them to life as stones, and from these as plants, from there as animals, and from there as pagans and slaves, and from there as Jews.²⁹²

Luria concluded that for a wise and pious man even eating is a holy act, for it enabled such a man to elevate souls by incorporating them into his own flesh.

He who is a wise disciple and eats his food with proper attention is able to elevate and restore many revolving souls. Whoever is not attentive will not restore anything, but he will also be damaged by them.²⁹³

Interestingly enough, the somewhat unusual ideas in these last two passages reappear – but in a more ecumenical fashion – in van Helmont’s last book, written by Leibniz:

at length, by innumerable Transplantations or Removes of Deaths, Lives, Feedings, and Regenerations, all things might be Transported into Man, in and by whom they were to be Glorified.²⁹⁴

What is especially significant and important about this passage – and I stress that it was written by Leibniz – is the emphasis it places on the role of man in the redemptive process. That human beings were entirely responsible for redeeming the fallen world is a fundamental axiom of the Lurianic Kabbalah. Moshe Idel has described the tremendous power accorded to man in the Kabbalah:

The focus of Kabbalistic theurgy is God, not man; the latter is given unimaginable powers to be used in order to repair the divine glory or the divine image; only his initiative can improve Divinity... the Jew is responsible for everything, including God, since his activity is crucial for the welfare of the cosmos.²⁹⁵

Idel labels the role envisaged for man by the Kabbalah as “universe maintenance activity.”²⁹⁶ He contrasts the kabbalistic view that God is dependent on man with the Christian concept of man’s complete dependence on God. However, it was precisely this cornerstone of Christian – and especially Lutheran and Calvinist – belief that began crumbling in the latter part of the sixteenth century. In this respect the Lurianic Kabbalah joined forces with a host of other essentially Pelagian philosophies and theologies that shared a common belief in perfectionism and in man’s inherently divine nature and ability to restore the world to its prelapsarian state. One of the so-called Hermetic dialogues, first translated from Greek during the Renaissance by Marsilius Ficino, presents this gnostic belief in man’s essentially divine nature. In this dialogue *Nous*, or the universal mind, explains to Hermes Trismegistus the power man possess to become God:

See what power you have, what quickness! If you can do these things, can god not do them? So you must think of god in this way, as having everything – the cosmos, himself, [the] universe – like thoughts within himself. Thus, unless you make yourself equal to god, you cannot understand god; like is understood by like. Make yourself grow to immeasurable immensity, outleap all body, outstrip all time, become eternity and you will understand god. Having conceived that nothing is impossible to you, consider yourself immortal and able to understand everything, all art, all learning, the temper of every living thing. Go higher than every height and lower than every depth. Collect in yourself all the sensations of what has been made, of fire and water, dry and wet; be everywhere at once, on land, in the sea, in heaven; be not yet born, be in the womb, be young, old, dead, beyond

death. And when you have understood all these at once – times, places, things, qualities, quantities – then you can understand god.²⁹⁷

Passages such as this one from the Hermetic dialogues led Pico della Mirandola to write his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in which he emphasized man's protean nature and his ability to become anything he wished, including divine. This optimistic view of man's inherent power and divinity clearly clashed with the Christian doctrine of original sin and emphasis on man's fallen nature.

Alchemists – and one must remember that Hermes Trismegistus was the reputed founder of the art, which is why alchemists were called "Hermeticists" – strayed even farther from the path of Christian orthodoxy. Accepting the doctrine that man is the microcosm who contains the whole of creation, or the macrocosm, within himself, they came to believe that the alchemist possessed the power to save the world as well as himself. The alchemist thus assumed the role of a gnostic savior. The notorious sixteenth century occultist Cornelius Agrippa reveals the logic behind this assumption:

... no one can reach perfection in the art without having recognized its principles within himself, indeed, the more each man understands himself, the greater the power of attraction he attains, the greater and more wonderful the work he does, and he rises to such perfection that he becomes a Son of God, and is transmuted into the image of God, and is united with him in a way which is granted neither to angels, nor the world, nor any creature save only man himself; in short, he can become a Son of God, and united with God. And moreover, when man is united with God, everything in that man is also united with the divine – firstly his mind then his spirit and his animal faculties, his vegetative faculty and the elements, right down to matter; indeed, he draws with him even the body, whose shape remains, transferring it to a better destiny and a celestial nature, so that it may be glorified in immortality; and this gift, as we have just mentioned, is peculiar to man, for whom the glory of being made in God's image is truly his own, and not shared with any other creature.²⁹⁸

This grandiose view of man's role in the universe was encouraged by the parallel alchemists drew between the philosopher's stone and Christ and by their conviction that both were in man. "Christ, that most noble cornerstone, is in us," wrote Robert Fludd.²⁹⁹ The author of the *Sophic Hydrolith* is more expansive: "The earthly philosopher's stone is the true image of the real spiritual and heavenly stone, Jesus Christ."³⁰⁰ Herman Kopp, the nineteenth-century historian of alchemy, was scandalized by the drawn out parallel between Christ and the philosopher's stone which took up more than fifty pages of *Wasserstein der Weisen*.³⁰¹ Alchemists were essentially a fifth column within

the various Christian denominations (and they were in all of them).³⁰² They carried forward the optimistic ideas of Renaissance Humanists into the age of Enlightenment. The gnostic conviction that man was a spark of divinity which had fallen into the world of matter with the power to regenerate himself and the world around him was an idea that simply could not be eradicated. As an idea it acted in much the same way the philosopher's stone was thought to act, like yeast, starting as a speck or grain but gradually transmuting whatever it touched. Nurtured by alchemists and mystics during the dark, pessimistic period of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, this optimistic belief in human potential reached its full development during the Enlightenment and has provided the rationale for liberal and progressive thinking ever since.

It is important to keep this optimistic, alchemical view of man in mind in connection with Leibniz's assessment of human nature. For Leibniz was an alchemist and he was well acquainted with all the radical ideologies stemming from the Renaissance combination of alchemical, neoplatonic, and kabbalistic thought. Frances Yates describes this mix as "Rosicrucian." She suggested that the word "Rosicrucian" should enter the vocabulary of serious historians to describe the kind of activist, reforming mentality that paved the way for modern science.³⁰³ The so-called "Yates Thesis" ran into a barrage of criticism. The idea that good science could come out of bad occultism clearly affronted some scholars.³⁰⁴ But Yates' hunches have proved to have more substance than her detractors could have imagined. Mounting evidence has shown that the progressive ideas of major scientific thinkers from Bacon to Newton were influenced by occult and especially alchemical theories, and Leibniz was one of these.³⁰⁵ The rumor that Leibniz joined a "Rosicrucian" society in Nürnberg has been discounted by Ross.³⁰⁶ But as Yates pointed out, Andreeae (who, if he did not write the Rosicrucian manifestos himself, was closely connected with them) attempted to organize a "Societas Christiana" along Rosicrucian lines in Nürnberg in 1628. This may have been the society Leibniz joined in 1663. The rules for Leibniz's own Order of Charity, which he formulated many years later, have a great deal in common with the Rosicrucian manifestos.³⁰⁷

The development of a more optimistic attitude toward man and the universe during the latter half of the seventeenth century can be seen from the increasing disenchantment with the idea of predestination and eternal damnation, even among Protestants. A growing number of people rejected the idea that a just and merciful God could damn any of his creatures eternally, arguing instead that he would punish them simply and solely to ensure their eventual salvation. Van Helmont went so far as to argue that the very idea of original sin and eternal damnation turned people against Christianity and promoted atheism:

... many Doctrines maintained by some Christians, concerning Reprobation, Original Sin, Infinite Damnation and the like, do give great occasion to many... to suspect the whole Doctrine is false, and many of them do bless themselves from the God of the Christians, as being not the true God, but an Idol of their own making, whom they have so shaped and framed after their own dark and foolish imaginations.³⁰⁸

By the end of his life Leibniz became equally dismayed by the extreme emphasis on God's will and power to the exclusion of justice and mercy. In his *Theodicy* he criticizes those who,

convinced that nothing comes to pass save by the will and the power of God, ascribe to him intentions and actions so unworthy of the greatest and the best of all beings that one would say these authors have indeed renounced the dogma which recognizes God's justice and goodness. They thought that, being supreme Master of the universe, he could without any detriment to his holiness cause sins to be committed, simply at his will and pleasure, or in order that he might have the pleasure of punishing; and even that he could take pleasure in eternally afflicting innocent people without doing any injustice, because no one has the right or the power to control his actions. Some even have gone so far as to say that God acts thus indeed; and on the plea that we are as nothing in comparison with him, they liken us to earthworms which men crush without heeding as they walk, or in general to animals that are not of our species and which we do not scruple to ill-treat.

I believe that many persons otherwise of good intentions are misled by these ideas, because they have not sufficient knowledge of their consequences. They do not see that, properly speaking, God's justice is thus overthrown. For what idea shall we form of such a justice as has only will for its rule, that is to say, where the will is not guided by the rules of good and even tends directly towards evil?³⁰⁹

The revival of the idea of *apocatastasis*, or universal salvation, associated originally with Origen (and for which he was anathematized at the Council of Constantinople in 553 C. E.) was another important indication of a move in the direction of Enlightenment tolerance. It should come as no surprise that Leibniz joined ranks with the optimistic and progressive thinkers who revived Origen's view that man had the innate, God-given capacity and will to ensure his own salvation.³¹⁰ As Michel Fichant has shown in his important edition of several virtually unknown manuscripts, Leibniz not only came to accept Origen's theory of *apocatastasis*, but he actively promoted the dissemination of this theory.³¹¹ Over a period of twenty-six years, between 1693 when Leibniz wrote the first treatise entitled *Concern-*

ing the *Horizon of Human Knowledge*³¹² and 1715 when he wrote two short pieces entitled 'Αποκατάστασις πάντων (*The Universal Restitution*) and 'Αποκατάστασις (*Restitution*), Leibniz radically altered his views. Having initially accepted the idea of *apocatastasis* in the pre-Origen and primarily Stoic sense that this world and everything in it was bound to return again and again in endless cycles of repetition, Leibniz came to embrace Origen's wholly different and optimistic interpretation of *apocatastasis* as the inevitable restitution of the fallen world to its prelapsarian perfection. Although Fichant recognizes the significant change in Leibniz's thinking from the first treatise to the last two, he nevertheless argues for their basic continuity on the grounds that, although he may not have quite realized it initially, Leibniz's own philosophical principles precluded the kind of determinism accepted by the Stoics.³¹³ As I will argue in the next chapter, I do not believe that Leibniz's acute sense of logic motivated him to change his views as much as van Helmont. The dates of the three treatises seem to me to be crucial in this respect: the first was written before van Helmont and Leibniz's most intense period of friendship and collaboration, the last two well after it. As I show in the following chapter, the years between 1694 and 1697 was decisive in laying the foundations for Leibniz's mature and to my mind successful, though unorthodox, theodicy. During these years, and as the direct result of van Helmont's influence, Leibniz wrestled with the question of whether this world in its present condition was really the best of all possible worlds or if it could improve. He eventually decided that progress was inevitable and indeed essential if God's ways were to be justified. I do not believe that Leibniz arrived at this conclusion through logic. As in all other areas of his thought metaphysics and theology were his guiding lights.

The belief that everyone and everything would eventually be restored to its prelapsarian state represented a revival of the Renaissance view of man as a miraculous hybrid creature who possessed the power to be anything he wished, including God, a view that carried over in a somewhat modified but still heady form into the following period of the Enlightenment. This essentially heretical doctrine made a startling and somewhat paradoxical come-back in a century which began with the pessimist conviction that the world was in an unalterable state of decline and ended with an almost fatuous optimism. Alchemists, Hermeticists, Kabbalists, and radical sectarians of all stripes, including Quakers and Philadelphians, joined forces to promote this optimism by establishing the new image of man as a reasonable, self-reliant individual capable of creating a future of unlimited enlightenment and progress. This is the position that Leibniz eventually reached in his *Theodicy* as well as in various unpublished treatises, including several of those published by Fichant. Although there were many sources from which

Leibniz could have derived these ideas – Fichant, for example, mentions Johann Wilhelm Petersen, a figure we shall come back to – his most direct sources were van Helmont and the Lurianic Kabbalah.³¹⁴

Leibniz's vision of man's potential is not as lofty as Pico's – he had, after all, full knowledge of the savage butchery caused by religious disputes, particularly those of the Thirty Years' War – but he had a vision nonetheless. The world may appear to be full of disorder, and man may commit "great errors," but as a "little god" in his own "microcosm," he can perform "wonders" as well:

Here is another particular reason for the disorder apparent in that which concerns men. It is that God, in giving him intelligence, has presented him with an image of the Divinity. He leaves him to himself, in a sense, in his small department... He enters there only in a secret way, for he supplies being, force, life, reason, without showing himself. It is there that free will plays its game: and God makes game (so to speak) of these little Gods that he thought good to produce, as we make game of children who follow pursuits which we secretly encourage or hinder according as it pleases us. Thus man is there like a little god in his own world or *Microcosm*, which he governs after his own fashion: he sometimes performs wonders therein, and his art often imitates nature... But he also commits great errors, because he abandons himself to the passions, and because God abandons him to his own way.³¹⁵

But as we have already seen, Leibniz believed that if men would use their intelligence and follow the kind of method he had devised in his *ars combinatoria*, they could control their passions and make the world a better place.

Like everyone else who attempted the impossible task, Leibniz failed to present a philosophically persuasive argument that man could be free when God was both omniscient and omnipotent. His early admission that he was a determinist and his failed attempt to escape from this position in the *Discourse* made him receptive to new solutions. The one he found came from van Helmont and the Lurianic Kabbalah. By the end of his life Leibniz had become a radical gnostic optimist who believed in the ultimate perfection of man and the world.

CHAPTER SIX

The Kabbalah and Leibniz's Theodicy

The great change in Leibniz's thinking about the possibility of progress becomes abundantly clear if one compares passages from the manuscripts published by Fichant. In the one written in 1693, *Concerning the Horizon of Human Knowledge*, Leibniz argues that if human beings were to exist for long enough, there would inevitably come a time when everything that could be enunciated and written down would already have been enunciated and written down, and people would simply begin to repeat themselves:

If the human race continues for long enough in its present condition, and if every 100 years, or million years, or some even greater interval, each individual produced at least one new statement or proposition, it would necessarily follow that eventually all the propositions which could be enunciated would have been exhausted and therefore a perfect repetition would occur, word for word, of what had already been said or enunciated before. One would not be able to write a sermon, poem, novel, or book which had not already been written by another. The common saying, "Nothing is said which has not been said before" would be true to the letter.³¹⁶ I find that the hypothesis that a certain interval of time produces at least something new is not certain or even reasonable. It seems rather that the difficulty of producing anything new continually increases.

But perhaps the number of enunciable truths, although finite, will never be exhausted, just as the interval between a straight line and the curve of a hyperbola or conchoid is never exhausted, although it is finite. And even if we suppose that the human race as we know it has existed for all eternity, it does not necessarily follow that everything that could be said has already been said. However, it is true that if the human race continues for a long enough time, almost everything that one could say would only be a repetition; and if new things are often said, eventually one will be unable to produce any more... But leaving such propositions aside, which are not entirely proven, let us content ourselves with having discovered a kind of horizon, which limits human knowledge, and with having elevated

our understanding to such reflections, which make us recognize the limits which to some extent nature has placed upon it.³¹⁷

The clear implication of this line of reasoning is that progress only occurs up to a point and then stops dead in its tracks. In this text Leibniz takes to heart the ancient idea of eternal return, or the so-called platonic year,³¹⁸ which presupposes that the universe experiences endless cycles during which the same events continually repeat themselves. By 1701, however, Leibniz had changed his mind. In a short text, or rather fragment of a text, Leibniz returns to the idea that events are bound to repeat themselves, but he now denies this on the grounds that men will continue to discover new things, and thus progress will never stop:

If the human race continued for long enough, the time would necessarily come when nothing would be said that had not been already said before. But it is not certain that a time will come when nothing can be said that has not been said before. For it could happen that certain things were never said, even through all eternity. Therefore, there would always remain things that could be said but were not yet said. There is no such thing as a perfect return such as in circles or ellipses, and it will not happen that one time or place in the universe will perfectly resemble another, although they appear similar to the senses.

But suppose that one day nothing could be said that had not already been said before, then there must also be a time when the same events reoccur and when nothing happens which did not happen before, since events provide the matter for words.

Furthermore, there would necessarily be certain periods like the Platonic year, such that in the course of a century exactly the same things would happen as happened before in another century. For the events of an entire century can be taken as one huge fact and the whole history of a century for one great statement. These same events either repeat or exhaust themselves by necessity, that is, after they exhaust themselves, they repeat themselves. And this can happen for different times in the same place and apply to the same events in different places at the same time, so that the same things reoccur. Such periods can even occur in each mind since they always think, even if in a confused way and without the attention of the spirit.

It is possible to imagine that a time will come when the human race no longer exists. Nevertheless, if intelligent substances survive, which have no other things to think about or notions than we have, the same thing must happen to them.

On the other hand, because it does not agree with the dignity of nature that prior events repeat themselves, it follows that more perfect intelligences are made, which have other, more profound notions and which are

capable of greater and more complex truths. Thus progress in knowledge can go on to infinity.

Thus, it is appropriate that if human minds endure and experience platonic years, the same men return, not simply so that they might return to the earth but so that they might progress toward something greater in the manner of a spiral or winding path. This is to step back in order to jump farther, as across a ditch...

During these periods souls will not only be immortal but there will be something equivalent to the resurrection of the body, if not the resurrection itself. Indeed, I do not see how one can avoid platonic periods, at least in regard to notions that must remain or are distinct, in which there is nothing new in terms of matter but only in terms of their form or combination, which is limited. And indeed, if anyone understands confused notions, these become distinct. Therefore, because the minds which become more perfect make greater propositions, which are composed of smaller ones, their actions are more complex than their previous actions and proceed like a spiral or platonic year which has been augmented, so that I believe the same minds return often in order to pick up the thread [where they left off].³¹⁹

Leibniz's commitment to the inevitability of progress is even stronger in the two last texts from 1715. I quote from the final one, which is the more fully developed:

... one can conclude that the human race will not always remain in the same state because it does not agree with the divine harmony to always play the same chord. One should rather believe, following natural reasons as to what is appropriate, that things must advance for the better either little by little or by leaps. For although things often appear to become worse, one must think that this happens in the same way that we sometimes step back in order to jump farther.

Finally, even if the human race does not always remain as it is now, if we suppose that minds always exist which hunt out and know the truth, it necessarily follows that at some time these minds will come to know truths that are independent of sense experience, that is, theorems of pure science, which can be exactly demonstrated by reasons which have already been discovered and which do not exceed a certain length (for example, a page, if they are written), and, even more, that they will discover brief formulas which can be written in a few words.

This is why the new theorems to be discovered must grow in length to infinity, in the same way we see that there are certain geometrical proofs which are rather long but nonetheless handsome.

If this happens, it must follow that those minds which are not yet sufficiently capable will become more capable so that they can comprehend and invent such great theorems, which are necessary to understand nature more deeply and to reduce physical truths to mathematics, for example, to understand the mechanical functioning of animals, to foresee certain future contingencies with a certain degree of accuracy, and to do certain wonderful things in nature, which are now beyond our capacity...

Every mind has a horizon in respect to its present intellectual capacity but not in respect to its future intellectual capacity.³²⁰

Fichant recognizes the significant change of view in these texts, beginning in the fragment from 1701 and culminating in the final text, which Fichant describes as advocating a “quasi-origenism,” purged of its original weaknesses.³²¹ In accounting for Leibniz’s change of view, Fichant looks primarily to the influence of Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649–1727), the Lutheran theologian and minister who caused such consternation among many of his co-religionists because of his millenarianism and belief in universal salvation.³²²

Fichant traces Leibniz’s relationship with Petersen, revealing how Leibniz’s initial but distant curiosity about the man and support for his right to espouse controversial millenarian views developed into a relationship in which Leibniz took an active hand in planning and correcting Petersen’s philosophical poem advocating universal salvation, *Uranias seu opera Dei magna carmine heroico celebrata*, published five years after Leibniz’s death. In 1706, however, fourteen years before this work was published, Leibniz had scribbled an outline of its contents on the back of a letter Petersen had written to him. It is worth quoting this draft in full because it so clearly indicates that by this date Leibniz fully accepted the doctrine of universal salvation, even though he was unwilling to advocate it publicly:

I, who am accustomed to thinking often about how the talents of great men might serve to advance the public good to the greatest degree, see that what I have often hoped for might come from you, namely a fit and comprehensive work about divine matters in the form of a heroic poem. For theology, which shines forth in prose, would be even more sublime if dressed in Virgilian majesty, which you of all people could do best. This would be the subject of such a great work: first, God, sufficient in his perpetual and secret eternity; then the creation of the cosmos; and finally the workings of providence in the governing of the world. But the second part should treat the future as it pertains to the body and the soul. Here the purification of souls and the restitution of all things, or rather their gradual improvement and elevation, could be discussed. I hope that the last, but not the least, part of the work will concern the grandeur of the

celestial kingdom, or, as I call it, the divine court. There the astonishing virtues of the angels should be depicted in vivid colors and the happiness of blessed souls celebrated, blessed souls, who not only see the world under our feet but innumerable other worlds. From the different scenes of divine wisdom and goodness throughout the ages the love and veneration for the supreme mind will burn ever more brightly. Here is the holy place for the most elegant fictions, although there is nothing that can be imagined by us, however beautiful, that is not surpassed by the truth. I do not know anyone from whom one could hope for such a work aside from you, you who have the gift of divine eloquence and to whom the hidden recesses of divine matters are visible.³²³

Five years later, in 1711, Petersen actually began work on the poem and Leibniz played a vital part in its execution, going so far as to correct Petersen's poetry. Leibniz's favorable attitude towards Petersen's theory of universal restitution went back even further, however, to 1701, when Leibniz published an anonymous review of Petersen's first work advocating universal salvation, *Μυστηρίου ἀποκαταστασεως πάντων*. Leibniz's review appeared in Johann Georg Eckart's monthly literary digest, *Monatlicher Auzug aus allerhand neuherausgegeben nützlichen und artigen Büchern*.

What can account for Leibniz's favorable reaction to Petersen's ideas? As I suggested at the end of the last chapter, Leibniz's relationship with Petersen can only be understood in terms of his relationship with van Helmont. It is no coincidence that in his review of Petersen's book Leibniz specifically mentions both Lady Conway and van Helmont, and it is surely significant that he should also mention the book he ghosted for van Helmont, *Thoughts on Genesis*, which itself advocated universal salvation:

The author adds that several people still support this doctrine, especially during the time of the Reform... In her *Philosophical work, which contains the principles of the most ancient and modern philosophy*, the English Countess writes, "Christ has sanctified in the nature of man the nature of all creatures, so as to restore the creatures from corruption." (This Lady was Countess Conway, the sister of Chancellor Heneage Finch, as one remembers often to have heard from Monsieur Helmont)...

Monsieur Francis Mercury van Helmont wished to maintain in diverse ways the restitution of all things and progress toward what is better in his *Cogitata in Genesim* (Thoughts on Genesis), as elsewhere. But he believed that souls ordinarily experience metempsychosis, that there always exists a certain number of human souls (and of every other sort) and that they will be led by revolutions from one body to another, always better, and glorified all together at the same time in their leader, Christ. He also maintained that Christ himself was a reincarnation of Adam and that all other human souls

preexisted and must once again attain perfection with and in Christ (along with other rather extraordinary ideas that came to him during his life).³²⁴

Here as elsewhere, in fact in all his public references to van Helmont, Leibniz keeps his distance and hardly sounds enthusiastic. In fact, who could possibly tell from this paragraph – supposing one knew the review was written by Leibniz, as some people eventually did – that Leibniz had any part whatsoever in the writing and publication of *Thoughts on Genesis*? Nevertheless, to my mind van Helmont is the missing link between Leibniz and Petersen. Petersen knew van Helmont and van Helmont's writings as well as Lady Conway's were clearly sources he used, as his references to both reveal.³²⁵ In fact, Petersen's arguments in favor of universal salvation closely follow those given by van Helmont and Lady Conway, namely that eternal punishment for finite sins is out of all proportion and inconsistent with God's mercy and justice; that God could not possibly damn people who, through no fault of their own, had never heard of Christianity; and finally that pain and suffering are beneficial and God only punishes his creatures for their own good and eventual salvation. The documents that Fichant has assembled can therefore best be understood if placed within the larger context of Leibniz's knowledge of and interest in the Lurianic Kabbalah. What made Leibniz so receptive to Petersen was his exposure to the kabbalistic idea of *tikkun*, an idea that is a basic aspect of all van Helmont's writing and all his thinking and one he discussed at length with Leibniz. However stand-offish Leibniz was publicly about van Helmont and his ideas, the very fact that he refers to both so often indicates the measure of his interest.

But did Leibniz eventually embrace the idea of universal salvation? At the end of his study Fichant raises this question but says the answer goes beyond the scope of his work. However, he gives many indications that the answer is positive.³²⁶ As I have already suggested, I believe Leibniz eventually did accept the idea of universal salvation. In the remaining part of this chapter I offer evidence, in addition to that given by Fichant, showing how preoccupied Leibniz was with the question of progress, especially during the years between 1694 and 1696. Fichant notes that Leibniz's views changed radically from 1693 to 1701. I would argue that the change occurred earlier, that by the time Leibniz wrote *Thoughts on Genesis* in 1697 he had come to believe progress was inevitable. This conviction, in turn, provided the basis for his final theodicy. But if, as I contend, Leibniz's exposure to the Lurianic Kabbalah was an important factor in his acceptance of the idea of universal salvation, it is essential to know exactly what Isaac Luria and his disciple, Francis Mercury van Helmont, thought about this issue.

Isaac Luria was a thoroughgoing proponent of metempsychosis, the belief that souls were continually reincarnated until they achieved salvation and

were freed from the cycle of birth and death. Luria believed that all souls, including human ones, could go up or down the ladder of creation, depending on their behavior. Pain and suffering were therefore an inevitable aspect of purification:

There are few men who are able to avoid revolution in some animal or vegetable, and similarly in some other creature of the world. For which reason everyone is compelled to undergo his punishment in both body and soul because he is brought into a certain bodily state in order that he might be able to feel those pains which he merits. And all things happen according to the nature of the sin.³²⁷

As I have argued in several articles, the Lurianic Kabbalah provided van Helmont, von Rosenroth, and Lady Conway with a way to vindicate God from the charge of injustice by showing that he had created his creatures with full knowledge of their ultimate redemption.³²⁸ These ideas are set out repeatedly in the books written by van Helmont as well as in Lady Conway's one book, *The Principles of Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, which reiterates van Helmont's ideas.³²⁹ In van Helmont's opinion, the strongest argument in favor of the reincarnation of souls comes from a consideration of the divine attributes:

Now which way can we reconcile with the Attributes of God that he who is a wise and perfect Creator, who hath created all things in some wise order, that they might all at last be able to attain their full and ultimate perfection, should have created such imperfect Creatures as Fools and Naturals, Abortions and Monsters and all those wicked and barbarous men we find in the world, etc.? Now to suppose that all these must continue in this their state of imperfection, would not this run directly contrary to the forementioned Attributes? But how can this be, that God should work and act contrary to his own nature and himself?³³⁰

Vindictiveness is not part of the divine nature. God's justice requires that he punish his creatures according to their misdeeds and for their benefit. Evil by its very nature cannot be absolute; therefore at some future, glorious time all things will be perfected:

... the punishment of wicked men is not to be looked upon as that whereby the Creature should still become worse and worse; but as it is in order to the changing of it from Evil to Good, for that when the Evil is transchanged, the Good then begins to work upwards, by innumerable steps of ascension towards God, through it can never reach so high as to reach his Being or Essence (for as much as it is impossible that a Creature should become God), but must therefore continue to mount upwards, and continually attain to more and greater degrees of Glory.³³¹

The concept of eternal punishment is an anathema. God may punish his creatures, but only out of love and with their redemption in mind:

If God be unchangeable, as certainly he is, can he absolutely hate any of his Creatures, which once he loved? And if when he most severely punishes his Creatures, he loveth them, is not then his punishing them an Act of Love, and consequently medicinal, or in order to their recovery?³³²

Luria's conviction that pain and suffering were prerequisites to redemption dovetailed with the fundamental alchemical idea that transmutation only occurs as a result of death and suffering. The first, or "black," stage in transmutation was thus understandably referred to as the "death" or "mortification" of the base matter being worked upon.³³³ As an alchemist and Kabbalist van Helmont took these ideas in a very personal way. When he was arrested and imprisoned by the Inquisition on the charge of "judaizing," he concluded that if worse came to worse and he were to be burned, it would do his soul good.³³⁴ That he was able to convince Lady Conway of the redemptive value of suffering at least offered her some philosophical consolation for her own pronounced pain, which medicine was powerless to alleviate. As Lady Conway wrote in her treatise:

... all pain and torment stimulates the life or spirit existing in everything which suffers. As we see from the constant experience and as reason teaches us, this must necessarily happen because through pain and suffering whatever grossness or crassness is contracted by the spirit or body is diminished and, consequently, the spirit is set free and becomes more spiritual and therefore more active and effective through pain.³³⁵

Lady Conway repeated these ideas in a way that may have especially appealed to Leibniz because of her introduction of the concept of infinity:

... a body is always able to become more and more spiritual to infinity since God, who is the first and highest spirit, is infinite and does not nor cannot partake of the least corporeity. Consequently, it is the nature of a creature, unless it degenerates, always to become more and more like the creator. But, because there is no being which is in every way contrary to God (surely nothing exists which is infinitely and immutably evil as God is infinitely and immutably good, and there is nothing which is infinitely dark as God is infinitely light, nor is anything infinitely a body having no spirit, as God is infinitely spirit having no body), it is therefore clear that no creature can become more and more a body to infinity, although it can become more and more a spirit to infinity. And nothing can become darker and darker to infinity, although it can become brighter and brighter to infinity. For this reason nothing can be evil to infinity, although it can become better and better to infinity.³³⁶

The Lurianic Kabbalah solved another thorny problem for Christians by making sense of the concept of original sin. How could generations who came into being long after the death of Adam and Eve be held accountable for an original sin they never committed? Van Helmont stated the problem clearly:

Does it ... remove the difficulty, to say, as some do, that those woeful effects came upon Adam's Posterity for his sin? For besides that it seems unjust, and contrary to Scripture to continue so great a misery so long, upon so many thousands for his sin only, except they had been consenting to it, and that they could not be if they had no being; besides this I say, do we not see this misery fall very unequally, some being born fools and mad men, others with a large capacity of Natural Understanding; now how can this be only for Adam's sin, in the Judgment of these very men, seeing they say that all are equally guilty for it?³³⁷

Van Helmont found the solution in the Lurianic Kabbalah, for Luria maintained that the souls of every individual preexisted in the body of the first man, Adam. Thus when he sinned, every soul sinned with him. Luria's theory was set out in the treatise *Concerning the Revolution of Souls*, which appeared in the *Kabbala Denudata*:

Certainly all minds, spirits, and souls without exception, were comprehended in Adam Protoplatus when he was made. Certain souls related to Adam's head; certain to his eyes; others to his nose; and thus to all of his limbs, from which it is as if they derived.³³⁸

Leibniz was clearly aware of this kabbalistic idea and mentions it several times, for example in the anonymous review he wrote of Petersen's book quoted above. He also mentions it in a letter to Thomas Burnett, although with a characteristic disclaimer:

Monsieur van Helmont believed that the soul of Jesus was that of Adam and that this new Adam repaired what the first had damaged; it was the same person who paid off his ancient debt. I think one does well to spare oneself the trouble of refuting such ideas.³³⁹

One might well ask here and elsewhere, if this opinion was so ridiculous, why did Leibniz bother to mention it? Once again I would answer, because he really did not find it ridiculous; in fact, he accepted it. As Gaston Grua pointed out, Leibniz was very good at propagating opinions he found attractive and probable, without actually advocating them.³⁴⁰

The same idea appears in a more general and philosophically acceptable form in the book Leibniz wrote in van Helmont's name:

We may take notice, that every present thing doth contain the seeds of all the future individuals of its kind, as itself also was contained in the seeds of the thing already past. Wherefore there are as many things as there are seeds, and neither more nor less.³⁴¹

The same idea is presented in a slightly different form in another passage from the same book, where Leibniz describes all created things as having been produced by God from “seeds” which contain within themselves an “active” and “spontaneous” “force” which allows them to progress or regress:

All things having been produced by Aelohim from seeds, since these were in him before [creation] but now subsist by themselves, having left him, and they have an active and spontaneous force so that they are able to progress or fall in as much as the whole world fell in Adam.³⁴²

In their activity and spontaneity, these “seeds” anticipate Leibniz’s monads. What is especially interesting is that van Helmont thought he had found support for this Lurianic concept of pre-existence in the microscopic observations of Swammerdam, Kerckring, and Malpighi. As we saw earlier, Leibniz had looked to these same microscopists to validate his theory of preformation. Swammerdam and Kerckring believed correctly that a woman was born with all the eggs which she would later produce. Both Leibniz and van Helmont interpreted this to support the idea that all souls, or in Leibniz’s case monads, originated at the beginning of creation and never ceased to exist. In taking this position, they accepted the most popular of the two current theories about generation, the preformation theory rather than the theory of epigenesis. The preformation theory that life is a process of development, unfolding, or expansion, rather than generation proper, fit well with the elder van Helmont’s theory of the *archeus* as well as with the Aristotelian idea of substantial form. It also led to the concept of *emboitement*, that individuals were enclosed one within another in a line stretching back to Adam, who contained the whole human race within himself.

Leibniz was well aware of the dilemma the doctrine of original sin posed for Christians, which is precisely why he accepted the kabbalistic doctrine that all created souls had originally existed in Adam and consequently sinned with him. He makes this point in his *Theodicy*, in a passage which appears to me to be greatly indebted to van Helmont’s kabbalistic belief that souls ascend the spiritual ladder as they evolve from lower forms of life to men:

It is thus my belief that those souls which one day shall be human souls, like those of other species, have been in the seed, and in the progenitors as far back as Adam, and have consequently existed since the beginning of things, always in a kind of organic body. On this point it seems that M. Swammerdam, Father Malebranche, M. Bayle, Mr. Pitcairne, M.

Hartsoeker and numerous other very able persons share my opinion. This doctrine is also sufficiently confirmed by the microscopic observations of M. Leeuwenhoek and other good observers. But it also for diverse reasons appears likely to me that they existed then as sentient or animal souls only, endowed with perception and feeling, and devoid of reason. Further I believe that they remained in this state up to the time of the generation of the man to whom they were to belong, but that then they received reason, whether there be a natural means of raising a sentient soul to the degree of a reasoning soul (a thing I find it difficult to imagine) or whether God may have given reason to this soul through some special operation, or (if you will) by a kind of *transcreation*. This latter is easier to admit, inasmuch as revelation teaches much about other forms of immediate operation by God upon our souls. This explanation appears to remove the obstacles that beset this matter in philosophy or theology. For the difficulty of the origin of forms thus disappears completely; and besides it is much more appropriate to divine justice to give the soul, already corrupted *physically* on the animal side by the sin of Adam, a new perfection which is reason, than to put a reasoning soul, by creation or otherwise in a body wherein it is to be corrupted *morally*.³⁴³

Thus, while Leibniz rejected van Helmont's notion of the transmigration of souls, he favored the preformationist theory of the transformation of souls. Anne Becco sees this as a major difference between the two men.³⁴⁴ But are the two ideas so very different? Not if one looks back to van Helmont's *Dialogue* in answer to More and remembers the description of monads falling down into a "drowsie," i.e. more material, state. Here van Helmont outlines an evolutionary scheme of transformation in which monads move up and down the ladder of creation as they become more "spiritual," i.e. active, or more "material," i.e. passive. In fact, one can only envision the transmigration of souls in a dualistic scheme where souls can move from one bit of matter to another, and as I have tried to argue, van Helmont was a monist, as was Leibniz. Thus the debate over transmigration versus transformation is something like the debate about whether or not Leibniz is a realist or a phenomenalist. The answer is that both sets of oppositions – transmigration/transformation and realist/phenomenalist – disappear from a gnostic perspective. For Gnostics, and this includes Lurianic Kabbalists and alchemists, matter and soul cannot be separated; they are, as explained above, opposite ends of a continuum.

If this is indeed the case, then why does Leibniz take such pains to distinguish his idea of transformation from van Helmont's transmigration? The answer should be obvious. Leibniz did not want to be taken for a magus or a Kabbalist. His rejection of Newton's concept of gravity on the grounds that it reintroduced occult qualities indicates how much he wanted to rationalize

science, just as he wanted to rationalize all other forms of knowledge. But he was not willing to pay the high price of eliminating mind, spirit, or soul from his scientific world picture as Cartesians and mechanical philosophers did. Nor was he willing to introduce substantial forms or vital spirits when nothing definitive or useful could be said about them. This was the basis of his criticism of both the Scholastics and the Cambridge Platonists. Leibniz's position was therefore unique and uniquely difficult to fathom at the time he devised it. By introducing the concept of force as the defining characteristic of monads, he was able to reunite metaphysics and mechanics in a way that only began to be appreciated long after his death, for force is at one and the same time both a measurable and a spiritual entity (because it is "active").

As I have tried to demonstrate, matter is also eliminated as a real entity in van Helmont's kabbalistic scheme since all matter originates from God as spirit and only becomes matter as its energy diminishes and it "slips down" and becomes "drowsie" or "contracted." The notion that God could have created matter was an anathema to van Helmont because he believed this implied that God was the author of sin and suffering. Thus, in order to save the divine attributes and create a viable theodicy, van Helmont rejected the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. As we have seen, Leibniz also denies creation *ex nihilo* in the book he wrote in van Helmont's name. Reacting against Henry More's forceful advocacy of this doctrine, which More took to be a cornerstone of Christianity, van Helmont argues that if creation had been *ex nihilo*, then the distinction between God and matter would be obliterated and God would be responsible for evil:

But from the common opinion that matter is created by God out of nothing these absurd and incongruous propositions may follow. 1. It might be said that from a most perfect, most intelligent, most free being, who has in himself motion in its highest degree, who is most penetrating, immutable, positive, alive, etc., a most imperfect being is produced, lacking all knowledge, intellect, and understanding in the highest degree, [a being] in the highest degree forced, compelled, and obligated to laws of passive motion and, therefore, altogether deprived of freedom and will, [a being] lacking motion in itself in the highest degree unless subjected to motions impressed [upon it] by others, and so, itself in the highest degree motionless and at rest, lacking in itself all active as well as passive penetration, [a being] highly changeable, completely bereft of all blessedness and so completely dead and senseless as to have absolutely nothing of those things which are contained in its cause, for which reason its nature is said by many to be completely contrary to God. And since just as an efficient cause cannot produce anything completely like itself, so it cannot produce anything completely unlike itself. 2. This vile and inane created thing, which we

justly say occupies the least part of the universe is said, according to common opinion, to be co-extensive with God, nay, to coexist and to be on the same level with him, and, consequently, this thing is held in such esteem that an entire doctrine may be drawn from all of gentile philosophy on this subject alone, which is taken as the basis of all theorems concerning spirit and God (which they term, to demonstrate *à posteriori* – reasoning from the latter to the former – from which comes that cursed materialism and consequently atheism). 3. Just as to be and not to be imply contradiction, so the consequence of this contradiction is that *ex* means not to be, if one should speak accurately about the laws of causality. 4. In the same way, God should be said to have created death, sin, darkness, monsters, evil, etc., which are privations, as matter is a privation of the nature of spirit. Indeed, no single positive term should with any merit enter into a definition of this [matter], because divisibility, either in the abstract or in atoms, cannot agree with [the nature of] God. 5. The creation of matter out of nothing is totally contradictory to the wisdom of God. Indeed, in such a case [creation *ex nihilo*], wisdom could have made all creation spiritual, which would have been best, but nevertheless it would have made something that was not spirit and not the best. 6. It [creation *ex nihilo*] is against his goodness because he would have created something lacking a share of his full goodness. 7. It is against his excellence since it is completely distant from the first excellence. 8. Nay, an immediate step would be judged to have been made from one extreme to the other. 9. Wherefore it would be absurd to admit further absurdities in order to avoid absurdities that do not necessarily flow from the hypothesis or [to admit absurdities] that are harmful to the soul and reign of the Messiah, [absurdities] which sink the mind into the filthy pit of matter so that it is as if matter is finally made as a result of the destruction of spirit. May God avert this!³⁴⁵

This argument against creation *ex nihilo* combined with van Helmont's previous description of monads as "slip[ing] down from the state of knowing" anticipates Leibniz concept of monads as self-activated centers of energy which move up and down the scale of creation as their passive, resistant (i.e. "material") natures either increase or decrease. It is therefore my contention that shorn of its more fantastic elements, the Lurianic doctrine of *tikkun*, or the restoration of all created things to their original perfection, makes its way into Leibniz's theodicy.

Leibniz is best known for his theory of the "best of all possible worlds," so mercilessly ridiculed by Voltaire. The whole thrust of Voltaire's scathing and humorous critique was to prove by means of example piled on top of horrendous example that this miserable world, filled with cowards, thieves, fanatics, and homicidal maniacs who run rings around the virtuous and pious,

is the very opposite of the best and that its creator is consequently neither wise nor benevolent. But Voltaire's witty diatribe misses the mark because, while Leibniz has been caricatured as saying this present world is the best of all possible worlds, he really believes something quite different, namely that this world is the best because it has the capacity to become better and better. Loemker recognizes this aspect of Leibniz's theodicy, although he does not think much of it:

Sin is, as Russell points out, merely *materia prima* and the limited actions arising out of this source of confusion. Within this inadequate *a priori* conception of evil, Leibniz offers the various explanations of badness that have been used in every theodicy which has appeared since – the appeal to ignorance, to the instrumental goods involved in many apparent evils, to the possibility of higher spirits than men, to the necessity for restricting the good of the individual in the best society, to immortality and its assurance of continued growth toward perfection. Evil, being merely the relative term for the finiteness implied in existence, time, and plurality, thus becomes virtually a datum in the teleological argument.³⁴⁶

To attribute sin or evil to matter, as both Leibniz and van Helmont do, is to utilize the gnostic and neoplatonic ploy of defining evil as privation. "Sin is not from God," Leibniz remarks in *On the True Theologia Mystica*, "but original sin has arisen in some creatures from their non-being and hence out of nothingness."³⁴⁷ He repeats this idea in the *Discourse*³⁴⁸ and again in the *Theodicy*. Here he draws an interesting analogy between evil and cold, reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*, where the devil is not surrounded by fire but frozen in ice:

Evil itself only comes from privation; the positive enters therein only by concomitance, as the active enters by concomitance into cold. We see that water in freezing is capable of breaking a gun-barrel wherein it is confined; and yet cold is a certain privation of force, it only comes from the diminution of a movement which separates the particles of fluid. When this separating motion becomes weakened in the water by the cold, the particles of compressed air concealed in the water collect; and, becoming larger, they become more capable of acting outwards through their buoyancy.³⁴⁹

Dismissing this idea of evil as privation, as rather tiresome and unhelpful, which Loemker essentially does, would make sense if Leibniz had not also accepted the equally gnostic view that every created thing will eventually reach a state of perfection as a result of repeated transformations. For it really does not matter to an individual that the world will get better *unless* that individual continues to exist and improve along with everything else. While Grua argues that Leibniz believed in the gradual improvement of all things

from approximately 1671 onwards,³⁵⁰ this belief only became a decisive aspect of Leibniz's theodicy *after* his prolonged contact with van Helmont and *after* he wrote *Thoughts on Genesis*. The idea that each single created thing will ultimately reach perfection does not appear in the *Discourse*, but it does appear in the short treatise *On the Radical Origination of Things* written in the same year as *Thoughts on Genesis*, 1697.

But before turning to this document, it is helpful to look at three documents which in Grua's estimation date from between 1694 and 1696, precisely the years of Leibniz's most extensive contact with van Helmont. These documents show that Leibniz was thinking about progress and perfection but had not yet come to the conclusion he would reach in *On the Radical Origination of Things* that both are an integral aspect of the created world, a conclusion he repeats in the documents edited and published by Fichant. Grua speculates that these documents were inspired either by Leibniz's conversations with van Helmont or by reading his works.³⁵¹ The first two documents offer a somewhat tortured and tentative discussion about whether or not things progress and become perfect. I include them to highlight the contrast between the ideas expressed in them with Leibniz's later views in *On the Radical Origination of Things*. I believe their existence strengthens my argument that Leibniz began to think seriously about progress as a result of his contact with van Helmont and that he gradually came to accept van Helmont's optimistic and basically kabbalistic views in a less mythical form.

Concerning Infinite Progress

If all things in the course of ascending descend again and do not proceed in a straight path, the question arises of how progress to infinity may be defined, whether as ascent, descent, or neither. If we say that something ascends, another will say that it descends again after a long period, even if at some other time it ascends again. Therefore I say that it is a true ascent if we posit a point below which there is no further descent and after a certain time it at length arrives back to the higher point below which it does not descend any further (and so on to infinity). The same argument, on the other hand, applies to descent because if there is no point about which it can be said now or at any time that there is no returning here, there will be a revolution in which there is neither ascent nor descent.³⁵²

In the second document, Leibniz begins by rejecting the idea that the world increases in perfection, but ends by suggesting that it does. I have highlighted the key sentences.

Whether the world becomes more perfect:

It is asked whether the whole world becomes more or less perfect or whether the world always maintains the same degree of perfection, which I prefer to think, although different parts alter their perfection variously among themselves as one thing becomes another. If the perfection of the world remains constant, then certain substances are not able to increase or decrease in perfection perpetually. A substance growing in perfection either continues to increase or decreases, but in such a way that it appears to have increased more than decreased. If a substance proceeds either directly or by intervals to infinite perfection, it is necessary to assign a maximum degree of perfection below which it will never later descend and afterwards it will be greater than before. Nevertheless, it is not necessary that the highest degree of ascent is always an advance. In which case, it is necessary that the lowest degree of ascent within a given time, although it always advances, nevertheless reaches a certain limit or finally reaches a certain limit or attains the highest ascent, in which case the substance maintains the same degree of perfection eternally. If the lowest degree ceases at some point to advance or has some limit above which it does not ascend, but the highest degree of ascent always advances, then it proceeds towards infinite perfection. But this process is completed when the lowest descent also has no limit above which it cannot ascend.

But if a substance descends to infinity below a certain degree and if it also ascends below a certain degree, it will nevertheless appear to ascend if it ascends rather than descends.

*Whether we might say that the world increases [crescere] by a necessary power because everything that has passed away has been furnished with souls. For, as we have demonstrated elsewhere, complete oblivion is not permitted to souls. Although we do not remember distinct things, nevertheless we now perceive the whole which is constituted from the parts into which all previous actions enter. Whether, therefore, souls should always be carried forward through periods toward more manifest thoughts. If it cannot happen that a perfection is given which does not increase, it follows that the perfection of the universe always increases. Thus there is more perfection than if it did not increase. [Will] Happiness does not consist in a certain highest grade, but in the perpetual increase of joy. The highest Being does not increase in perfection because it is beyond time and change and contains equally both the present and future.*³⁵³

The third and last document entitled *Of Man, Happiness, God, and Christ* is in my opinion a crucial text in terms of Leibniz's theodicy. It is a resumé of kabbalistic, alchemical, and gnostic ideas typical of van Helmont; but even more importantly, it elaborates the kabbalistic doctrine of *tikkun*, or the final redemption of all things, and advances the view that it is the inner

Christ, not the external Christ on the cross, who has the power to save. The Pelagian implications of this idea are obvious. The main points of this document include the following ideas which would have been relevant to anyone thinking in terms of a theodicy: the created world was produced by divine emanation; God contains “all in one” and everything tends towards this one; internal good flows from within (an idea reminiscent of Leibniz’s view that monads are entirely self-activated); matter is a source of contagion, from which souls must remove themselves; everything seeks the highest good but differently; evil is nothing but privation; suffering and punishment are temporary and salutary; selfishness and self-love were Lucifer’s major sin (thus, by implication charity towards one’s fellow man is imperative); and lastly, a repetition of the idea that everything ultimately returns to God. Axiom 23 contains an especially interesting insertion that sounds very much like the voice of Leibniz cropping up in the middle of a kabbalistic document. According to this axiom, bodies come from “stars (or rather forms, archeai, ideas, or astral forces),” but, as Leibniz says, “I might rather say, more philosophically, the active forces of the first universe.” This document provides clear evidence that Leibniz was re-emerging himself in kabbalistic philosophy during these years, especially in those aspects dealing with creation, the fall, and redemption. I have highlighted the sentences that are especially relevant in this regard:

Concerning Man, Blessedness, God, and Christ

1) In man there is spirit, soul and body:³⁵⁴ or mind, reason, flesh or sense. Mind considers higher matters, reason things in the middle, and sense inferior matters. Three worlds, the divine, the Angelic <spiritual>,³⁵⁵ the sensible.³⁵⁶ The superior world contains the inferior. The inferior is the shadow of the superior. [An angel has every inferior world in himself in a spiritual manner so that he can display it if he wishes.]³⁵⁷ *God contains all in one and everything tends toward this one; this is the highest good of all things.* Good is internal and external. The first is true, the second falsely called good. Internal good flows from us; external good, as is generally accepted, can be called fortune, and it is not in our power.

2) Particular external goods (of body and mind) come from fortune or they are acquired either from nature, study, or chance. Nevertheless, everything is called fortuitous in a certain sense and comes from the heavens (that is from the whole flow of bodies) and, as they are given by chance, they can be taken away by it.

3) Terrestrial man comes from this world, or slime, whence he depends on the heavens or fortune. While men are eager for good fortune, they make themselves slaves of the stars <like brutes>. Fortune harasses its slaves <as it changes> just as soldiers are worn out by marching. *But*

the immortal part of man must dominate astral fate or bodily impressions. Wisdom is greater than fate (those who think about the immortal part of themselves recognize the angels as brothers, God as a father, and the body as a servant). For the better part of us is created in the image of God like the angels. *Those who engage in contemplating these things and dwell on eternal matters, removing the soul from sensible things, will be removed from corporeal contagion and dominate the stars. They will see the clouds and the stars of heaven beneath their feet.*

- 4) Sadness and joy improperly linked to fortune.
- 5) She only lends her gifts; a mistake to abide there.
- 6) *Everything seeks the highest good, but differently.*
- 7) Riches, transitory or deceitful, and not honorable.
- 8) Honor fortuitous and artificial.
- 9) Posthumous glory limited.
- 10) Pleasures, beauty transitory. No happiness on earth.
- 11) Earthly goods compete among themselves. God alone unites all goods.
- 12) Even brought together they are nothing but the shadow of true goods.
- 13) True goodness, wisdom, justice, and happiness are essentially in God.
- 14) God united. Adhering to God, we become a first-born witness (Jo. 17).
- 15) *Men become happy "by obtaining divinity," sons of God by Christ.*
- 16) The end of things, that is the good. Separating ourselves, we renounce our being.
- 17) Everything obeys God. *Evil is nothing; it comes from privation in the creatures.*
- 18) *Evil consists in the degree to which all things do not attain the highest good.* However, evil is useful to the good.
- 19) To do evil is impotence. Evil men serve good men, as beasts men.
- 20) *Amelioration by punishment.*
- 21) Impunity is not chance but sickness. Pity for the wicked.
- 22) All providential events are good for the good.
- 23) An ascent from the sensible to the intellectual, from creatures to God ... God produces angels by saying, "let there be light." From this light stars (or rather forms, archeai, ideas, or astral forces <or I might rather say, more philosophically, the active forces of the first universe>), bodies come from these.
- 24) *God, a maximum of infinity, a minimum of indivisibility ... Christ the center of eternal life.*

25) *Lucifer sought his happiness in himself. It is a law of nature that condemns that “self love” as idolatry.* “To be turned towards himself is to aim at nothing. Concerning these things see *Theologia Germanica*, Kempis, and Tauler. Finally God shines for everything, like the sun, but those [trying to] ascend by themselves do not see him.”

26) *Evil is possible on account of blindness.* “But it is not God’s part to violate the order of the highest things.”

27) “True theology in the knowledge of Adam and Christ, of ourselves and of God. Of Adam, to turn to oneself < to eat the body and blood of Adam>. Of Christ, to abandon oneself to God < to eat the body and blood of the son of God>.”

The external Adam does no harm, only the internal. *The external Christ does not come forward but the internal. Therefore he who puts on Christ in faith has within himself life, light, God, the highest good (Everything returns to one, or to God). This is to understand the harmony of things... The divine light shines in the shadows of the creatures.*³⁵⁸

Could these be notes jotted down by Leibniz after one of his many conversations with van Helmont? As we saw from Leibniz’s journal entries, he spent a great deal of time with van Helmont when he visited Hanover in 1696, and he kept notes of their discussions.³⁵⁹

As we have seen, before his departure from Hanover in August, 1696 van Helmont had entrusted Leibniz with the task of arranging for a new edition of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*. Van Helmont believed the book would be better received if it had the approbation of the two Electresses, Sophie of Hanover and her daughter, Sophie Charlotte of Brandenburg. To this end, Leibniz wrote to Sophie Charlotte, enclosing copies of the book. One can see from his letter that he was preoccupied with the question of reconciling divine justice with the apparent disorder in the universe. He makes the very interesting suggestion that we may not be able to recognize the inherent beauty and order of the universe because we only see a tiny portion of it in our brief lives; but he adds that we will gain increasing knowledge of this perfection as our “condition changes.” This suggests to me that Leibniz is steadily moving towards van Helmont’s view that individuals will experience many different incarnations until they eventually reach a state of perfection:

Madame. It is at the command of Madam, the Electress of Brunswick, that I take the liberty of sending this packet of books to your Serene Electress. Before leaving here, Mr. Helmont asked me to arrange for a new edition of the very good German edition of the famous book of Boëtius, the Roman consul during the period the Goths were masters of Rome. Although the book, entitled *The Consolation of Philosophy* (copies of which have been sent with this letter), has had throughout time the general approval of

the most knowledgeable, Mr. Helmont believed with reason that it would be even better received in the world at present if it had the approbation of the two great Electresses, whose intellect is no less elevated than their rank, and who appear to possess, by a singular gift from heaven, a judicious judgment about sublime matters which exceed the capacity of common and profane people. Mr. Helmont has special affection for this book because he believes he can find traces of Pythagorean ideas in it. But aside from that, it must be said that the author says some very beautiful and sensible things about the order of the universe. Because seeing the success of the wicked, the misfortunes of the good, the brevity and bad luck of ordinary life, and the thousands of examples of apparent disorder that meet our eyes, it seems that everything happens by chance. But those who have examined things closely find that everything is so well regulated that they do not doubt that the universe is governed by a sovereign intelligence with such perfect order that if one understood it in detail, one would not only believe but would also see that nothing better could be wished for. The apparent disorder is like certain chords in music which seem awkward when they are heard by themselves but which a knowledgeable composer inserts in the piece because, in joining them with other chords, he enhances the music and makes the harmony more beautiful. And since what we now see is only a very small portion of the infinite universe, and because our present life is only a little portion of what will happen to us, we should not be astonished if all the beauty of things does not reveal itself at first sight. But we will discover it more and more, and this is why it is necessary for us to change our condition. It is a bit like the movements of the stars, which seem irregular to those who observe them for only a few years. However, over the course of centuries one can see that there is nothing so beautiful or well ordered. This is why common people cannot conceive of these things. They never consider the general order; they do not even understand their own religion. Having only false ideas about the divinity, they hover between ill-founded superstition and free-thinking, whether they fear evil or fear nothing at all. But why should I say more about these things which Boëtius explains much better and which your sublime intellect understands even better than Boëtius? I only thought it appropriate to give some idea of the book I send...³⁶⁰

By the time Leibniz wrote *On the Radical Origination of Things* in 1697 he had accepted the idea that progress was an integral aspect of the divine scheme and that each created thing would experience repeated transformations until it reached full perfection. He begins this short treatise by putting forward the idea that this world is the best possible: "... the world is not only the most perfect naturally or, if you prefer, metaphysically – in other words, that series

of things has been produced which actually presents the greatest amount of reality – but also that it is the most perfect morally, because moral perfection is truly natural.”³⁶¹ Leibniz anticipates the kind of objection raised by Voltaire:

You may object, however, that we experience the very opposite of this in the world, for often the very worst things happen to the best; innocent beings, not only beasts but men, are struck down and killed, even tortured. In fact, especially if we consider the government of mankind, the world seems rather a kind of confused chaos than something ordained by a supreme wisdom.³⁶²

He responds that this objection is only superficial and that if one considers the matter more carefully, “the opposite can be established.” He then trots out the tired arguments mentioned by Loemker: men only have a bird’s eye view and cannot imagine the beauty of the whole; apparent evils contribute to the greater good; we would not appreciate the good without the bad, and so forth. But he does not stop with these bromides but goes right to the heart of the matter, maintaining that all would not be for the best unless the well-being of each individual was looked after:

... we must recognize that, just as care is taken in the best-ordered republic that individuals shall fare as well as possible, so the universe would not be perfect enough unless as much care is shown for individuals as is consistent with the universal harmony. No better measure for this matter can be set up than the law of justice itself, which dictates that each one shall take part in the perfection of the universe and his own happiness according to the measure of his own virtue and the degree to which his will is moved toward the common good. And in this very thing is fulfilled what we call the charity and the love of God, in which alone the force and power of the Christian religion also consists, according to the opinion of wise theologians.³⁶³

Even this is pretty standard stuff, tapering off as it does with the idea that everything shares in the perfection of the universe according to the measure of its own virtue. It is only in the last three paragraphs of this short essay that Leibniz reveals the kabbalistic source of his ideas. In the first paragraph, he describes affliction and punishment as “temporary evils” which are simply “short cuts to greater perfection.” As we have seen, this was one of Van Helmont’s basic convictions and one he mercifully convinced Lady Conway to accept as an explanation for her excruciating headaches. Interestingly enough, to illustrate this point Leibniz uses two examples commonly used by alchemists, the germination of seeds, which must “suffer” before they bear fruit, and distillation. The analogy with germinating seeds fit in well both with Christianity (John 12: 24: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the

ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit") and the Lurianic idea that fallen souls were enveloped in "husks." In the penultimate paragraph Leibniz speaks of a "perpetual and most free progress towards greater culture."³⁶⁴ In the final paragraph he refers explicitly to the gnostic mythic of "drowsie," "sleeping" souls which will eventually be "aroused." This was precisely the terminology that van Helmont had used in his *Cabbalistic Dialogue*. Once again I have highlighted the passages that show the clearest kabbalistic affiliations:

As for the afflictions, especially of good men, however, we must take it as certain that these lead to their greater good and that this is true not only theologically but also naturally. So a seed sown in the earth suffers before it bears fruit. In general, one may say that, though afflictions are temporary evils, they are good in effect, for they are short cuts to greater perfection. So in physics the liquids which ferment slowly also are slower to settle, while those in which there is a stronger disturbance settle more promptly, throwing off impurities with greater force. We may well call this stepping back in order to spring forward with greater force...

As the crown of the universal beauty and perfection of the works of God, we must also recognize that *the entire universe is involved in a perpetual and most free progress, so that it is always advancing toward greater culture.* Thus a great part of our earth has now received cultivation and will receive it more and more. And though it is true that some sections occasionally revert into wilderness or are destroyed and sink back again, this must be understood in the same sense in which I have just explained the nature of afflictions, namely, that *this very destruction and decline lead to a better result, so that we somehow gain though our very loss.*

To the objection which could be offered, moreover, that if this were so, the world should long since have become a paradise, there is an answer near at hand. Although many substances have already attained great perfection, yet because of the infinite divisibility of the continuum, there always remain in the abyss of things *parts which are still asleep. These are to be aroused and developed into something greater and better and, in a word, to a better culture. And hence progress never comes to an end.*³⁶⁵

Leibniz never comes out and explicitly says that the world will be restored to its prelapsarian state or that every created thing will eventually be saved. He was, after all, trying to create consensus in an age of bitter sectarian conflict, and such opinions smacked too much of radicalism. As D. P. Walker has shown, even people who denied the eternity of hell were not sure it should be broadcast to the lower classes, for whom the threat of hell was thought to be the only certain stimulus to virtue.³⁶⁶ But the ideas of progress and perfectionism are to be found liberally scattered through Leibniz's writings,

especially after 1697, largely because of the influence of van Helmont. In his *Theodicy*, Leibniz categorically denies that God could predestine anyone to damnation. He takes the same position as van Helmont and Lady Conway that divine punishment is an act of redemption not retribution. Once again he uses the alchemical and Christian image of the seed that disintegrates before it can germinate:

... God wills *antecedently* the good and *consequently* the best. And as for evil, God wills moral evil not at all, and physical evil or suffering he does not will absolutely. Thus it is that there is no absolute predestination to damnation; and one may say of physical evil, that God wills it often as a penalty owing to guilt, and often also as a means to an end, that is, to prevent greater evils or to obtain greater good. The penalty serves also for amendment and example. Evil often serves to makes us savour good the more; sometimes too it contributes to a greater perfection in him who suffers it, as the seed that one sows is subject to a kind of corruption before it can germinate: This is a beautiful similitude which Jesus himself used.³⁶⁷

What is even more interesting, however, is that Leibniz takes the extremely radical step in the *Theodicy* of suggesting that one does not have to believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. This was one of the opinions that had landed van Helmont in the dungeons of the Roman Inquisition in 1662.³⁶⁸ That Leibniz could say such a thing openly fifty years later shows how much the religious climate had changed in the intervening years:

... I would be rather on the side of those who grant to all men a grace sufficient to draw them away from evil, provided they have a sufficient tendency to profit by this succour, and not to reject it voluntarily. The objection is made that there has been and still is a countless multitude of men, among civilized peoples and among barbarians, who have never had this knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ which is necessary for those who would tread the wonted paths to salvation...

... Supposing that to-day a knowledge of Jesus Christ according to the flesh is absolutely necessary to salvation, as indeed it is safest to teach, it will be possible to say that God will give that knowledge to all those who do, humanly speaking, that which in them lies, even though God must give it by a miracle. Moreover, we cannot know what passes in souls at the point of death; and if sundry learned and serious theologians claim that children received in baptism a kind of faith, although they do not remember it afterwards when they are questioned about it, why should one maintain that nothing of a like nature, or even more definite, could come about in the dying, whom we cannot interrogate after their death? Thus there are countless paths open to God, giving him means of satisfying his

justice and his goodness: and the only thing that may allege against this is that we know not what way he employs; which is far from being a valid objection.³⁶⁹

Leibniz's vision was truly ecumenical. It was also truly modern in the sense that in evaluating the ethics of an individual he looked at his intentions and actions rather than his formal beliefs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Causation, Language, and the Kabbalah

In an extremely interesting and insightful article Lois Frankel points out that it is difficult for the modern reader to comprehend Leibniz's concept of causation because we use different models which ultimately derive from Hume. We reject metaphysical, non-mechanical causal connections and tend to define causal relations in non-causal terms. As Frankel says, "the contemporary theorists seek formulas to determine *when* causation obtains, not an understanding of *what* causation is."³⁷⁰ Where we tend to think of causation in terms of a relation between events, philosophers in earlier centuries viewed causation in the much broader terms of the qualities, essences, and powers of substances acting upon each other on different levels of ontological reality. Thus, for Leibniz, God acts in one way, monads in another, and physical bodies in still another way. Yet, as Frankel points out, all these different forms of interaction are analogous, a point we will come back to.

In the case of God, Leibniz employs two models of causation: emanation and volition. The emanation model is a basic aspect of Platonic, neoplatonic and kabbalistic theory, according to which God created the universe through a process of emanation, or radiation, without diminishing his essence in any way. In this theory of causation a higher form, or idea (to use Plato's terminology), provides the model or mirror from which the various effects take their being. Causation of this kind is often described in metaphors of flowing fountains, mirrors, or fulgurations of light. As we saw in chapter three, Leibniz uses this last metaphor in section 47 of the *Monadology*:

Thus God alone is the primitive unity or the first simple substance; all created or derivative monads are products, and are generated, so to speak, by continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited.

In using an emanation model of creation, Leibniz's philosophy displayed the very pantheism he took great pains to refute, especially in the case of Spinoza. If everything ultimately emanates from God, how can one distinguish between

the creator and the creatures? As Friedmann has pointed out, Leibniz was no more able to resolve this problem than any other philosopher subscribing to emanationism.³⁷¹ His philosophy reflected the kind of spiritual monism characteristic of Gnosticism in general and the Lurianic Kabbalah and van Helmont in particular.

Although Leibniz employed the emanation model, according to Frankel “the basic model of Leibnizian causation” is that of volition.³⁷² This model appears throughout his writings, from the earliest to the latest. For example, in a letter to Thomasius in 1669, Leibniz says, “mind is the principle of all motion, as Aristotle rightly saw.”³⁷³ In the *New Essays* he says much the same thing: “I still agree with you, though, that the clearest idea of active power comes to us from the mind. So active power occurs only in things which are analogous to mind, that is, in entelechies; for strictly matter exhibits only passive power.”³⁷⁴ The clearest statement of the volition model of causation applied to God appears in section 48 of the *Monadology*:

God has *power*, which is the source of everything, *knowledge*, which contains the diversity of ideas, and finally *will*, which brings about changes or products in accordance with the principle of the best.³⁷⁵

Because souls or minds are “images of the divinity... each mind being like a little divinity in its own realm,” they act analogously to God:

And these [i.e. *power*, *knowledge*, and *will*] correspond to what, in created monads, is the subject or the basis, the perceptive faculty and the appetitive faculty. But in God these attributes are absolutely infinite or perfect, while in the created monads or in entelechies ... they are only imitations of it, in proportion to the perfection that they have.³⁷⁶

This passage is especially interesting because it seems to contradict what Leibniz repeatedly says elsewhere, namely that monads have no effect on one another. Did Leibniz intend this to mean that there can be no interaction between monads, or simply no *physical* interaction? He seems to say the latter in a passage from his commentary on Wachter’s *Elucidarius* (1706). Here he suggests that there is a kind of moral, though not physical, interaction between monads. I have highlighted the passage where this idea is expressed most clearly:

I say that the soul acts spontaneously and yet like a spiritual automaton; and that this is true also of the mind. The soul is not less exempt than the mind from impulses from external things, and the soul no more than the mind acts determinately; as in bodies everything is done by motions according to the laws of force, so in the soul everything is done through effort or desire, according to the laws of God. The two realms are in harmony. *It is true, nevertheless, that there are certain things in the soul which cannot*

*be explained in an adequate manner except by external things, and so far the soul is subject to the external; but this is not a physical influx, but so to speak a moral one, in so far, namely, as God, in creating the mind, had more regard to other things than to it itself. For in the creation and preservation of each thing he has regard to all other things.*³⁷⁷

Leibniz combines the emanation and volition model in section 15 of the *Discourse* when he describes creation in terms of the emanation of divine thoughts:

After having seen, in some way, what the nature of substances consists in, we must try to explain the dependence they have upon one another and their actions and passions. Now, first of all, it is very evident that created substances depend upon God, who preserves them and who even produces them continually by a kind of emanation, just as we produce our thoughts. For God, so to speak, turns on all sides and in all ways the general system of phenomena which he finds it good to produce in order to manifest his glory, and he views all the faces of the world in all ways possible, since there is no relation that escapes his omniscience. The result of each view of the universe, as seen from a certain position, is a substance which expresses the universe in conformity with this view, should God see fit to render this thought actual and to produce this substance. And since God's view is always true, our perceptions are always true; it is our judgments, which come from ourselves, that deceive us.

From this passage it appears that all created substances are essentially actualized thoughts of God. If we couple this idea with the principle of sufficient reason, a basic concept in Leibniz's philosophy, another model of causality emerges, the deductive model. According to the principle of sufficient reason, no event is purely contingent or accidental. It must have a sufficient cause or reason to occur. The same rule applies to ideas or thoughts; every thought must have an antecedent and a consequence built into it by its very nature. This is the essence of Leibniz's complete-concept theory of substance, according to which a substance contains all the predicates it will have from its inception. Thus, in the deductive model of causation an effect is seen as inevitably following logically, mathematically, or metaphysically from its cause.

How do these models apply to causation on a physical or bodily level? Frankel offers an ingenious answer to this problem which avoids the perplexing question of whether Leibniz was a realist or phenomenalist. As she says, Leibniz uses various models of causation for different levels of ontological reality. The emanation and volitional model apply to God and to a lesser extent to monads, while a mechanical model applies to physical bodies. But

as Frankel points out, all these models are analogous because at the basis of them all is the volitional model. For example, when Leibniz speaks of “force” in the physical world, he equates it with “conatus” or “striving”, terms that have a great deal in common with the notion that monads have “appetite” and “desire.” As Frankel says,

Bodily motion and its cause are ultimately traceable to the will of God, and are described even at the finite level as analogous to volition. Leibniz equates mechanical “force” with “conatus” or “striving”: it is the physical expression of the monadic appetition.³⁷⁸

Frankel asks why Leibniz should have used so many disparate models of causation. She concludes that their use was a consequence of Leibniz’s primary goal of integrating theology and science into a harmonious whole. While the volitional and emanation models were suitable for theology, the mechanical model had proven eminently useful for explaining the interaction between bodies in the physical world. However, the mechanical model was inherently dangerous in Leibniz’s view because in its Cartesian version it postulated a radical dualism between matter and spirit which could lead to total materialism, as it had in the case of Hobbes. Thus, instead of positing totally different kinds of causation for different ontological levels, Leibniz’s models are analogous:

The concepts of causation and action are applied to God, finite spirits, and bodies analogously, rather than univocally... divine causation is pure *volition*, which is universally efficacious. That is, an omnipotent being need only will a state of affairs in order to bring it about. God is also sometimes described as acting in an *emanative* fashion, as when Leibniz writes that “the created substances depend on God, who preserves them and indeed even produces them continually by a kind of emanation, as we produce our thoughts [Discourse 14].” Next in order of existence is the will of finite spirits. Finally, the least “noble” form of causation is mechanical causation, although ... even it has elements of volition. Endorsing the Platonic principle that “it would be absurd to make the less noble a pattern for the more noble,” Leibniz employs hierarchical analogies from God to finite spirits to bodies.³⁷⁹

Thus, according to Frankel’s suggestive interpretation, the pre-established harmony does not refer to two utterly distinct and incompatible realms; it simply describes analogous modes of causation viewed from different perspectives:

One role of the pre-established harmony... is to unite, by means of analogy, the disparate modes of action of God, finite minds, and bodies... Leibnizian bodies follow laws of motion, which is the material analogue of monadic

appetition. Further, monadic appetition is itself a finite analogue – perhaps one of the “vestiges” of God expressed in things³⁸⁰ – of the divine will, which acts by emanation.

The following passage from a letter to Bayle (1687) gives additional support to Frankel’s interpretation. Here Leibniz emphasizes the essential unity of theology and physics and describes true causation as volitional, not physical:

... true Physics may be tapped from the source of divine perfection. God is the final reason of things, and the knowledge of God is no less the principle of sciences than his essence and will are the principles of beings. The most reasonable philosophers remain agreed on this, but there are very few of them who are able to make use of it in order to discover truths of consequence. Perhaps these small samples will arouse some to go much farther. Philosophy is sanctified by having its streams flow from the fountain of God’s attributes. Very far from excluding final causes and the consideration of a being acting with wisdom, we must from these deduce everything in Physics. That is what Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedo* admirably well observed in arguing against Anaxagoras and other philosophers who were too materialistic. They, after recognizing an intelligent principle above matter, when they come to philosophize about the universe, instead of showing that this intelligence makes everything for the best (and that this is the reason of things: that it has found it good to produce things in accordance with its ends), try to explain everything by the sole concourse of particles, thus confusing conditions or instruments with the true cause. It is as if (Socrates says), in order to explain why I am sitting in prison awaiting the fatal cup and why I am not on my way to live among the Beotians or other people among whom everybody knows I might have been able to save myself, one were to say that the reason is that I have bones, tendons, and muscles which can be flexed in the way necessary for me to be sitting. By my faith (he says), these bones and these muscles would not be here and you would not see me in this posture, if my mind had not judged that it is more worthy for Socrates to submit to what the laws of the country order. This passage in Plato deserves to be read in its entirety for it contains very beautiful and very solid reflections. However, I agree that the particular effects of nature can and ought to be explained mechanically, without forgetting still their admirable ends and uses, arranged by Providence, so that the general principles of physics and of Mechanics itself depend on the conduct of a sovereign intelligence and cannot be explained without having it enter into our consideration. It is thus that we must reconcile piety with reason, and that will enable us to satisfy people of good standing who have some apprehension about the consequences of the mechanical or corpuscular philosophy as though it

might alienate them from God and immaterial substances, whereas with the required corrections and everything well understood, that philosophy should lead us to them.³⁸¹

Frankel's discussion of Leibnizian causation offers an Ariadne's thread through the labyrinth of the continuum between physical bodies and spiritual monads; physical bodies are monads, simply viewed from a different perspective and situated on a different ontological plane. This, in turn, strengthens my contention that Leibniz was neither a realist nor a phenomenalist, but a gnostic monist.

Emily Grosholz has suggested a similar solution to the problem of whether Leibniz was a realist or phenomenalist. She also thinks that one must interpret Leibniz's philosophy in terms of different levels of reality, and she also associates these levels with different perspectives. Her discussion is extremely helpful because perspective is something Leibniz was very much concerned with. He often speaks of monads as mirroring the universe from their particular perspectives, and he draws an analogy between the way individual monads view the universe and the different perspectives one may have of a city, which can be seen from many different points of view yet remains one and the same city.³⁸²

There is a great deal of further evidence in Leibniz's writings to support Frankel's contention that volition was the primary model Leibniz employed to explain causation. By examining this evidence more closely, we shall see once more how indebted Leibniz philosophy was to the mix of neoplatonic, hermetic, and kabbalistic thought characteristic of Renaissance occultism and present in the work of Francis Mercury van Helmont. Their roots in this common tradition clearly provided the basis for their friendship and collaboration on van Helmont's last book.

In chapter three, I followed Pagel's lead in suggesting the very important ways in which Leibniz's concept of monads was similar to the elder van Helmont's view of matter. In this chapter, specifically devoted to Leibniz's theories of causation, the ideas of the elder van Helmont are again relevant. The troubling question of how form could effect body, or spirit matter, which eventually led Leibniz to his theory of pre-established harmony, had led the elder van Helmont to a remarkably similar idea at an earlier date. He too denied that matter and spirit could mutually interact. The younger van Helmont agreed. Both father and son were convinced that any change that occurs when two or more bodies appear to interact results from the interaction of the *archei*, which, because they are not material, act on each other through ideas. The example the elder van Helmont gives to explain this interaction between *archei* is of a man who thrusts his hand into a pail of pitch. He denies that the man's hand becomes black because the material particles of pitch

stick to it but attributes the blackness to the influence of the *archeus* of the pitch on the *archeus* of the hand:

So it is altogether necessary, that he which toucheth Pitch should be defiled by it: That is, it behoveth the Archeus himself, primarily, and immediately to conceive, and put on that new Image, to be affected with the same, and by virtue of a resembling mark or Symbole, other things depending on him, according to the properties of the hurtfull idea.³⁸³

Although the elder van Helmont denied that spirit and matter could interact, he postulated innumerable intermediaries between the two to explain their interaction. I quote Pagel's discussion of these "psycho-physical agents" – freely admitting that I do not fully understand the differences between them – but they suggest to me precisely the kind of distinctions Leibniz attempted to draw between "primary entelechy" "primary matter," "the complete monad," "mass," and "corporeal substance," which were so confusing to De Volder:

To separate and specify the hierarchy of psycho-physical agents that form the individual object is a somewhat artificial undertaking which van Helmont nevertheless attempted... He distinguished (1) the odours. These are capable of penetrating and of transmitting (2) the images – the directional plans, "blue-prints" of structure and function. The ferments (3) join odour to image and inform matter. The *gas* (4) is the ready-made object in a volatile state, "disposed" matter. The *archeus* (5) is *gas* of a higher grade, informed by luminous aura and splendour. Lastly the semen (6) of sexual generation contrasts with the "naked" ferment of spontaneous generation; it is an organism in miniature endowed with ferment, image, and odour, the "dispositional knowledge of things to be done," and the *archeus*.³⁸⁴

What I am trying to show here is that however much both J. B. van Helmont and Leibniz wished to separate matter and spirit, they also tried to understand and explain their obvious interaction. Leibniz's theory of pre-established harmony should have settled the issue, but did it? I cannot help finding in his discussion of preformation, in his insistence that every entity, even a supposedly dead one, exists in conjunction with a "subtle" body, and in his conception of monads as both active and passive, the old Renaissance attempt to "reify" the immaterial (and vice versa) to use Brian Vickers' felicitous phrase.³⁸⁵

In J. B. van Helmont's universe all the basic units of matter are endowed with perception, and some even possess sense and intellect. Pagel describes this concept of matter in a way that underlines its similarity to Leibniz's: "In other words, the world consisted of enmattered psychoid impulses that were intrinsic, rather than superadded to matter."³⁸⁶ Pagel's use of the word "psychoid" is suggestive, for while many scholars have remarked on the

“pansychism” characteristic of Leibniz’s monadology, few have looked for the source of this in the thought of the two van Helmonts.

In his youthful treatise *Hypothesis Physica Nova* (1671) Leibniz made what Pagel describes as “a somewhat surprising application of fermentation to cosmology.” In doing this, he essentially borrowed van Helmont’s concept of ferments as one of the activating forces in matter. According to Leibniz’s proposed theory a sort of divine ether penetrates earthy matter and becomes enclosed in *bullae*, which then become the *semina* of things and determine their properties. Pagel suggests that Leibniz was attempting to “mechanize” van Helmont.³⁸⁷ I mention this because although Leibniz did not know it, van Rosenroth included this treatise in his German edition of Thomas Browne’s works.³⁸⁸ Obviously both von Rosenroth and the younger van Helmont appreciated Leibniz’s ideas at an early stage in his career, undoubtedly because of their shared assumptions.

As we have seen, in both the *Discourse* and the *Monadology* Leibniz describes substances as the actualized thoughts of God. But this is not all. Leibniz also subscribed to the idea that each substance or individual was a microcosm of the larger world, or macrocosm, an idea at the heart of Renaissance occult philosophy and one which provided the foundation for the widespread belief in sympathetic magic. As we saw above, in section 83 of the *Monadology* Leibniz describes souls or minds as “images of divinity... each mind being like a little divinity in its own realm.” The same idea appears in section 16 of the *Discourse*, “... every person or substance is like a small world expressing the large world...” Individual substances are therefore both actualized thoughts of God and microcosms reflecting every other actualized thought of God to the best of its ability. It thus appears that the created world is essentially the mind of God refracted in an infinite number of microcosmic mirrors, and that the connection between these refractions is akin to the connection between one thought and another; for the very fact that one monad has a thought or perception implies that all other monads must have thoughts that conform to this thought.

Section 15 of the *Discourse* takes this idea a step further by describing the interaction between substances in terms of their greater or lesser ability to “express” themselves. As the title to the section says, “The Action of One Finite Substance on Another Consists Only in the Increase of Degree of Its Expression Together with the Diminution of the Expression of the Other, Insofar as God Requires Them to Accommodate Themselves to One Another.” What strikes me about this passage is the use of the word “expression” and the association this word has with thought in general and speech in particular.

But, without entering into a long discussion, in order to reconcile the language of metaphysics with practice, it is sufficient for now to remark

that we ascribe to ourselves – and with reason – the phenomena that we express most perfectly and that we attribute to other substances the phenomena that each expresses best. Thus a substance, which is of infinite extension insofar as it expresses everything, becomes limited in proportion to its more or less perfect manner of expression. This, then, is how one can conceive that substances impede or limit each other, and consequently one can say that, in this sense, they act upon one another and are required, so to speak, to accommodate themselves to one another. For it can happen that a change that increases the expression of one diminishes that of another. Now, the efficacy a particular substance has is to express well the glory of God, and it is by doing this that it is less limited. And whenever something exercises its efficacy or power, that is, when it acts, it improves and extends itself insofar as it acts. Therefore, when a change takes place by which several substances are affected (in fact every change affects all of them), I believe one may say that the substance which immediately passes to a greater degree of perfection or to a more perfect expression exercises its power and *acts*, and the substance which passes to a lesser degree shows its weakness and is *acted upon*.

It seems to me that implicit in this passage is an echo of very ancient theories about the creative power of thought – particularly when expressed in music or speech – theories which were revived in the Renaissance and provided the basis for the many attempts to discover or create a “natural” language. I may be reading too much into this one passage, but if it is taken together with the previously cited passages describing creation as the actualization of divine thought, and if it is placed in the context of Leibniz’s life-long interest in the creation of a universal character, there is ample evidence to show that Leibniz was fully cognizant of these ancient theories and that they provided the foundation for his volitional model of causation. As I have discussed the concept of a “natural” language and the theories about sounds and images from which it developed at length elsewhere,³⁸⁹ I will only refer briefly to the subject in connection with some of the new ideas that have occurred to me as a result of reading Frankel’s article.

In 1667 Leibniz mentions reading van Helmont’s *Kurtzer Entwurff des eigentlichen Naturalalphabets der heiligen Sprache* (*Short Sketch of the Truly Natural Alphabet of the Holy [Hebrew] Language*).³⁹⁰ In this book van Helmont employs kabbalistic arguments to prove that Hebrew was the divine language used by God to create the world. This idea originates, of course, in the Old Testament, where sound is a powerful creative force. God’s words assail the chaos and rush over it; they are “sent,” they “come,” they “abide.” When God said, “Let there be light,” there was light; and Psalm 103 clearly credits creation to divine speech: “by the word of the Lord were the heavens

made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." The creative power of God's word was reinforced by the prologue to the fourth Gospel, where Christ is designated as the *logos*, through whom the world is created. The belief that thoughts, words, or sounds were capable of having concrete, physical effects was commonplace during the Renaissance and seventeenth century, especially among Christian-Kabbalists, who discovered an even richer source for these ideas in the *Sefer Yezirah* (*Book of Creation*), a small treatise written in Palestine between the third and sixth centuries A.D. and commented upon frequently by later Jewish and Christian Kabbalists.

The anonymous author of the *Sefer Yezirah* considered the letters of the Hebrew alphabet building blocks with which God had constructed the universe. He divided the letters into various "groups," "roots," or "gates" and describes how they were arranged on a sphere and rotated in a way that led to the creation of every existing thing. One of the treatises von Rosenroth gives prominence to in the *Kabbala Denudata* depends heavily on the *Sefer Yezirah*. Entitled the *Valley of Kings*, it was written by Napthali ben Jacob Bacharach, a sixteenth-century Lurianic Kabbalist. Following the *Sefer Yezirah*, Bacharach describes the Hebrew letters as the "building blocks" of the universe. Even man was created through the letters. Since man was formed in the image of God, it should come as no surprise that when God's name, *YHWH* (the tetragrammaton), is written vertically, the stick figure of a man emerges.



Bacharach brings out the magical implications implicit in the *Sefer Yezirah*'s discussion of the Hebrew alphabet by including in his own treatise a recipe for making a three-year-old heifer by manipulating letters in certain prescribed ways.³⁹¹ Hayyim Vital, another Lurianic Kabbalist whose work is well-represented in the *Kabbala Denudata*, describes how pious men can create angels and spirits through prayers: "if a just and pious man applies himself to the law and prays with attention, from the utterances going forth from his mouth, angels and sacred spirits will be created, who will always last and persist."³⁹²

The belief that Hebrew had been the language of creation implied that it was a language in which words and things were one and the same, and that, to quote von Rosenroth's laudatory preface to van Helmont's book, "no

other language in the world agrees with [nature] so well as Hebrew.”³⁹³ Von Rosenroth offers the case of Adam naming the animals as proof:

To prove this, nothing can serve better than the example of our first father Adam, when he gave all the animals their names. He must have found that he was able to represent all the internal movements of his understanding in an orderly and clear way through a certain alteration of his voice and tone... Because an actual part of all the animals which he saw before him became, so to speak, a part of his own inward condition, and his words were able to imitate exactly this inward state, it therefore must follow that his language, which was Hebrew, was able to copy most exactly the essential nature of all animals as well as of other things. Where can one find another language of which one can prove the like with such happy certainty?³⁹⁴

The belief that words encapsulated the essential nature of things explains why the study of philology and etymology was thought by many to be tantamount to science.

Van Helmont contended that each of the Hebrew letters in his “natural” alphabet expressed certain specific qualities and characteristics, both in terms of its written shape and its sound, and that when these letters were combined into words, they perfectly expressed the nature of the thing designated. One had only to dissect a word in terms of its written shape and spoken sound to grasp the essence of the thing signified. The most comprehensive example he gives to show this is his discussion of the name *Aelohim* (van Helmont’s spelling). He maintains that the shape and sound of each individual Hebrew letter contribute qualities and characteristics which, when taken together, perfectly describe God:

At present we will search out the meaning of the word *Aelohim*... El imports Virtue or Strength for **א** signifies *Infiniteness* or *Magnitude*. **ל** or **L**, is a Letter form’d with a topping Eminence in Writing, and in pronouncing is framed by an Elevation of the Tongue, and therefore signifies high Virtue or Power, and accordingly is the common Termination of the Names of Angels, as *Michael*, *Gabriel*, etc. O is the highest Sound, and therefore Cholem is placed on the tip of the Letter. As for **ה** *He*, it is, and denotes *Respiration*, *Breath*, *Life*, *Vegetation* or *Growth*, *Fruitfulness*, the *Air* and *Heavenly Influence*, and therefore was vouchsafed to *Abram* and his Wife *Sarai*... so that from thenceforth he was no more to be called *Abram*, but *Abraham*; and she no longer *Sarai*, but *Sarah*; and according to what is there added, this Change was to signifie to him, that God had *appointed him to be the Father of many Nations*. Whence it appears, that *O*, *H* hold forth to us a sublime exalted *Life*, *Fruitfulness* and *Vegetation* or *Growth*: But as far as *I*, the same hath a Sharp or Shrill Sound, and signifies the strong *Life*,

that produceth the manly Member; while on the other hand, *M* denotes a *Mother*, the *Womb*, and the multiplicity of Births: for by its comprest and stifled Sound, from a shut Mouth (as appears in the pronouncing of this Letter) the Conception of Births is plainly represented to us: From all which we understand, that *Aelohim* is the Creator, who by his most exalted Infinitely diffused, Vital, Vegetant, and Generating Vertue, conceived all things from eternal Seeds, hidden in himself, and at length produced and sent forth the same out of himself, with multiplicity and distinction.³⁹⁵

What is remarkable about this passage is that it comes from the book Leibniz wrote in van Helmont's name, *Thoughts on Genesis*.

Neither van Helmont nor Leibniz evade the magical implications of this theory that language is full of creative power. Not only are Hebrew words identical to the things they describe, but the articulation of these words creates the things. The most obvious example to prove this was, of course, the passage where Adam names the animals referred to above. In van Helmont's last book this passage is discussed and interpreted metaphorically. The animals did not exist apart from Adam until he named them; before that time they were simply ideas in his mind: "For all Things were placed within him." Adam is therefore the microcosm in which the macrocosm is reflected. By imposing names on the thoughts in his mind, he brought the animals into physical existence, "because to call Things by their Names, is to give them their Nature."³⁹⁶ We have already seen how Leibniz described creation in terms of divine volition and thought. In *Thoughts on Genesis* this process is described as the expression of thought through speech. While God has this power to the fullest, man also shares it:

From efficacious thinking, within himself, whereby *Aelohim* doth conceive things, and we also conceive Images and Ideas, there proceeds a word of the Mind from the Party thinking, or a power tending to an object; and by this going forth of the Mind, an Object is made and fixed: *And last of all, it is call'd by name, that is, it receives an absolute and determinate Nature.*³⁹⁷

Perhaps to protect themselves against the charge of magic or heresy, van Helmont/Leibniz is quick to add that although men retain a vestige of this power, it had been significantly weakened by the Fall. A sorry contrast is drawn between the splendid spectacle of divine creation by fiat with man's postlapsarian method of propagation:

no sooner had God said, *Let there be light* but the Light was; that is, *Aelohim* conceiving the Light in Thought, by a powerful Word of the Mind, and constituting to himself an object of thinking, into which he might send forth his inward Power, in so doing, I say, he outed or produced

the same, and gave Existence to something separate from himself, and brought forth without himself. This Process illustrates the Nature of the Spiritual Conception and Birth; for in like manner, tho' in far inferior Degree, Adam also should have begotten and propagated his Posterity, in case he had not Fallen, and Coated himself with the gross earthly Shell.³⁹⁸

The fact that Leibniz expressed similar ideas about God's power to create merely by thinking, although in a much abbreviated form, in both the *Discourse* and the *Monadology* provides additional evidence that he was not merely ghosting van Helmont's book out of kindness but shared many of the same ideas.

The volitional model of causation is clearly what is at issue here. Creation is a process which began with thoughts in God's mind and ended with the articulation of these thoughts. This explains why van Helmont and Leibniz retranslate the first sentence of Genesis to read, "In the Head, *Aelohim* created the Heavens and the Earth, instead of the usual "In the beginning," on the seemingly plausible grounds that בְּרֵאשֶׁת (beresith), the meaning of which has always puzzled translators, could be amended to בְּרַאשׁ berosh (*in the head*).

These ideas about the creative power of language were not unique to the Kabbalah; they also played a part in Renaissance Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, natural magic, and the celebrated art of Raymond Lull. Ficino, for example, developed a form of spiritual magic in which he used words set to music. Ludovico Lazarelli apparently took the demon-making passage from the Hermetic *Asclepius* literally and believed that men still possessed the power to make "divine souls."³⁹⁹ Together with the Kabbalah, these writings provided the sources for van Helmont's and Leibniz's ideas about the creative power of language. Frances Yates has established Leibniz's indebtedness to Lull and the tradition of the Art of Memory in his own attempts to create a universal character.⁴⁰⁰ Just like Leibniz's intended *characteristica*, the art of Raymond Lull was both a memory system and a method for investigating and discovering new truth. Lull based his art on the divine attributes of God, which he seems to have identified with Platonic ideas, considering them both the causes of creation and the abstract principles informing the created world. In the most common form of his art, Lull designated the following nine divine attributes with the letters B through K: *Bonitas, Magnitudo, Eternitas, Gloria, Potestas, Sapientia, Voluntas, Virtus, Veritas*. He placed these letters on concentric circles, which the practitioner of his art was supposed to revolve in such a way that he would understand any subject he wished to tackle. The similarity between Lull's art and the description in the *Sefer Yezirah* of the twenty-two Hebrew letters revolving with each other on spheres (more probably circles) presents a very Lullist picture (or *vice versa!*). Pico was the

first to draw a parallel between the two practices. Many works were published which purported to be based on the Kabbalah when they actually discussed Lullist techniques and used Lullist figures, attributes, and notations.⁴⁰¹ Surely there are echoes of this kind of Lullist and kabbalistic letter mysticism behind Leibniz's belief that all philosophy and physics can be derived from the divine attributes:

... true Physics may be tapped from the source of divine perfection. God is the final reason of things, and the knowledge of God is no less the principle of science than his essence and will are the principles of beings.... Philosophy is sanctified by having its streams flow from the fountain of God's attributes.⁴⁰²

While van Helmont's theory of Hebrew as a natural language had its source in the various philosophies that made up Renaissance occultism, his theory was unique in one important respect. Although he was convinced that Hebrew had originally been the divine language of creation, he did not think this true of contemporary Hebrew nor of scriptural Hebrew passed down to his generation. While these forms were corrupt, van Helmont believed it was his good fortune to have rediscovered Hebrew in its original, divine form. Such was his "natural" alphabet, an alphabet based on pictorial representations of the movements made by the tongue as each Hebrew letter was pronounced. Thus letters are the intermediaries between thought and things; they are at one and the same time both physical and spiritual. The moment a thought is expressed in words it assumes some kind of physical existence, not only as sound, but because every Hebrew word is formed from letters representing the physical movement of the tongue. Language is therefore the bridge between mind and matter. When von Rosenroth, van Helmont, and, perhaps, even Leibniz looked at the diagrams of the Hebrew letters drawn by van Helmont to accompany his treatise, they had additional proof that mind and matter could not possibly be separated in the way Descartes argued it was. I say "perhaps even Leibniz" because to my mind the link between mind and matter via the Hebrew letters emphasized in both the *Alphabet of Nature* and *Thoughts on Genesis* provided the basis for Leibniz's later statement to Bayle that abstract reasoning is inseparable from the "characters" that represent such reasoning:

Everything which ambition or any other passion makes the soul of Caesar do is represented in his body as well, and the movements of these passions all come from impressions of objects joined to internal movements. The body is made in such a way that the soul never makes any resolutions to which the movements of the body do not correspond; even the most

abstract reasonings play their part in this by means of the characters which represent them to the imagination.⁴⁰³

Leibniz reiterates this same idea in *Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit* written in the same year, 1702. Here he maintains that thought is always accompanied by some material traces and consequently that spiritual and physical functions are always reciprocal and never separable:

I find... that there is never any abstract thought which is not accompanied by some images or material traces, and I have established a perfect parallelism between what happens in the soul and what takes place in matter. I have shown that the soul with its functions is something distinct from matter but that it nevertheless is always accompanied by material organs and also that the soul's functions are always accompanied by organic functions which must correspond to them and that this relation is reciprocal and always will be.⁴⁰⁴

I am not claiming that Leibniz accepted van Helmont's theory of Hebrew as a natural language, simply that he shared enough of the same basic assumptions to be willing to write a book explaining them in van Helmont's name. Leibniz never relinquished the idea so basic to van Helmont, that names were "real." He consequently rejected Hobbes' and Locke's nominalist theory of language. Leibniz's first criticisms of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* were written during the period that he was in closest contact with van Helmont and may well have been stimulated by their discussions. Van Helmont knew Locke and respected him.⁴⁰⁵

Leibniz eventually rejected the idea that Hebrew was the original language spoken by Adam. Although he continued to believe that such a language had once existed, he did not think it was Hebrew but concluded that German retained the most traces of this "lingua Adamica." According to Hans Aarsleff, the height of Leibniz's interest in linguistic studies (as against his attempt to create a universal character) began in 1697, the very year he wrote van Helmont's last book.⁴⁰⁶

The year after writing van Helmont's book, Leibniz published a paper in the *Acta eruditorum* entitled *On Nature itself, or on the Inherent Force and Actions of Created Things*. This paper was occasioned by the controversy between John Christopher Sturm and Gunther Christopher Schelhammer in 1697–98 over the suggestion made by Robert Boyle that the term "nature" should be replaced by "mechanism."⁴⁰⁷ Taking the Cartesian position that matter is inert and passive, Sturm argued that it was pagan and un-Christian to attribute any inherent properties to matter; hence he sided with Boyle. Leibniz, who was well on his way to his monadology at this point, demurred, arguing that God endowed each thing with its own "form" or "force" at the

moment of creation. What is especially interesting is the precise terms in which Leibniz makes this argument. Elaborating on Sturm's statement that all motions occurring in the present are the result of the "eternal law" or "volition and command" of God, Leibniz harks back to the idea that is so central in *Thoughts on Genesis*, namely, that creation occurred through divine *fiat* and that in naming creatures God gave them their natures:

Surely if nothing has been impressed upon creatures by that divine word *producat terra, multiplicemini animalia*, if things are affected after the command just as if no command had intervened, it follows – since some connection, either immediate or mediated by something, is necessary between cause and effect – either that nothing conforming to the command is now happening or that the command was valid only in the present and must always be renewed in the future. But the learned author rightly repudiates this view. If, on the other hand, the law set up by God does in fact leave some vestige of him expressed in things, if things have been so formed by the command that they are made capable of fulfilling the will of him who commanded them, then it must be granted that there is a certain efficacy residing in things, a form or force such as we usually designate by the name of nature, from which the series of phenomena follows according to the prescription of the first command.⁴⁰⁸

Once again Leibniz suggests that action on a spiritual level occurs through the "expression" of speech. In a later passage Leibniz explains what it meant when God saw "it was good," a phrase which, as we have seen, he singled out for explanation in *Thoughts on Genesis*:

For it is nevertheless consistent that, just as the word *fiat* leaves behind it something permanent, namely, the persisting thing itself, so the word *benedictio* leaves behind it something in things no less wonderful – a fruitfulness or an impulse to produce their actions and to operate, from which activity follows if nothing interferes.⁴⁰⁹

What Leibniz is essentially doing in both these passages is to recast van Helmont's kabbalistic theory that Hebrew names contain the essential nature of the things they designate into the more linguistically and philosophically acceptable theory that God creates things in such a way that their life history evolves from within. This became, of course, the essence of Leibniz's monadology.

All the attempts to discover or devise a "natural" language, including Leibniz's, come out of the kind of analogous thinking characteristic of Renaissance occultism, in which representation is identified with reality and a sign with the thing signified. The belief in the "real" nature of sounds and symbols was not, however, the product of a pre-rational and pre-scientific thought

pattern, as Brian Vickers suggests,⁴¹⁰ but a corollary of basic Platonic and neoplatonic theories: first, that creation was a process of emanation from an intelligible world of forms or ideas – a theory to which Leibniz subscribed, as we have seen; second, that there is a basic harmony between nature and the human mind and that consequently knowledge consists in remembering these archetypal ideas; and third, that intuition is the highest form of knowledge.⁴¹¹ The Platonic view of the universe as a great chain of being, in which planets, angels, men, animals, plants, minerals and metals are linked together in complex hierarchies of correspondences, encouraged the belief that every existing thing is in some measure a symbol, or reflection, of something else. This provided the foundation for the kind of analogous thinking characteristic of the period and characteristic of Leibniz's theories of causation. In this system of correspondences, a symbol was more than a conventional sign; it was a reflection of the highest order of reality and, as a reflection, or microcosm, it contained traces of the power and force of its prototype. The parallel that Christians constantly drew between Scripture and the Book of Nature also encouraged the belief that there was an intimate connection between language and things and that it was therefore entirely plausible to approach things linguistically. The Platonic definition of knowledge as the remembering of ideas, together with the high value placed on intuition, reinforced the notion that symbols were "real" and not conventional. Through the intuitive understanding of a symbol, Neoplatonists like Marsilio Ficino believed they could grasp the whole of a truth in an instant. When Ficino contemplated the figure of the tail-eating serpent, or *ouroboros*, he thought he gained an essential and intuitive understanding of what eternity really means.⁴¹² The same kind of thinking lay behind John Dee's exclamations of wonder when he contemplated his *Monas*, a complicated hieroglyphic which he devised in the belief that it embodied all the most important secrets of the natural and supernatural world.⁴¹³ A similar way of thinking about symbols explains von Rosenroth's fulsome praise of van Helmont's "natural" alphabet and his belief that it provided the blue-print for utopia. As he says,

If we examine the writings of the Old Testament, what do we find in them but a gold mine of all good arts and knowledge, and a treasure chest in which all the gems of philosophy, all the riches of the Divine Law, and what is most excellent, all the treasures of hidden divine and holy wisdom. I will not stop to consider that from this [source] the light of all chronology radiates, that in it one finds before his eyes a mirror of all virtues and vices, and that the true art of politics and skill in economics cannot be learned better and more thoroughly from any other book than this [one]. Much less am I able to point out what secrets both of nature and customs this

miraculous book keeps concealed under the simple historical letters, not to mention the secret prophecies.⁴¹⁴

These theories, which were a stock part of Renaissance occultism, influenced Leibniz, just as they did van Helmont. Leibniz believed as ardently as his Renaissance predecessors in the possibility of a “real” character precisely because he shared the same Platonic belief in an intelligible world of ideas from which the material world of created things had emanated. The correspondence between ideas and things led him to the familiar notion that all knowledge can be reduced to a number of simple ideas which could be arranged logically and expressed in suitable signs. These signs would constitute a “real” character, and by means of their combination men would arrive at a clear understanding of complex propositions. A mathematical model lay behind Leibniz’s thinking, but it is the kind of fanciful numerology more characteristic of a Renaissance Neoplatonist or Kabbalist than the inventor of infinitesimal calculus. To take Leibniz’s own example: the proposition “man is a rational animal” might be expressed symbolically as

Man = Animal + Rational

or mathematically as

$$6 = 3 \times 2.$$

In either case one can see at once whether the proposition is true or false.⁴¹⁵ This kind of mathematical manipulation encouraged Leibniz to hope that men would eventually resolve their differences by simple calculation. But such calculation had nothing to do with genuine mathematics. It has more in common with the kabbalistic practice of *gematria*, in which numbers are substituted for letters. Leibniz was well aware of the various practices in which numbers or letters were substituted for words and phrases by both Kabbalists and Lullists. In his remarks on Wachter’s book on Spinoza and the Kabbalah, he specifically refers to these.⁴¹⁶

Leibniz was not original in claiming that his characteristic could be used to invent and discover, but the inventions he claims to have made as a result of using it were certainly astonishing and, as at least one Leibniz scholar has suggested, tax our credulity.⁴¹⁷ Writing to Herzog Johann Friedrich, Duke of Hanover, in October, 1671, Leibniz claims to have discovered the following amazing array of inventions by means of his “combinary art”:

In mathematics and Mechanics I have by means of the Combinary Art found several things which in practical life are of no small importance: first of all, an arithmetic machine, which I call a Living Bank-clerk... of many uses in Business, military affairs, surveying, sine-tables and astronomy. Another

instrument of mine, which I call a Living Geometer, mechanically – for nothing exists in nature otherwise than mechanically – provides a way to resolve all conceivable lines and figures... In Optics I have first of all men discovered (1) a certain kind of tube or lens which I call Pandochas because it makes the whole object uniform... (2) Cataoptic tubes, for in one tube are juxtaposed a mirror and perspective ... (3) a means, much sought until now, of measuring from a given position in perspective... which I found through the Art of Combinations. In nautical things ... on procuring sufficient data from a few experiments ... I will demonstrate how to find longitudes completely, and provide a way for a person on a ship to know with certainty what his location is without the help of the sun, moon and stars which cannot always be observed (yet Huyghens' famous invention depends on them alone). In Hydrostatics I have restored the lost invention of Drebel that enables one to go with a ship under the surface of the water during a storm (for it is tranquil enough under water) or during an attack by sea-robbers, and then to come up again; and this is what Mersenne wanted so much to do. In Pneumatics ... I have compressed air into a box 1000 times normal pressure which can exert terrific force on water ... like a canon shot.⁴¹⁸

The utopian visions that Leibniz's *characteristica* inspired in his mind were no less grand than those inspired in van Helmont and von Rosenroth's minds by the "natural" Hebrew alphabet. It is hardly surprising, then, that he called it a "magia naturalis," a "Cabbala of the wise," and a "true key." Not only was it miraculously effective but it would be easy to learn, requiring but a few weeks. Van Helmont had made the same claim with the extraordinary statement that he had taught a "deaf, weak-eyed, and trembling" musician to read and speak Hebrew in two weeks by using the diagrams of his "natural" alphabet.⁴¹⁹ Paolo Rossi points out that such astonishing promises to teach everything in a short time had been a standard aspect of Lullism and memory treatises for the previous two centuries.⁴²⁰ This only provides another example of how indebted Leibniz was to earlier traditions, and this, in turn, explains why he had so much in common with van Helmont.

Conclusion

Kant thought the idea of “slumbering” monads was unbelievably funny.⁴²¹ Perhaps it is. But behind it lay the conviction that all things could change and better themselves; and this, in turn, encouraged the humanitarian outlook and activist philosophy that separates van Helmont and Leibniz from so many of their contemporaries, contemporaries who loathed and feared the common people and objected to any kind of progressive social policy on the grounds that it would undermine the *status quo*.

During the seventeenth century there was a revival of the Pelagian view that man might save himself through his own efforts. In ways that may never be fully understandable Luther’s and Calvin’s view of man as a lowly worm so inextricably inured in sin that he could do absolutely nothing to mollify God or to ensure his own salvation gradually gave way to the optimistic idea that man was in charge of his own destiny as well as the world’s. The denigration of reason and exaltation of faith so prevalent during the Reformation was reversed in the eighteenth century age of Enlightenment. The late seventeenth century is a crucial period in this transformation. Out of the obscure and confusing mix of mystical, occult, and magical beliefs that characterized so much of the thinking of the early modern period a rationalist philosophy gradually emerged based on the conviction that man was essentially good and reason a noble tool in the inevitable march of progress. In a letter to L’Hospital, Leibniz confessed that Arnauld had accused him of Pelagianism, but he quickly added that he had defended himself and satisfied Arnauld on that point.⁴²² However, Leibniz’s correspondence with Arnauld ended long before the idea of progress and perfection entered into his mature monadological scheme. As Wilson (and others) have pointed out, Leibniz was as bad as Spinoza in being unable to hold sin against an individual.⁴²³ This inability, which to me seems more of a virtue, is not really so curious if one takes into account Leibniz’s contact and collaboration with van Helmont.

The belief in the power and perspicuity of man arose in part from gnostic sources – from alchemy, Hermeticism, Renaissance Neoplatonism, and the Kabbalah. In different ways each of these philosophies preached the doctrine of perfectionism and in so doing undermined the Christian emphasis on man's fallen nature and the unique role of Christ as the *only* and *external* source of his salvation. For the alchemist in a very real sense was Christ, the Neoplatonist a powerful magus able to draw divine power into himself, and the Kabbalist the link between God and his creatures. Alchemists, Neoplatonists, and Kabbalists were each in their own way gnostic saviors responsible for the salvation of the world. As the microcosm which contained the macrocosm, they possessed the power to restore the world to its prelapsarian perfection.⁴²⁴

These were heady views which intoxicated some to the point of heresy, blasphemy, or madness. Who can forget Giordano Bruno, burnt at the stake as a Hermetic magus, or Paracelsus with his penchant for oracular, aphoristic, or just plain crude and scurrilous statements, or even the Quaker James Naylor riding into Bristol on the back of a donkey as adoring women threw palm fronds in his path? But in the person of Francis Mercury van Helmont such views took on a more human coloring. As he wandered the continent in his brown Quaker garments, advising German princes on ways to help the destitute in their war-torn lands and encouraging everyone he met to practice charity and brotherly love, it is easy to forget that he was inspired by kabbalistic and alchemical visions. Those who do remember have tended to dismiss him as a genial crackpot. I hope this essay will do something to dispel this impression. The sources of van Helmont's inspiration are no more bizarre than those referred to by many would-be prophets today. The difference lies in the age in which he lived and the uses to which he put them. His vision was neither selfish nor exclusive. It looked forward to the greatest good for the greatest number in an age when such a concept was just beginning to be imaginable. Unlike modern fundamentalists and occultists, he did not put his head in the sand and deny the value of the scientific enterprise, while enjoying its fruits. He had no mental "index" but read, explored, and investigated everything to the best of his ability. The world was a marvel to him and the individuals he met along the way were his equals and brothers. Because he appeared to live well with no visible means of support and had so many friends, some people thought he really had discovered the secret of transmutation and possessed the philosopher's stone. But the secret was much simpler. What he possessed was an essential goodness and kindness that won him friends in every walk of life. Just thinking about his good qualities reduced Henry More to tears at one of their partings. Trying to hide his embarrassment, More quipped that as a chemist van Helmont could draw moisture from a flint.⁴²⁵ Is it any wonder that Leibniz should have been drawn

to a man so like him in his humanitarian outlook and enthusiasm for doing good?

In conclusion let me say that I am not suggesting the Leibniz's view of the Kabblah was one of total acceptance or that van Helmont's kabbalistic theories were the major influence on his thought. Leibniz criticized certain kabbalistic ideas as lacking sufficient foundation or proof. But regardless of his criticisms, a careful reading of the manuscripts shows that he took the Kabbalah extremely seriously. While discussing and reflecting on van Helmont's ideas, he tested, refined, and in some cases modified his own. As van Helmont's kabbalistic philosophy filtered through Leibniz's acute mind, its more fanciful, mythical, and mystical elements were rationalized and oriented to the tastes of a more modern world. Van Helmont was the moon to Leibniz's more powerful sun; but even this analogy is not quite correct since not all the light came from the greater philosopher. But in righting the historical record, perhaps the last word should be left to Leibniz:

[I]t is good to study the discoveries of others in such a way that allows us to detect the source of their inventions and to make them in some sense our own. And I wish authors would give us the history of their discoveries and the process by which they arrive at them. When they do not do this, it is necessary to try to guess in order to profit better from their work.⁴²⁶

In this essay I have only tried to do what Leibniz suggests.

Notes

Abbreviations

AK	<i>Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe</i> , ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften. Darmstadt und Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1923 –. References are to series and volume.
G	<i>Die Philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz</i> , ed. C. I. Gerhardt, 7 vols (Berlin, 1875–90), repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1962.
Grua	<i>G. W. Leibniz: Textes inédits</i> , ed. G. Grua, 2 vols. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948.
KD	<i>Kabbala Denudata</i> , tr. and ed. Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, 2 vols (Sulzbach, 1677, 1684), repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1974.
L	<i>Gottfried Wilhem Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters</i> , tr. and ed. L. Loemker, 2 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956.
LBr	389 Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hanover, MSS Helmont
LH	Leibniz Handschriften in the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hanover

1. The major recent exceptions are Carolyn Merchant, Anne Becco, and Bernardino Orio de Miguel, whose work will be discussed below.
2. A term suggested by G. MacDonald Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 1: "... Commentators have been positively embarrassed by the many quirkier aspects of Leibniz's philosophical work." On this subject also see D. Cook, "Den 'anderen' Leibniz verstehen."
3. Ross, *Clavis Universalis; Francis Bacon; Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition; The Art of Memory; The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*; Popkin, "The Religious Background of Seventeenth-Century Thought," *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought*; Ross, "Occultism and Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century," "Leibniz and Renaissance Neoplatonism;" Schaffer, "Occultism and Reason;" Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science; The Great Instauration*; Pagel, *Joan Baptista van Helmont*.
4. The *Kabbala Denudata* (Sulzbach, 1677, 1684) was the most comprehensive collection and translation of major Kabbalist texts published in Latin up to that time. The editors have received praise for their accuracy and erudition from no less an authority than Gershom Scholem in his entry on Knorr von Rosenroth in the *Encyclopedie Judaica*.
5. Foucher de Careil, *Leibniz...*, p. 56.
6. *Ibid.*: "On sent qu'elle [the Kabbalah] n'est pour lui qu'un objet de curiosité, comme beaucoup d'autres imaginations curieuses de son temps ou des siècles passés ... Ce vigoureux penseur [Leibniz] ramène toutes ces doctrines à son système propre. Il n'en prend que ce qui s'accorde à lui."
7. Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, preface to the second edition.

8. Couturat, *La Logique de Leibniz*, p. x. For a similar view see B. Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*; J. M. Child, *The Early Mathematical Manuscripts of Leibniz*, p. 11. This is essentially Cassirer's view in *Leibniz' System*. For modern subscribers to this view see Schrecker, "The Unity of Leibniz' Philosophical Thought" and Nason, "Leibniz and the Logical Argument for Individual Substances."
9. Couturat, *La Logique de Leibniz*, p. 14.
10. Quoted in Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 9.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.
12. See references in note 3.
13. R. W. Meyer, *Leibniz and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*.
14. J. Baruzi, "Trois Dialogues mystiques inédits de Leibniz;" "Leibniz. Avec textes inédits."
15. D. Mahnke, "Die Rationalisierung der Mystick bei Leibniz und Kant."
16. "Sur l'aspect occultiste de Leibniz... ce sujet n'a pas encore suscité l'étude approfondie qui'il mérite (Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, p. 235, note 2).
17. "... on peut dire de lui qu'il est un Paracelse de la fin du xviiie siècle qui aurait bénéficié de la discipline acquise par cent années de science moderne" (*Ibid.*, p. 233).
18. Knecht, *La Logique Chez Leibniz*.
19. L I: 12. Friedmann makes a similar point in *Leibniz et Spinoza*, p. 46 and *passim*.
20. "Je le surpris un jour lisant des livres de controverse; je lui témoignai mon étonnement, car on me l'avait fait passer pour un mathématicien de profession, parce qu'il n'avait presque fait autre chose à Paris. Ce fut alors qui'il me dit qu'on se trompait fort, qu'il avait bien d'autres vues, et que ses méditations principaux étaient sur la théologie; qu'il s'était appliqué aux mathématiques, comme à la scolastique, c'est-à-dire seulement pour la perfection de son esprit et pour apprendre l'art d'inventer et de démontrer, qu'il croyait d'y être allé à présent aussi loin qu'aucun autre" (quoted in Friedmann, p. 42). He said much the same thing in a letter to the Elector Johann Frederick in 1679: "Je n'ai donc pas étudié les sciences mathématiques pour elles-même, mais à fin d'en faire un jour bon usage pour me donner du crédit en avançant la piété" (*Ibid.*).
21. For Leibniz's indebtedness to Lull and the Herborn Encyclopedists see Loemker, "Leibniz and the Herborn Encyclopedists." On Leibniz's indebtedness to Lull see Yates, *The Art of Memory*, and Hübener, "Leibniz und der Renaissance-Lullismus."
22. L I: 97.
23. M. Wilson, "Leibniz's Dynamics and Contingency in Nature."
24. Papineau, "The Vis Viva Controversy."
25. "A New System of the Nature and the Communication of Substances, as well as the Union between the Soul and the Body," *Journal des savants* (June 27, 1695). L II: 740–1.
26. C. Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics: a historical and comparative study*, p. 195.
27. Butts "Leibniz's Monads: A Heritage of Gnosticism."
28. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
30. Leibniz mentions the translation of Pisani in *Nova Methodus Descendae Docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*, 1667 (AK VI, 1: 300) and *Alphabeti vere Hebraici* in the same year (AK VI, 1: 283).
31. Leibniz described this meeting in a letter to Christian Philipp (AK I, 3: 442).
32. Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont: Bagatelle pour des Monades," p. 120.
33. 15/25 February. AK I, 1: 235.
34. Loemker, "Leibniz and Boyle," pp. 249, 252.
35. Aiton, *Leibniz: A Biography*, p. 100.
36. Grua I: 91. This passage appears in a review Leibniz wrote in 1695 of *An account of W. Penn's travails in Holland and Germany, anno MDCLXXVII for the service of the Gospel of Christ...* (London, 1695): "Car rien ne nous sçauroit mieux marquer les perfections

divines que les beautés admirables qui se trouvent dans ses ouvrages. Je vois que la pluspart de ceux qui pretendent à une plus grande spiritualité, et particulierement les trembleurs, tachent de donner du degout pour les contemplations des vérités naturelles. Mais à mon avis ils doivent faire tout le contraire s'il ne veulent entretenir nostre propre paresse ou ignorance <c'est en quoy je trouve Messieurs Helmont, Knorr, Morus et Poiret plus raisonnables que la pluspart des autres, quoique je ne veuille point autoriser plusieurs de leurs sentiment ou ils s'eloignent de L'Eglise> L'amour <veritable> est fondé sur la connoissance de la beauté de l'object aimé. Or la beauté de Dieu paroist dans les merveilles des effects de cette cause souveraine. Ainsi plus on connoist la nature et les vérités solides des sciences reelles, qui sont autant de rayons de la perfection divine, plus on est capable d'aimer Dieu véritablement..." The words in brackets [<>] signify insertions made by Leibniz.

37. "Some Observations of Francis Mer: Van Helmont..." British Library, Sloane MSS 530, 9th observation.
38. For Leibniz's interest in alchemy, see Baruzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre*, pp. 209–13; Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, pp. 135ff. For the letters between Leibniz and Schuller, see Stein, *Leibniz und Spinoza*, pp. 284–96.
39. Ross denies that this was a Rosicrucian society (*Leibniz*, p. 5) as Couturat suggested, *La Logique de Leibniz*, p. 131, note 3.
40. Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 5.
41. Letter to Christian Philipp (2/12 November 1680): "Il y a peu d'apparence que le jeune Helmont scache de faire la projection: je luy ay parlé assez familiерement il y a environ huit ans, et il a parlé assez ingenuement, pour me faire connoistre qu'il n'a rien de cette nature (A I, 3: 442).
42. AK I, 3: 260.
43. *Journal de Trévoux* (January, 1737), p. 6ff.; Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 5.
44. Vickers, "Analogy and Identity," p. 117.
45. Walker, *The Ancient Theology*.
46. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*.
47. Schmitt, "The Perennial Philosophy from Agostino Steuco to Leibniz."
48. For example, Leibniz distinguishes between a "Cabbala quaedam vulgaris" (G VII: 184) and a "cabala sapientium," which would be useful for his "calculus generalus" or "characteristica" (G VII: 49). Such a kabbalah would be a "cabale non chimérique" (A I, 2: 168; G VII: 199) See Knecht, *La logique chez Leibniz*, pp. 31, 73, 157, 354ff.
49. "Vous sçavez, Monsieur, mes principes qui sont de preferer le bien public à toutes les autres considerations, même à la gloire et à l'argent" (G III: 261).
50. Meyer emphasizes Leibniz's commitment to practical reforms and improvements (p. 118ff and *passim*). So does Ross (*Leibniz*, p. 5ff).
51. "A Short Discourse of ye Motif and Manner of Creating in the Low Countries Monti di Pietà," London, Royal Society, Classified Papers, 1660–1740, xxiv, Collins, Oldenburg, Hooke, no. 47.
52. G III: 176: "Il a des opinions bien extraordinaires; avec tout cela je trouve qu'il a des tres bons sentimens pour la pratique, et qu'il seroit ravi de contribuer au bien general, en quoy il est entierement de mon humeur..."
53. Grua 1: 105: "... Chez moy la pierre de touche de la véritable lumiere est une grande ardeur pour contribuer autant qu'il est possible à la gloire de Dieu et au bien general. Et je trouve si peu de gens qui prennent cela à coeur que j'en suis étonné. J'ay fait mille fois des propositions de cette nature. Mais j'ay trouvé ordinairement que les personnes qui vouloient passer pour les plus pieuses n'estoient que glace quand il s'agissoit véritablement de bien faire; se contentant de s'évaporer en belles paroles comme si Dieu se gagnoit par les ceremonies. Je trouve même que peu de gens ont une véritable idée du bien. Je ne daigne de donner ce nom qu'à ce qui rend véritablement les

hommes plus parfaits, et la grandeur de Dieu plus connue; je trouve encor que ceux qui sont d'humeur sectaire ou schismatique, c'est-a-dire qui ont de l'eloignement pour ceux qui sont pleins de bonne intention, mais qui ne donnent pas justement dans leur opinion, ne sçauroient avoir ny la charité ny la lumiere dans sa veritable pureté: il me semble que je reconnois que feu Mons. Labadie, feu Madlle de Bourignon, et William Penn avec ses confreres, ont eu ce defaut d'estre sectaires ou condemnatifs. Parmy les personnes qui ont des sentimens extraordinaires, je n'ay presque trouvé que Mons. d'Helmont qui convienne avec moy par ce grand principe de la charité, et dans lequel j'aye remarqué une veritable ardeur pour le bien, quoique d'ailleurs nous ayons souvent des opinions bien differentes sur des matieres particulières .

54. G III: 261; L I: 16.
55. Baruzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre*, p. 495ff.
56. G. Guhrauer, *G. W. von Leibniz: Eine Biographie*, I, pp. 118–9; cited in Daniel Cook, “Leibniz's Use and Abuse of Judaism and Islam,” p. 3.
57. Couder, “The *Kabbala Denudata*: Converting Jews or Seducting Christians.”
58. Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 74.
59. G VII: 451: “Mon systeme... n'est pas un corps complet de Philosophie et je n'y pretends nullement de rendre raison de tout ce que d'autres ont pretendu d'expliquer. Il faut aller par degrés pour aller à pas seurs.”
60. Popkin, “Leibniz and the French Sceptics.”
61. L II: 775.
62. L I: 15 (Letter to Count Goloskin, 1712).
63. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
64. Ross, *Leibniz*, pp. 26–7.
65. Spaeth wrote a letter to van Helmont thanking him for his gift of money and clothing and explaining his reasons for converting to Judaism (Hamburg, Staats- und -Universitätsbibliothek, Supplex. ep., vi. 26). On Spaeth/Moses Germanus, see Schoeps, *Philosemitismus im Barock*, p. 67ff. and Scholem, “Die Wachterische Kontroverse...”
66. Ross, *Leibniz*, pp. 26–7.
67. Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, LBr. 389, f. 125: “Nil patre inferior jacet hic Helmontius alter./Qui junxit varias mentis et artis opes;/ Per quem Phythagoras et Cabbala sacra revixit./Elausque potest qui dare cuncta sibi./Quod si Graja virum tellus, et prisca tulissent/Secula, nunc inter lumina prima foret.” In a note Leibniz explains the reference to Elaus: “Hippias patria Elaus, professione philosophus, qui omnia quibus opus, manu sua elaborare poterat.” Anne Becco suggests that this might have been written ironically, but the whole thrust of this monograph argues otherwise.
68. Becco, “Leibniz et Francois-Mercure van Helmont: Bagatelle pour des Monades;” “Aux Sources de la Monade: Paléographie et lexicographie leibniziennes;” *Du simple selon G. W. Leibniz*.
69. Foucher de Careil, *Leibniz*, pp. 64ff.
70. I have unfortunately not been able to obtain a copy of Orio de Miguel's PhD thesis, *Leibniz y la tradición teosófico-kabbalistica. Fr. M. van Helmont* (Madrid, 1988), although I have read articles taken from it.
71. Among those who argue that Leibniz's system was complete by an early date (besides those cited in this article) see Couturat, “Sur la métaphysique de Leibniz;” Rescher, “The Contributions of the Paris Period;” Poser, “Leibniz's Parisraufenthalt.”
72. Aiton, *Leibniz*, p. 135.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 201–2.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 14. But as Becco points out, Thomasius referred to the Cabbala and Agrippa in his discussion of the term “monadicus” (“Aux Sources de la monade,” p. 290). In any case, thirty years is a long time to keep a word in mind. While Leibniz may indeed have

- remembered his old teacher's use of the word, this was probably the result of having his memory jogged by van Helmont.
75. Aiton, *Leibniz*, p. 68; for the idea of a persisting vital center, pp. 35–6.
 76. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
 77. *Ibid.* p. 196.
 78. *Ibid.*, p. 191.
 79. L II: 591.
 80. Loemker, "A Note on the Origin and Problem of Leibniz's *Discourse* of 1686," pp. 227–38.
 81. Garber, "Leibniz and the Foundation of Physics: The Middle Years," p. 104.
 82. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
 83. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
 84. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
 85. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
 86. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
 87. Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld: A Commentary on their Correspondence*, chapter 5, section 3.
 88. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–3.
 89. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
 90. Aiton believes that Leibniz rejected phenomenology at the end of his life (*Leibniz*, p. 325), but others scholars take the opposite position. For an overview of the subject from opposite points of view see Jolley, "Leibniz and Phenomenalism" and Adams, "Phenomenalism and Corporeal Substance in Leibniz."
 91. Hein, *Journal of the History of Biology*, (1972), p. 170.
 92. Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, p. 81.
 93. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 94. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
 95. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
 96. *Ibid.*, pp. 196–7.
 97. Quoted in Brown, *Leibniz*, p. 148.
 98. Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, p. 160.
 99. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
 100. *Ibid.*
 101. *Ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
 102. *Ibid.*, p. 181 & note 77. Wilson also rejects the view of Carolyn Merchant that Anne Conway's philosophy could have influenced Leibniz on the grounds that he only read her work in 1696, which is again too late.
 103. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
 104. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
 105. *Ibid.*, pp. 188–9 (*True Intellectual System*, p. 830).
 106. *Ibid.*, p. 177 (*True Intellectual System*, p. 155).
 107. *Ibid.*, p. 189, note 104.
 108. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
 109. H. Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 4: "Unter den Vorgängern, welche man für die Leibnizische Monadologie aufsucht hat, ist er ohne Zweifel der, welcher dem deutschen Philosophen so wie persönlich, so in seiner philosophischen Denkweise am nächsten stand."
 110. R. W. Meyer, *Leibniz and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, pp. 62–4.
 111. Marjorie Nicolson suggested this in the *Conway Letters* (p. xxvii).
 112. Merchant, "The Vitalism of Anne Conway: its Impact on Leibniz's Concept of the Monad."
 113. Nicolson, ed., *Conway Letters*, pp. 39ff.

114. Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare;" "A Quaker-Kabbalist Controversy."
115. In an unfinished letter to L'Hopital, 12/22 July 1695, cited in A. Robinet, *Malebranche et Leibniz: Relations personnelles*, p. 319.
116. Merchant, "The Vitalism of Anne Conway," p. 262: "In much of her discussion of the essential spiritual vitality of the whole world, Anne Conway's thought converged with that of Leibniz, and she was for this reason held in high esteem by him."
117. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
118. Part of Merchant's reason for writing her article was to put Lady Conway back into the historical record, from which Merchant thinks she has been unfairly excluded. While I agree that Lady Conway's work is worthy of scholarly attention, I think the primary influence on her thought was van Helmont and consequently that van Helmont exerted the most direct influence on Leibniz, not Lady Conway. Merchant gives slightly more credit to van Helmont in her book but, in my view, still not enough: "It seems clear... that Leibniz appropriated the term *monad* from Conway and Van Helmont, its origins stemming initially from the Cabala. The influential role that Anne Conway's ideas played in his decision to use this concept has hitherto not been recognized, due to a series of scholarly errors originating from Heinrich Ritter's assumption that Van Helmont was the author rather than the editor of her *Principles*" (p. 267). Lady Conway's book is, however, basically an exposition of van Helmont's ideas.
119. Brown, "Leibniz and More's Cabbalistic Circle," p. 91.
120. In 1923 Walter Feichenfeld suggested that a short treatise by Henry More entitled "The Fundamentals of Philosophy, or the Cabbala of the Eagle, the Boy, and the Bee..." included in the first volume of the *Kabbala Denudata*, was the ultimate source for Leibniz's monadology. This idea has been taken up more recently by Serge Hutin, "Leibniz a-t-il subi l'influence d'Henry More?" *Studia Leibnitiana* 2 (1979): 59–72. Hutin made the error of crediting More with ideas that were really van Helmont's! See Brown, "Leibniz and More's Cabbalistic Circle," pp. 77, 81. See also Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare."
121. Brown argues that Leibniz only possessed the English version of Lady Conway's book and that his English was not proficient enough at that time to have read it. However, Aiton says that Leibniz could read English by October, 1676, although he probably could not speak it (*Leibniz*, p. 66). Van Helmont brought a copy of Lady Conway's manuscript with him in 1679, after Lady Conway's death. It is therefore conceivable that Leibniz could have read it when he met van Helmont in that year. Brown thinks that even in 1696 when Leibniz received a copy of the book, he could not have made much sense of it because he only had the English edition. However, Anne Becco has found Leibniz's *Latin* copy of the book with his annotations ("Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont," pp. 124–25 and note 5), which means he had read it and presumably during van Helmont's visit to Hanover in 1694 or 1696, if not earlier. To my mind, whether or not Leibniz read Lady Conway's book is unimportant in as much as he had a living and talking source of kabbalistic ideas in van Helmont. It would not seem illogical to suppose that when van Helmont met Leibniz in 1679, he would have talked about his recently deceased friend and about her book and their mutual philosophy.
122. Brown, "Leibniz and More's Cabbalistic Circle," pp. 83–4.
123. *Ibid.*, p. 93, note 44. Brown made this same point in *Leibniz*, pp. 95, 156.
124. Brown, *Leibniz*, p. 116.
125. Brown, "Leibniz and More's Cabbalistic Circle," p. 88.
126. Brown, *Leibniz*, p. 139.
127. *Ibid.*, p 116. See also p. 145: "The view, suppressed in the *Discourse*, that perhaps in metaphysical strictness there are no corporeal substances as such became, by 1690, his acknowledged opinion. But his thought about the composition of the continuum

- were taking him even farther in the direction of making his ultimate entities not merely non-material but non-spatial also.”
128. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
 129. This was suggested by one of the anonymous reader’s of the first draft of this monograph, who gave the example of George Keith. Like Leibniz, Keith collaborated with van Helmont on one of his books, the *Paradoxal Discourses*, but Keith later denied that he shared van Hemont’s opinions. As I have shown in my PhD thesis and forthcoming book, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont* (E. J. Brill), Keith did share van Helmont’s views; his repudiation of them came after the fact and was basically an attempt to substantiate his orthodoxy in the eyes of his fellow Quakers.
 130. Becco, “Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont,” p. 137: “L’intérêt philosophique de van Helmont se situe en fait au point central de l’oeuvre de Leibniz, par l’influence qu’il a eu entre 1694 et 1696, moment clé de l’enracinement définitif du système leibnizien.”
 131. *Ibid.*, p. 141: “... le rôle de van Helmont, rôle de réactivation d’un vocabulaire et de connaissances que Leibniz connaissait fort bien dans sa jeunesse... est si important... Mais il s’agit de rationnaliser ces monadomagies... C’est justement parce que la substance simple et la monade ont un lourd passé d’irrationnalité et d’atomisme que Leibniz ne se risque à leur emploi que timidement, avant de les engager définitivement dans son vocabulaire...”
 132. The latter position seems to be taken by R. C. Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld. A Commentary on their Correspondance*, although I find the following statement ambiguous: “I believe that the conception of an individual substance brought to fruition in our texts [the correspondance with Arnauld] is essentially that of the *Monadology*. Still, there is a marked difference between our texts and the *Monadology*, bearing on the notion of substance” (p. 96).
 133. Becco, “Aux sources de la monade,” p. 279: “... on ne peut plus voir dans le *Discours* une *Monadologie* autrement disposée. Car le thème même de la simplicité de la substance, avec tout ce que cela implique sur le plan de l’ontologie leibnizienne y fait défaut. Certes, nous savions depuis très longtemps que Leibniz n’y fait pas usage du mot “monade,” dont on avait réperé l’apparition dans les années 1694–1696. Mais il fallait encore repérer que la monade n’est pas une “substance”: c’est une “substance simple.” Or, dans le *Discours*, où il n’est question que de substance individuelle, singulière, particulière, qualifications que nous ne trouvons pas dans la *Monadologie*, la simplicité de la substance n’est jamais évoquée. Son *unité* même parvient pas à l’expression. Par sa “notion individuelle,” locution qui n’apparaît pas dans la *Monadologie*, elle acquiert tout au plus la complétude d’un être réel. Par-delà la simple différence terminologique, c’est l’ensemble des thèmes monadologiques qui se marque au coin du “simple.” La plus frappante des “insuffisances” monadologiques de *Discours* consiste dans la coupure du déroulement ontologique, car les âmes des bêtes n’apparaissent ici que comme contre-champ négatif de la positivité rayonnante des esprits. En affinant les qualités de la substance, Leibniz renverse peu à peu le *Discours de métaphysique*, l’épure de la logique scolaire et l’émancipe de ces vestiges cartésiens.”
 134. Becco (*Ibid.*) follows W. Otto Saame (*Der Satz vom Grund bei Leibniz*. Mainz, 1961) in finding the first use of the word monad in a letter from Leibniz to L’Hospital (22 July 1695).
 135. See Becco, “Aux sources de la monade,” p. 293, which does not mention Cusanus or Bruno as possible sources. For a further discussion of these earlier monodologies, see chapter 4.
 136. Sleigh, *Leibniz & Arnauld: A Commentary on their Correspondence*, chapter 5, section 3.

137. Becco, "Aux sources de la monade," p. 285: "Les sources cabalistiques de Leibniz à cette époque de la cristallisation terminologique de la "monade" méritent d'être soigneusement prises en considération."
138. To the 1697 edition of van Helmont's and von Rosenroth's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*.
139. "Leibniz und 'die physischen Monaden' von Fr. M. van Helmont," in Marchlewitz & Heinekamp, eds., *Leibniz's Auseinandersetzung mit Vorgängern und Zeitgenossen*, p. 149.
140. AK I, 1: 235. Letter to John Friedrich Schütz von Holtzhausen (15/25 February 1672): "... Sonste bitte M hh wolle sich doch ohnbeschwerig ergundigen ob Herr Helmontius zu Würzburg sey, oder neulich da gewesen, oder wieder dahin kommen werde, oder wo er iezo sey." AK I, 1: 303. In a letter to Johann Christian von Boineburg (21 December 1672) Leibniz says he knows that van Helmont is in England.
141. AK I, 3: 260: "... j'ay appris que Monsieur Helmont y est à présent avec un nommé Monsr. Kohlhas qu'on fait passer pour adepte, ce qui veut dire dans le style des chymistes, faiseur de la pierre philosophale... Et pour Monsr. Helmont on m'a dit qu'il est entièrement Quacquerisé, et qu'il ne se découvre plus, quand il parle à des princes. J'ay de la peine à la croire, car lors que je luy parlay assez souvent et assez familièrement il y a quelques 8 ans, il me parut tout à fait raisonnable, et depuis je l'ay fort estimé. En effet c'est assez d'avoir esté à l'épreuve de l'inquisition."
142. For a discussion of the Landgraf, see the articles by Raab in the bibliography.
143. Grua I: 94: "In Batavis mira nunc circa religionem et philosophiam eduntur studio et opera Helmontii qui inauditam patris medicinam alterius argumenti paradoxis vincere velle videtur. Ex Judaeorum cabbalistis et Chemistarum teratologiis multa traxit. His accessere Tremulorum vestrorum et Batavorum abnormes sententiae, et Henrici Mori vestri et Christiani Knorri nostri, egregiorum caetera virorum, quibus diu familiariter usus est, meditationes quaedam inexpectatae. Unde jam novum doctrinae corpus conflavit. Omnia per Messiam creata statuit, velut medium inter Deum et creaturas; animas majorum in posterorum corporibus redire mirabiliter et chronologice computat. Adami illam primariam animam eam esse ipsam quae sunt quae non abhorrent ab opinionibus acuti cuiusdam apud vos viri, qui corporis Christi nescio quibus irradiationibus velut balsamo emendari delerique putat sparsum in nobis venenatum et corporale semen serpentis. Hi sunt fructus degenerantis libertatis. Ut difficile sit inter persecutionem et licentiam tenere modum."
144. G III: 176: "Nous avons eu ici Mons. Helmont durant quelques jours; luy et moy nous nous rendimes tous les matins vers les 9 heures dans la chambre de Madame l'Electrice; Mons. Helmont tenoit le bureau, et moy j'estois l'auditeur, et de temps en temps je l'interrogeois, car il a de la peine à s'expliquer clairement. Il a des opinions bien extraordinaires; avec tout cela je trouve qu'il a des tres bons sentimens pour la pratique, et qu'il seroit ravi de contribuer au bien general, en quoy il est entierement de mon humeur; il a esté ami particulier de Mad. la Comtesse de Kennaway, et il me conta l'histoire de cette Dame extraordinaire. Il me parla fort aussi de H. Henry Morus, qui a aussi esté de ses amis."
145. Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont," p. 129: "Il n'est pas besoin de s'interroger beaucoup sur les faisons de l'accueil empressé qu'on réserve à van Helmont dans toutes les cours: la quête de la *pierre philosophale* intéresse les princes. Et Leibniz, conseiller de Sophie, n'y est pas indifférent. C'est ainsi que la *magia naturalis* se trouve au coeur des relations helmontiennes."
146. Becco says that the question of whether or not van Helmont possessed the secret of transmutation was not directly dealt with in the correspondence between Leibniz and van Helmont (*Ibid.*, p. 129), but this is not the case. See LBr. 389, fols. 74, 82.

147. AK I, 3: 442. Letter to Christian Philipp (2/12 November 1680): "Il y a peu d'apparence que le jeune Helmont sçache de faire la projection: je luy ay parlé assez familierelement il y a environ 8 ans, et il a parlé assez ingenument, pour me faire connoistre qu'il n'a rien de cette nature."
148. "Binae fere septimanae sunt quod hac [sic] transit Fransciscus Mercurius Helmontius, mihi jam ante viginti quinque propemodum annos notus, cum eo fere quotidie in conclave Electricis Brunsivicensis sermones contuli super variis rebus. De adeptorum philosophia loquitur modestissime nec magna promittit, et qui ipsi credet mentem potius alio vertet. De caetero multas habet paeclaras notitas fuitque mihi consuetudo ejus jucundissima. Spem fecit in reditu huc revisendi, quod nobis erit gratissimum, sed aetas ejus gravis facit, ut diuturnam sibi possessionem viri polliceri Respublica vix possit, est enim octuagenario proximus." (Letter dated 26 March 1696, quoted in Ludwig Stein, *Leibniz und Spinoza*, p. 329) Leibniz adds an interesting comment about the Rosicrucians, which indicates that he was willing to consider, if only to reject, all kinds of ideas from all sort of sources: "I suspected that the Rosicrucians were a fiction, which Helmont confirmed, for to know those things which occur in remote places and to make oneself invisible and invulnerable is nonsense or laughable."
149. Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont," p. 129.
150. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 121: "Leibniz se montre critique mordant, lorsque par exemple, il se félicite que van Helmont ait rencontré en Buchius un homme qui explique ses sentiments de manière intelligible; il "plaisante" volontiers sur les "rêveries de feu M. de Helmont." La transmigration surtout excite ses sarcasmes; ces "pensées extraordinaires et peut-être allégoriques" qu'il nous "debité" "prétent à rire."
152. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
153. Erikson, *Letters to Erik Benzelius the Younger from Learned Foreigners*, I: 41.
154. (30 January 1699) G III: 252–3.
155. Michell Ficant agrees with Becco in thinking that Leibniz made ironic remarks at van Helmont's expense, while I see these same remarks as signs of interest and affection.
156. Brown, "Leibniz and More's Cabalistic Circle," p. 93, note 34.
157. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
158. Placcius to Leibniz, 11 April 1696 (quoted in Becco, "Leibniz et François Mercure van Helmont," p. 122): "Ex cabbalisticis Helmontiis et Knorrii ego fateor me parum aut nihil proficer potuisse. Non video fundamenta illius rei solida ulla..." Lebniz to Placcius, 19 May 1965 (*Ibid.*): "Ego Franc. Mercurium Helmontium et Korrium Sulzbacensem, non a cabbalisticis suis mediationibus, sed aliis multis rectis, ut mihi videtur, sentiis et notitiis apud te laudavi. Atque ita factus sum, ut ubique quaeram atque animadvertam potissimum, quod laudam, quam quod reprehensionem miretur."
159. Coudert, "The *Kabbala Denudata*: Converting Jews or Seducing Christians."
160. Grua I: 117 (1 October 1697): P.S... Ma lettre est bien remplie, de paroles au moins. Mais la vostre me donne encor sujet d'adjouter quelque chose. Monsieur van Helmont a repassé chez nous en allant à Sulzbach, et j'espere qu'il reviendra bientost. Il est nullement Misanthrope, au contraire il est tres honneste homme et a des tres bons sentimens. Mais il est extraordinaire et on ne le gouste pas d'abord. Outre que l'age l'affaiblit un peu, car il a je crois 80 ans passés. Et cependant, il fait ses voyages dans les chariots de poste et sans valet. Il ne manque pas d'argent, mais il evite de parler de chymie..."
161. G III: 427: "Je crois que p. 287 on veut parler de feu Mr. van Helmont le fils, qui fut dans les prisons de l'inquisition à Rome, et qui s'avisa dans cette solitude d'examiner l'usage des organes dans la pronunciation des lettres, et crut y trouver la formation de leur characteres. J'ay connu particulierement le même personnage, et il faut que je luy fasse la justice de dire, qu'il n'estoit pas si ignorant dans la morale qu'il semble qu'on le

représerve ici. Ce fut lui qui fit réimprimer le *Lycurgus* d'Ottavio Pisani, qui avait donné des avis au public sur la manière d'abréger les procès. Sa conduite étoit sans reproche, ses actions pleines de charité et de désintérêt; et à quelques chimères près, qui lui étoient restées des impressions de la jeunesse et comme une maladie heréditaire, c'estoit un excellent homme dont la conversation étoit très instructive pour ceux qui en savoient profiter. Ses ouvrages ne font voir que ce qu'il y avoit en lui de moins louable."

162. Aiton, *Leibniz*, p. 144.
163. Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod-Guelph 30.4, f. 10–10v.
164. Pierre Béhar, for example, has suggested that von Rosenroth influenced Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (*Silesia Tragica...* Wolfenbüttler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung, Bd. 18. Wiesbaden, 1988, pp. 319ff).
165. Leibniz advocated the use of German in: *Ermahnung an die Teutschen, ihren Verstand und Sprache besser zu üben, sammt beygefügten Vorschlag einer Deutsch gesinten Gesellschaft und Unvorgreiffliche Gedanken betreffend die Ausübung und Verbesserung der Teutschen Sprache*.
166. *Hypothesis physica nova* (1671). This was published anonymously under the initials G. G. L. L. Von Rosenroth included it in his translation of Thomas Browne.
167. *Des Vortrefflichen Herren Johann Baptista Portae, von Neapolis Magia Naturalis oder Haus-Kunst und Wunder-Buch...* Sulzbach, 1680, pp. 207–8.
168. Salecker, *Christian Knorr von Rosenroth*, p. 4. For his daughter's description, see LBr 389, ff. 17ff.
169. P. Zesen, *Das Hochdeutsche Helikon Rosenthal*. Amsterdam, 1669, pp. 112–3. Quoted in Salecker, *Christian Knorr von Rosenroth*, p. 6.
170. Quoted in Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont," p. 131: "Feu M. Knorr, qui nous a donné le Zohar des Juifs et la Cabbala denudata, et qui était peut-être le plus habile homme de l'Europe pour la connaissance des choses les plus cachées des juifs, me montra une construction du carré magique par mémoire, qui revenait à votre méthode indienne autant que je me souviens. Je cherçai le brouillon que j'en fis, car j'ai été trop distract par d'autres choses pour y penser depuis. Cela me fait croire qu'il aura appris cette méthode des Juifs ou des arabes."
171. *Ibid.*: "Je veux pourtant satisfaire à votre ordre touchant le carré magique dont j'ai enfin trouvé la méthode, que feu M. Knorr de Rosenroth me communiqua... Je m'imagine qu'il l'aura trouvé dans quelque livre cabalistique."
172. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Cod-Guelph, 30.4, f. 29v: "Tam remota quidem a vobis ora vivere cogor, prohibent ab itinere officium publicam resque oeconomica..."
173. D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries*.
174. It has been argued that it is anachronistic and inappropriate to apply the term "antisemitism" before the nineteenth century (when it was first used) and that the term "anti-Judaism" should be employed instead. To my mind such a distinction would be valid if the hostility shown towards the Jews before the nineteenth century had been purely a matter of religion. However, it was not; and although the concept of race was not clearly defined (as it still is not) there were clear racial overtones to medieval and early-modern hostility towards the Jews. The literature on this subject is enormous. A place to start is with Gavin Langmuir's *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Although Langmuir has reservations about using the term "antisemitism," he concludes that it is applicable after 1100. For documentation of the intense antisemitism of the period see Yardeni, Oberman, Hsia, Manuel, Shachar, and Couder, "The *Kabbala Denudata*: Converting Jews or Seducing Christians." For a different interpretation see Schoeps, *Philosemitismus in Barock; Barock Juden, Christen, Judenchristen*.

175. "Amica Responsio," KD I, 2: 75–6: "... in Scriptis Juaeorum Cabbalisticis me inventurum sperem, si quid superest Antiquae Philosophiae Barbarico-Judaicae... nihil magis in votis habui, quam ut dissipatis omnibus obstantium impedimentorum nubilis Sole ipso atque Luce ejusdem clariore, frui mihi liceret; quam aspicere posse vix speravi, nisi ipsorum vestigiis insistens rivulorum horum ductu ipsam perseverer scaturiginem; quam in antiquioribus illis Libris me inventurum adhuc opinor."
176. *Ibid.*, p. 75: "... quotiescumque detestandam illam Ecclesiarum discordiam dolui, cuius mala potissimum ab ista dissensionum seminatrice Philosophia nostra Gentili exorta esse, facilissime demonstrari posset; viam quoque mediantibus his studiis inveniri posse quandoque censui ad concordiam Christianam in distractas reducendam Ecclesias..."
177. "Lectori Phiebraeo Salutem!" KD II, 1: 18–19: "Unde cognoscere poteris quanto studio, in te ferar, imo cum periculo propriæ sanitatis & vitae meae: ut de bonis & sumtibus nihil dicam. Nec deterri me passus sum cum circa initia Magistro meo jam seni, cuius nomen ob odium contributum ejus reticeo, alias sua laude haud privandum, duo morientur liberi; & mox totidem & mihi, quod ille in poemam publicatae hujus doctrinae fieri interpretabatur. Nec deterreor tot non minus domesticorum meorum, quam Amicorum undique omnis monitis; hoc solo fine ut tibi inserviam: ut nimirum rerum Hebraicarum cognitio non amplius versetur circa nuda Ritualia; nedum Grammaticalia; sed ut ad res ipsas accedatur, earumque cum pharsi & doctrina Novi foederis fiat collatio; si forte hoc etiam medio facilitari queat Judaicae gentis ad fidem Jesu Messiae conversio."
178. Schmitt, "The Perennial Philosophy from Agostino Steuco to Leibniz."
179. Daniel Cook, "Leibniz's Uses and Abuse of Judaism and Islam."
180. Foucher de Careil, *Leibniz*, pp. 57–9: "M. Rosenroth a publié, dit-il, différentes choses sans y mettre son nom, comme la *Kabbala denudata, pars prima et secunda*. La première contient un procédé pour teindre les étoffes, pris à quelques juifs et qui doit être excellent. La deuxième partie a quelques morceaux du Zoar, le Zoar édité en hébreu, avec d'anciennes gloses. Guillaume Prostel [sic] a commencé une traduction du Zoar sur ce qu'on lui en avait envoyé à Oxford, mais il n'a pas suffisamment compris. Il était dépourvu des secours que nous avons maintenant. Les juifs éditent en ce moment à Sulzbach un nouveau testament syriaque en caractère hébreu. Il a été édité une harmonie des Évangiles; la version de Luther est imprimée en caractère allemand. Les Évangiles de Mathieu, Marc, Luc et Jean sont désignés par les lettres a b c d, ce qui se trouve dans un seul d'entre eux et marqué par une seule lettre, ce qui dans plusieurs est marqué par plusieurs lettres. Il a de beaux livres orientaux dont l'index se trouve à la fin de la *Kabbala denudata*. Il a traduit de l'anglais certaines questions sur la préexistence des âmes; il y a là des opinions qu'il n'adopte pas comme les siennes. Il a donné ses soins à l'édition allemande des œuvres de Helmont et ajouté quelques commentaires. Le nouvel Hélicon est un recueil de chants sacrés (Lieder), imprimé, je crois à Francfort, et qu'on trouve à Nuremberg, chez Felsekern."

J'ai parcouru avec lui la *Kabbala denudata* dont j'ai tiré ce qui suit:

L'Etre infini consiste dans un point indivisible, et la lumière émanée ou la sphère d'activité envoie à son gré sa lumière.

La premier né des créatures, le Messie, en tant que créature (*geschaffen*), est appelé Adam Kadmon; il reçoit les premiers rayons de la lumière et les envoie sur les créatures.

La deuxième classe est Adam ou le corps des âmes.

La troisième classe est celle des intelligences supérieures aux âmes.

La quatrième *quae est microprosopon*, ou plus brièvement, des colères.

La cinquième classe est celle des intelligences inférieures qui sont tombées et qu'il appelle Adam Belial.

La dernière classe est celle du royaume ou des sephirs dans laquelle les esprits ou *formes substantielles* sont contenus. Saisies du dégoût de la lumière supreme et

obscurcies dans leur chute, les six classes renfermées dans Adam Belial en ressentirent une certaine souffrance comme les créatures inférieures, et c'est là ce qu'a dit saint Paul quand il parle des souffrances des créatures. Cette corruption même s'est glissé jusque dans les classes supérieures; mais le Messie est descendu et il a mis les classes supérieures à la place des classes déchues. Des anges tombés il a fait des écorces (cortices), c'est-à-dire des lumières obscures. Ce sont elles qui ont ensuite emmené les âmes en captivité, et c'est ainsi que les âmes étaient contenues dans les écorces dont elles furent tirées peu à peu par la génération, ce qui suppose, remarque Leibniz, que le choix leur est enlevé. Les âmes sont divisées en âme de la tête, du cou, etc. Le corps contient huit fois la mesure de la tête, et ce signe est cabalistique; il signifie le huitième millénaire du monde.

L'homme, qui est à la fois le résumé et le dernier terme de la création, est un monde en raccourci, ou *microcosmos* [written in Greek]. Quand les écorces seront épuisées, c'est-à-dire quand toutes les âmes en auront été tirées, ce sera l'époque de la consommation. Les âmes ont toutes péché dans Adam et Ève, d'où le péché originel. Le Messie a pris un corps, il faut donc distinguer trois choses en lui, sa divinité, son rang, le premier né des créatures, et enfin ce qui est né, dans le temps, d'une vierge. Il y a différentes interprétations sur les personnes divines. Le Fils répond à la classe du Messie, et l'Esprit-Saint à celle des âmes. Saint Paul paraît distinguer entre Dieu et le Père de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ. Il fixe la venue du Messie et son règne sur terre environ à l'année 1832.

181. AK I, 5: 43: "Je trouve encore un très habile homme à Sulzbach, qui est Directeur des Conseils, il s'appelle Mr. Knorr de Rosenroth. Il passe le temps, que sa charge lui laisse, à la recherche de la nature par la chymie, et à déterrer les Antiquités cabalistiques des anciens Juifs, où il a trouvé des choses très excellentes touchant le Messie que les Juifs modernes ignorent, ou tachent de supprimer ou de détourner de leur véritable sens. Leur Livre capital sur la Cabala s'appelle Zoar, et est tout différent du Thalmud, peu de Chrétiens l'ont vu, et le peuvent entendre. Plusieurs se moquent encore de telles entreprises, mais moi je suis d'un autre sentiment. J'estime par tout ce qu'il y a de bons, et suis bien aise de cette différence des génies et des desseins, qui fait que rien n'est à négliger, et que l'honneur de Dieu et le bien des hommes est avancé de plusieurs façons."
182. (April 24?, 1688) AK I, 5: 109: "... Sulzbaci locutus sum Directori Cancellariae Dn Knorri, viro magnae eruditio. In poesi Germanica paucos pares habet, sed haec minima ejus laudum. Ut de rebus chymicis et mathematicis nihil dicam, vix quisquam hodie Christianorum in recondita Hebraeorum doctrina versatior. Multa ex libro Zoar excerpta edi curavit, quibus Christianas etiam veritas comprobatur. Apparet enim traditiones veterum Christo testimonium perhibere. Habet quoque complures libros Judaeorum Cabbalisticos ex oriente allatos, in Europa prope invisos, qui commentariorum vicem in librum Zoar praestant. Apparet Cabalam Judaeorum esse quoddam Metaphysicae sublimioris genus, quod verborum involucris exutum quaedam praeclara ostendit, tametsi alia inspergantur notae vilioris. De Messia sentiunt magnifice, et ultra humanam mesuram, neque ut vulgus suae nationis, nudum puer, in quo Christi Historia inde a conceptu usque ad disputationem in templo collatis Cabalistarum locis pulcherrime ornatur."
183. (30 April/9 September 1688) AK I, 5: 235: "... Sulzbaci multum fuit mihi colloquium cum Amplio. Knorri directore cancellorum aulicorum; magno et non ignorabim Hebraeophilo; et in profundiore illa parte linguae Judaicae quam Kabbalam vocant supra plerosque Christianos versato. Is multa insignia manuscripta partim ex oriente nactus est, partim aliunde comparavit sibi, unde arcana illius doctrinae eruit, quae fere metaphysica est in *Kabbala denudata*, atque alibi passim specimen dedit. Ostendit mihi jam prope confectum opus, cui titulus est: *Messias puer*, ubi Historia Christi ab annunciatione ad baptismum usque, quae ab Evangelistis traditur cum aliunde, tum ex locis veterum cabalistarum mirifice illustratur. Magno plausu accepit et Aethiopicorum tuorum speratam

continuationem et quae de Samaritanorum ad Te Epistola, et tuo illo instituto conferendi varia Alphabeta narrabam. Est et ipse *polygottos* [written in Greek], itaque optarem inter vos commercium intercedere."

184. LBr 389, f. 33: "... dat ick my in twee deelen niet konden deylen dat ick konden met myne genadige 2 Sophia in den garden gaen wandelen daer nu noch wat schoon weder is."

185. *Ibid.*, f. 23 (March, 1696): "Monsieur, ... La Lettre que je Vous envoye, Monsieur, est de Monsgr. Knorr de Rosenroth, fils de feu Monsgr. le Directeur de Sulzbach, qui estoit vostre digne ami, et encore le mien. Ce jeune Mr. Knorr est gentihomme de la Cour de Wolfenbutel. Je vois par celle, qu'il m'ecrit en meme temps qui'il vous croyoit encore à Hanover, et it me fait scavoit par ordre de Monsgr. le Duc Antoine Ulric, que S.A.S. souhaiteroit de vous voir et entretenir. Je me souviens de vous avoir dit icy, Monsieur, quoque de moy-meme, que vous feriez sans doute un plaisir singulier à ce Prince, si vous passiez chez luy. Et je voy de n'avoir pas mal deviné. Cependant vostre voyage de Berlin en aussi bonne companie, qui celle que vous avés eue, ne vous ayant pas permis d'aller cette fois à Wolfenbutel, j'espere que ce sera une autrefois, lorsque vous repasserés chez nous. Je souhaite, que vous le fassiez en bonne santé aussi tost que vostre commodité le permettra, et que nous puissions jouir de vostre conversation des années entieres. Madame l'Electrice de Bronsvic ne scauroit recevoir un plus grand plaisir, puis que le souvenir meme du peu de temps que vous avés été icy, lui est agreeable. Il est vray, qu'Elle sera toujours contente de le partager avec Madame l'Electrice de Brandenbourg, qui n'a pas moins de goust pour les choses et pour les personnes excellents.

Au reste je me rapport à nous discours, et je serai bien aise d'apprendre, que vous ayés pris la resolution de communiquer bientost au monde quelques unes de vos belles et importantes pensees. Et je suis avec zele,

Vostre humble et tres-obeyant Serviteur,
Leibniz."

186. *Ibid.*, f. 27 (20 March 1696): "Monsieur,

Je prens la liberté de vous recommander l'incluse pour Mr. Helmont, ne scachant comment la luy faire tenir autrement, car je ne doute pas que vous ne connoissiez pas un homme, dont le nom et les vertus sont si connus dans le monde. Il se trouve presentement à Hanover, et S. A. Sme. le Duc mon Maitre est curieux de connoître un homme, dont la renommé luy a dit tant de bien. Si vous le pourrerez persuader de venir icy, vous obligerez S. A. sensiblement. Pour moy je ne vous serois pas moins obligé, car, comme il a toujours honoré feu Mr. mon pere de son affection, et qui'ils étoient les plus intimes amys, et que j'ay l'honneur de le connoître depuis longtems, je souhaiterois bien de pouvoir me recommander dans les bonnes graces. Au reste je suis, Monsieur,

Vostre tres humble et obeissant serviteur
H. Knorr de Rosenroth."

187. *Ibid.*, f. 34: (Berlin, 7 April 1696): "Ick en kan V. D. L noch het Hanover se gezelschap niet vergeten. zulk zoo het my moyelyck zal zyn, dat myne gezondtheyt ende affaires toclaten, is myne intentie, myne rugreyze van zolzbach naer Hanover te nemen, ende zoo ick onze lieve hizige Courvurstien oock aldaer zal vinden, zal de harmoni perfeckt zyn. Hope dan naer het schryven van de Heere Leibniz, ende de heere Knor de Rosenroot, hare Durchlucht, den hertogh Antoine Ulrich, de handen te gaen kussen. Ick verblyve, die ick atryt geweest ben, met V. D. L den zegen des Heeren te wensen. H."

188. *Ibid.*, f. 33 (Ter Borg, October, 1696): "Durchleuchtigste Courvurstin

Tsedert myne Afreyze van Hanover om naer Amsterdam hare D L de Courvurstin van Brandenbourg te gaen vinden, zoo heb ick haer te Bilevelt aengetroffen alwaer ick haer met droefheyt verlaten heb: wonderling om dat zy my te rugh wilden voeren naer Hanover. De refugie was my heel sensibel wonderling ziende dat ick my in twee deelen

niet konden deylen dat ick konden met myne genadige 2 Sophia in den garden gaen wandelen daer nu noch wat schoon weder is

Hier zynde aenkommen heb ick my by V D L met myne Baze menigh mael gewenst om haer met verstandiche persoonen oft predicanter te hooren spreken weghen de dispute der religie.

Zy heeft den Bybel met vlys gelezen is goedtaerdigh en goetdoende vry van onverstandiche imbeeldinghe zoo kan zy met discretie den Mensen doen bekennen dat de schristure die de mensen gegeven is moet zyn nae ider zyne qualiteyt ordentelyck en verstandich nae deze muzike brengt zy alle deelen der dispute in verstand en liefde ten eynde deze myne baze heef my verteelt onder andere deze naervolghende zaken die zy op myn verzoek int frans geschreven heeft oordeelende dat het konden dienen om affgeschreven te worden om naer vranckreyt te Zynden aen Madame als oock den droom van de Dochter van de heere van Rosenrootd die de Hoogduytse Rymen uyt den Latyne van Boetius overgezet heeft Ick vermeye alhier noch ettelijke daghen te verblyven om myne schriften affeschryven ende te adjusteren eer ick naer Amsterdam denck te reyzen. soo ick hier oft daer V. D. L eenighen dienst kan doen kunnen de brieven geaddresseert vorden aen my ten huyze van Madame La Barone de Merode dict Mutzfelt..."

189. *Ibid.*, f. 99 (10/20 October 1698). See also Leibniz's letter to van Helmont (29 December 1697) in which he thanks him for carrying out certain political negotiations (*Ibid.*, f 97).

190. Coudert, *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont*, ch. 2.

191. LBr 389, f. 73 "(La Haye ce 1er de Dec. 1696): M'ayant trouvé dernierement, Madame, dans une compagnie à Bruxelles, ou estoit la Princesse de Chimay, de la famille de Bossu, je ne scay comme l'on vint à parler du Sr. de Helmont. Elle me prit à part, et se mit à me faire je ne scay si c'estoit un Eloge, ou une critique de la vie de cet homme là. La conclusion est, q'elle me dit le connoistre particulierement pour un homme, qui a des secrets merveilleux en matiere de Medecine, et d'autres choses; mais que cela le rend errant, me tesmoignant que c'est par crainte qu'on attrape les Secrets. Il en a un, [à ce que la Princesse me dit] auquel il donne des differens noms, mais lequel aussi tous ceux, qui en ont veu les experiences miraculeuses, baptisent pour le Mercure Diaphoretique, qui est une poudre de couleur de chair.

Pour moy, Madame, je suis l'homme du monde peut-estre qui croit le moins à ces sortes de Secrets. D'Ailleurs il se peut aisement que je n'escrive rien à V.A.S.E qu'Elle me sâche sans cela. Mais la Princesse de Chimay m'a prié si instamment d'en escrire à V.A.E; de l'asseurer que cette poudre est un tresor qui n'a point de prix, et dont elle a veu des effets prodigieux; et de la supplier de ne pas perdre l'occasion d'avoir du Sr. de Helmont le Secret, ou au moins la Poudre, que je ne puis refuser à cette bonne Dame de me donner cette Liberté et d'asseurer par cette occasion V.A.E que je suis

A Steffani Abbé de Lessing."

192. *Ibid.*, f. 74 (4/14 Decembr. 1696): "Vous voyés, Monsieur, par ce que je viens de vous rapporter de la Lettre, que Mad. l'Electrice a recue de Bruxelles, que Mad. la Princesse de Chimay estime infiniment vostre Secret. Mad. l'Elettrice m'a ordonné de vous écrire ce qui s'en dit, et vous nous en dirés ce que vous jugerés à propos; et ce que vous voudrés que nous disions. Il n'est pas toujours nécessaire de desabuser les gens. Au contraire la bonne opinion qu'ils ont des remedes en augmente l'effect. Outre que je crois aisement, que vous avés des choses singulieres, et qui meritent d'estre estimées, tant sur la Medecine que sur d'autres sujets. Mad. la Princesse de Chimay souhaiteroit, qu'on put avoir au mois quelque chose de la poudre au defaut du Secret. Elle ne demande pas tant ces choses pour elle même, qu'elle nous conseille nous memes de ne pas perdre l'occasion d'obtenir des Secrets ou remedes de cette importance. J'estime la curiosité de cette Dame, et je prefere les gens de ce caractère à ceux, qui ont en meme temps de l'ignorance et du mépris pour ce qu'ils ne scavent point."

193. *Ibid.*, f. 78 (Ter Borg, 14 December 1696): "Ick heb Vwc CVDL genadigh schryven van Linsbourg van den 16/26 October gepassert wel ontfanghen Ick ende myne niche van Merode blyven ons altyt verbonden aan VDL voor de genadighe erinneringhe ende toestemminghe desselviche by HCVDL van Brandenbourg myne genadighe Courvurstin. Den droom van de Maeght van myne niche is een droomende discours geweest dan de Mascherade van een zoentien is verandert worden in een dochtertien die de dobbel aengename Namen is Sophie van myne genadighe Courvurstinnen gegheven zyn worden. De anders zonder interest zynde ende ick sensa turbar m'acosto. zoo om de presentie der vrienden die by den doop waren heb ick in VCVDL name haer gauden beeltenis vereert. Eer ick dezen ten eynde conden breghen ter oorzaake van eenen kramp in de handt die my noch by blyft dat ick alle regulen moet ophouden die zyn begin genomen heeft zynde eenen tydt slapeloos geweest daer eene Colycke op gevolg is met eene swackheydt zoo dat ick een Winter per geworden ben als ick in myne Nichten brief van den eersten dezen an VCVDL geschreven heb Ick dancke den heere van myne toeneminghe in crachten [ende added in copy] hope weder tot eene zomer per te worden om Vwe CVDL ende den genadighen Courvurst noch eens optewachten. Wat aenbelangt he schryven dat de Heer Lybnitz my gedaen heeft weghen het schryven van de Prinsesin van Simay aen VCVDL rakende eene medsyn die ick zoude zeynden. Den Persoon waer voer het is heb ick bereyts een vernoeghen gedaen door zyn excellens den heer Diest affgezante te Brusselen van hare durchlucht dem Courvurst van Brandenbourgh die my een iaer geladen te kleef zynde badt dat ick den Prins de Voudemont die Medesyne zoude deelachtig maken tghen ick als gheen doctor zynde en konden doen. Maer nu heeft hy door myne Nichte van Merode zoo veel te weghen gebracht dat ick die aen eenen verstandighe Doctor die zy by my zullen zeynde zoude willen openbaren tghene ick hem toegezegt heb.
- Zoo VCVDL beyde myne Nicht van Merode ende mynen blinden girighen swagher eenen diens geliefden te doen van haer beyde te helpen door my oft haer een handtbriefken gena digst te schryven getuyghende dat myn swaher by haer gezocht heeft dat zy by my mocht maken dat ick hem alle myne goederen zoude schencken den tydt zoude men ongever mocten melden het en komp op een iaer niet aen. Ick heb myn swagher te weten gedaen door het schryven daer de Copy hier neven gaedt als VDL kan zien dat VDL my zulx zeyden als in den brief staet als dien die hem dat schryven behandighden is hy zeer gram geworden ende eer hy bedaerde zeyde dat hy wilden swart maken by alle hoven daer ick verkeerden dat handt briefken zouden myne nicht haer bedinen kunnen in recht zegt haren advocaat dan het leengoedt dat ick myne nichte gegeven heb daer over mynen zwagher prosedeert is het Voornaemste punck van reche daer hy hem op bewept dat hy ende myne zuster het zelvigh der tich iaren in rust ende vrede als haer eyghen goedt bezeten habben dat niet waer is als den medegaende brieff bewyst. deven myn schryven en gelt niet tot getuygenis maer een anders getuygenis gelt in de rechten zoo het nu gyiel dat door VDL getruygenis bewezen wert dat hy die goederen niet in Vrede genoten heeft ende dat hy daerop het prozes quaem te verliezen zullen zy bey de geholpen zyn alsdan zal ick hem alle myne goederen schenken als ick hem bedenkter wyze in dit schryven te kennen gheef dat den blinden giriger niet en kan zien
- Maer zoo myne nichte het prozes verliest zoo zal ick myne goederen hem niet geven maer andere als den brief melt
- Aen den heer Lybnitz hope ick met den naesten post alle zyne brieven te beantwoorden da tegenwoordlich my het schryven zeer swaer is. Hier nevens gaet het schryven van Rotterdam tot nieus ick bidde my doer imanden te Laten weten oft dezen ter handt is gekomen."
194. "Mad. l'Electrice avoit coutume de dire en parlant de luy, qu'il ne s'entendoit pas luy-mesme" (this comes from a resume of van Helmont's views written by Leibniz in September 1696. Klopp, *Correspondenz mit Sophie*, II, p. 8).

195. Pertz, ed., "Tagebuch," in *Geschichtliche Aufsätze und Gedichte Gottfried Wilhem Leibniz Gesammeltewerk*, pp. 184ff.: "3. August. Der Churfürstin Durchl. haben mir einen Brief von Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans zu lesen geben, darinn sie occassione Hrn. Helmonts über die Seele raisonnirt, und vermeinet, wir hätten deren Unsterbligkeit nur aus dem Glauben, dem natürlichen Verstande nach würde es scheinen, es gehe alles wieder in die Elementen, umb neue Gebuhrten zu machen. So können man auch nicht wohl etwas von Gottes Thun aus den Regeln der Gerechtigkeit urtheilen, weil solche Regeln vor die Menschen; daran das höchsten Wesen nicht gebunden. Soll meine Gedancken darüber geben. Die Gelegenheit von diesen Brief kommt von Hrn. Helmonts Speculationem, welche die Churfürstin an Madame überschrieben, so damit nicht einig, doch seine Zufriedenheit lobet und wündschet..."
4. August. Habe kurze Gedancken über den Brief von Madame vor die Churfürstin aufgesetzt... (p. 184). [These thoughts appear in a letter to the Electress published by Grua I; 378.]
6. August. Vor die Churfürstin punctiret in ihrem Cabinet zu Herrenhausen, was Sie an Madame antworten kändte, die Seelen betr.; als von Hrn. Helmont. Habe Abschrift behalten... (p. 188.)"
196. See van der Wall's articles on Serrarius in the bibliography.
197. "Coelius Secundus Curio wrote a little book, *De Amplitudine Regni Coelestis*, which was reprinted not long since; but he is indeed far from having apprehended the compass of the kingdom of heaven" (*Theodicy*, p. 134). Curio (or Curione) had edited Mario Nizolio's *Observationes omnia M. T. Ciceronis verba ... Basle, 1548*. Curio was listed in the Catholic Index as "auctores primae classis," meaning that all his works were forbidden, although dictionaries and books on non-controversial subjects might be allowed after censored" (J. Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy*, p. 322).
198. LBr 389, f. 9ff. (3 September 1694): "J'ay lû avec plaisir et profit les deux livres que M. Van Helmont a enoyés a V.A.E. Il n'aurait pû mieux adresser les pensées sublimes qui s'y trouvent. Je voudrois qu'il y eut joint le troisième intitulé *Aanmerkingen over den Mensch* cité dans le livre de M. Buchius sur la divinité. J'y trouve bien des choses qui me reviennent assez; mais il y en a aussi ou je n'entre point, faute d'en voir des preuves suffisantes. Plusieurs ne remarquent dans les livres que ce qu'ils croient y pouvoir reprendre, et moy tout au contraire, je me donne toute mon attention a ce qui me parait le plus solide.
- Je suis bien aise que M. van Helmont a trouvé en Mr. Buchius un homme qui explique ses sentimens d'une manière intelligible. J'ai souvent souhaité que feu Mr. Knorr à Sulzbach qui estait si habile homme, eut voulu ou pû en prendre la peine, comme il avoit commencé de faire dans son livre sur la Science Cabalistique des Juifs. Mais je souhaiterois encor d'avantage que quelqu'un conservat a la posterité quantité de belles découverts que Mons. van Helmont doit avoir faites sur plusiers arts et sciences en particulier.
- Quant aux deux livres, je voy que l'un ne porte point le nom de son auteur. C'est pourquoy je doute si M. van Helmont voudra l'avouer. Il est vray que l'éternité des peines qu'on y contredit, n'est pas conforme à l'ancienne Theologie des Pagens, et n'est pas assez recue chez les juifs. Et même parmy les Chretiens. Le grand Origen ne l'a point crue. Il semble que S. Gregoire de Nysse à penché du costé des Platoniciens, qui ont crû que tous les Chastimens du Dieu ne sont que des Medecines, et n'ont pour but que l'amendement. S. Jerome et quelques autres peres n'ont pas esté eloignés de croire tous les Chrestiens seroient en fin sauvé après avoir passé par le feu; ainsi l'enfer leur devoit un purgatoire. Dans le Siecle passe un scavent homme Celsius Secundus Curio fait un livre de la grandeur du Royaume Celeste, ou il pretend prouver que le nombre des sauvés est incomparablement plus grand que celuy des damnés, non obstant ce qui se dit du chemin estroit. De nostre temps Pierre Serrarius qui estoit a Amsterdam, a déjà

voulu annoncer aux hommes cet Evangile nouveau pretendu, ou cette bonne nouvelle de l'Extinction de l'enfer. On dit que S. Louis (si je ne me trompe) recontra une fille qui portait d'une main un flambeau allumé, et une cruche pleine d'eau de l'autre: Le roy lui demanda ce cela vouloit dire. Elle respondit que c'estoit, pour bruler le paradis et pour éteindre l'enfer, à fin que les hommes servissent Dieu dorenavent, sans crainte servile et sans esperance mercenaire. Passé pour la crainte de l'enfer, mais pour les paradis, c'est autre chose. Ca puisqu'il consistera dans la vision de Dieu, comment peut on aimer Dieu de tout son coeur sans souhaiter de le voir le plus qu'il est possible. On dit que les Suisses deliberant, s'il falloit garder le purgetoire quelcon de la compagnie se levant leur proposa, puisque ils y estoient, de casser encor les diables avec tout l'enfer. Mais pour parler serieusement, mon sentiment est, que les peines ne scauroient estre éternelles qu'à cause de l'éternité des pechés. Ceux qui pecheront tousjours seront tousjours punis avec justice.

Mais je passe a l'autre livre dont le sujet est plus étendu, puisqu'il contienne les principes de la Theologie de M. van Helmont, mis en ordre par M. Buchius. J'ay este ravi de voir qu'on reprend dans la preface, ceux qui séparent la Theologie d'avec la philosophie. Cela justifie assez Mons. van Helmont contre ceux qu'l'accusent de donner dans l'enthousiasme. Car les Enthusiastes ont cela de commun avec les Libertins, qu'ils disent des injures à la raison.

Je suis encor de sentiment de M. van Helmont lors qu'il reprend les Gassendistes et les Cartesiens qui s'attachent uniquement à la philosophie corpusculaire, qui explique toutes les choses de la nature par la matière ou par l'étendue. Et j'ay fait voir moy même qu'il y faut encor faire entrer le principe de la force dans lequel consiste pour ainsi dire la connexion des choses spirituelles et corporelles. Car je tiens que les lois de la nature et les principes de la physique ne scauroient estre expliqués qu'en employant les principes metaphysiques dont on a besoin pour bien entendre ce que c'est que la force.

Je demeure encor d'accord que toutes les substances durent tousjours et ne scauroient perir. Ce que je tiens véritable non seulement à l'égard des âmes humaines mais encor à l'égard de celles des autres animaux. J'ay fort disputé la dessus par lettres avec le celebre M. Arnaud. Ce n'est pas que je croye la transmigration des âmes; mais je crois la transformation d'un même animal, qui devient tantost grand tantost petit, et prend diverses formes, comme nous voyons faire les vers à soye, quand ils deviennent papillons. Cela est plus conforme à l'ordre, que la transmigration, il y a donc de l'apparence qu'il n'y a ny generation ny mort à la rigueur, mais que l'animal ne fait qu'estre enveloppé et developpé, l'ame demeurant tousjours unie a un corps organique, quoique ce corps puisse devenir incomparablement plus subtil, que les objets de nos sens. C'est ce qui a déjà dit l'ancien auteur d'un livre attribué à Hippocrate. Et même l'auteur de l'Epistre aux Hebreux dit que les choses apparentes sont produites des non apparentes. Cependant je ne veux point étendre cette doctrine a l'homme, ny à l'ame humaine, estant persuadé qu'ayant en elle l'image de Dieu, elle est gouvernée par des loix toutes particulières, dont on ne scauroit apprendre le détail que par la révélation. Et comme il semble que la Ste Ecriture n'a point voulu s'expliquer la dessus, autant que nous le désirerions, je doute que nous puissions espérer dans cette vie un aussi grand détail de l'estat de l'autre vie, que M. van Helmont nous semble donner.

Je suis fort de son sentiment lors qu'il refute ceux qui croient que nostre ame se perd dans l'esprit universel. Il semble que c'est l'opinion de quelques Mystiques et Quietistes. Mais c'est une chimere qui n'a point de sens; outre qu'elle est contraire a l'immortalité.

Lors qu'il compose tout de feu et d'eau et les prend pour des principes spirituels, je crois qu'il les entend allégoriquement, et qu'il a voulu signifier par la le principe actif et le principe passif.

J'apprécie sur tout son sentiment de l'infini des choses, et j'ay déjà dit dans le journal des scavants que chaque partie ayant des parties, à l'infini, il n'y a point de petite

portion de la matiere qui ne contienne une infinite actuelle de creatures et apparemment de creatures vivants. C'est par là que la nature porte par tout le caractere de son Createur. Et il est assez raisonnable de croire que chacune de ces creatures, quelque petite qu'elle soit, aura son temps pour parvenir a une plus grand perfection. Il parle encor de l'enveloppement de toutes choses dans le premier homme; de la propre humanite individuelle d'Adam unie au Messie; aussi bien que nostre dependance encor presente d'Adam; et de sa formation du sang de la terre, ou de la vie terrestre. Item, qu'Adam et Eve, ont esté chacun homme et femme, et par consequent quatre en tout, et que c'est pour cela que la Messie est venu au bout de quatre mille ans dans la plenitude des temps. Et comment les hommes seront tous reunis dans Adam lors qu'a la consummation du siecle chacun sera venu à sa perfection et aura spiritualité et perfectionné encor avec luy les creatures corporelles qui luy sont attachées; et enfin des revolutions des mondes suivants: Quant à tout cela et de quantite d'autres pensees extraordinaries et peut estre allegoriques que M. van Helmont nous debite, je me dispensoray d'y entrer. Je crois qu'une partie de ces dogmes sont incontestables. Mais avant que d'en juger, il faudra attendre de luy des plus grands éclaircissements. En l'assurant de nostre docilite en tout ce qui n'est point contraire à la raison ny à l'ecriture, ny à la tradition perpetuelle de l'Eglise Catholique. Je me contente de scauvoir en general, qu'à cause de la Sagesse et de la bonté immense de l'auteur des choses, tout est si bien ordonné, et ira si bien, même après cette vie, pour ceux qui aiment Dieu. Apprendre d'avantage, nous en serons ravis. Et je ne doute point qu'il ne juge V.A.E aussi digne que quelque ce soit dans l'univers, d'estre instruite dans ces misteres. Je suis avec devotio..."

199. Pertz, ed. *Tagebuch*: "7. August. Habe diesen Abend mit Herrn von Helmont viel geredet, wegen Erd ausbringen: ob Schiebekarrn guth. Durch motum hominis mit den Karrn viel tempus und vergebene Mühe. Praestat, hominem movere sine motu tanto sui. Von Gold schlagen. Von Braten und Kochen mit eisern Kasten. Zu redressiren, so krumb gewachsen, darinn er in Tractatu de Microcosmo et Macrocosmo, so teutsch nicht völlig sub tit. Paradoxa übersetzt. Von Drucken mit dem Fuss: mit beiden Händen spinnen. Hechel (p. 189)..."

8. August... Den Hern. Helmont meine Gedancken gesagt vom geschwinden fortkommen auff Schuhfedern. Von Voiture auf allezeit glatten Boden. Er meinet... [symbol for mercury and for copper] sey gemacht (p. 190)..."

9 August... Hr. Helmont is Nachmittag bey mir gewesen; haben viel von seinen Speculationibus geredet. Darunter ein und ander Guthes. Ich habe ihm gegen sein Seder olam remonstriret, daß die chronologia sacra aus der Massen ungewiss, weil die LXX Dolmetscher und der Codex Samaritanus vom heutigen Hebräischen Text umb viel 100 Jahr abweichen. Er meinet zu dessen Justification ein Maß zu finden in des Cain 7 mahl und Lamechs 77 mahl, da das Jahr der Sündfluth soll heraus kommen (p. 191)."'

200. Foucher de Careil published two of these, but several more versions exist in various stages of composition, which attest to Leibniz's interest in van Helmont's ideas. See AK I, 11: 17–23.
201. Foucher de Careil, "Remarques inédits de Leibniz sur le *Seder Olam*," *Leibniz*, p. 47: "... j'ai appris que le livre n'a pas été composé par Franz Mercurius Van Helmont, mais par un médecin de ses amis. J'ay lu ce livre il y a déjà du temps, et j'y trouve quelques bonnes pensées, mais mêlées de quantité d'impressions qui ne sont appuyées sur aucun fondement de la raison ni de la sainte Écriture; car les opinions et les expressions de ces anciens cabalistes hébreux ne sauraient servir de preuve assez solide, quoiqu'il y ait quelques-uns qui s'imaginent que ce sont des traditions de Moïse et des anciens sages, parce qu'en effect *cabale* signifie *tradition*"[This is from the first critique].
202. *Ibid.*: "L'auteur commence par une manière de parler qui a quelque chose de choquant, car il dit que Dieu est un agent nécessaire. Cependant, je conviens avec la censure qu'on luy peut donner un bon sens, et c'est ce que la charité ordonne: car, dans le fond, Dieu

est toujours déterminé à faire le meilleur et le plus parfait, et cela n'est pas contraire à la liberté, car la véritable liberté consiste dans le plus parfait usage des facultés."

203. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–54: "Le sentiment des anciens cabalistes paroît avoir été que le Messie, encore suivant son humanité ou en tant que créature, a été toujours l'ami des créatures, c'est ce que feu M. Knorr Rosenroth a montré dans sa *Cabbala denudata*, et l'auteur suit quelquefois les mêmes principes; ce sont des pensées assez belles, mais il n'y en a point de preuves assurées.

L'auteur parle assez étrangement lorsqu'il dit, page 28, que tous les esprits créés sont corporeals; il auroit dit avec plus de justesse que tous les esprits créés sont incorporés. C'estoit aussi le sentiment des anciens philosophes platoniciens, et la pluspart des Pères de l'Eglise ont cru que les anges mêmes avoient des corps subtils. Suivant cette opinion, les âmes ne seroient jamais séparées de tout corps, mais seulement de ce corps grossier. Si c'est l'opinion de l'auteur, elle n'a rien qui soit condamnable.

Il paroît aussi assez probable qu'il n'y a point de substance corporelle dans la nature qui ne soit douée de quelque vie, âme ou perception, ou du moins de quelque entelechie ou force d'agir, qui est le plus bas degré des formes, et s'il n'a pas toute la nature de l'âme, il a du moins quelque chose analogique qui répond à la perception et à l'appétit.

Si l'auteur s'estoit contenté de ces généralités bien entendues, on pourroit être content de lui, mais il passe à des particularités qu'on ne sauroit connoître ni par la raison, ni par la révélation. Cependant il se donne carrière là-dessus et se fait des idées assez plaisantes: il met un monde de création duquel est venu le monde de formation qui est double, supérieur pour les âmes qui sont demeurées dans la pureté de la création, dont le siège est le paradis, et inférieur pour celles qui sont déchues par le péché et qui demeurent hors du paradis dans des endroits nuisibles. Enfin, de ce monde inférieur de formation est venu notre monde qu'il appelle le monde de faction, où il y a une stupidité et comme une espèce de mort qui prévaut sur les âmes, en sorte qu'elles y agissent méchaniquement plutôt que par un principe vital. Ce qui ne se doit pourtant entendre que comparativement, car il y a de la vie et de la corporéité partout, il veut que ce monde visible n'est pas créé, mais fait des actes préexistants, et que les âmes de ce monde ne sont point créées, non plus que nostre corps avec sa vie qui s'appelle *nephesh*, appartient proprement au monde de la faction, et que nostre esprit, que les Hébreux appellent *ruah*, qui est mitoyen entre le corps et l'âme, nous est restée seule du monde de la création. Enfin, que le plus grossier est le véhicule de l'autre, le *nephesh* du *ruah* et le *ruah* du *neshama*, et que vice versa, le plus subtil pénètre l'autre et illumine par ses rayons.

Ces pensées ne sont pas tout à fait exactes dans la rigueur de la vraye philosophie, car dans la vérité il n'y a qu'un monde que Dieu crée encore continuellement, et ce monde est animé partout et étendu partout. Mais on y peut considérer deux règnes, celui des esprits que Dieu gouverne en prince, comme une personne gouverne d'autres personnes, et celui des corps qu'il gouverne en architecte ou machiniste, comme un habile maître gouverne ses machines. Ces règnes se pénètrent et s'entre-répondent profondément, sans que l'un trouble les loix de l'autre, en exécutant tous deux ce qui est dans le monde idéal du divin verbe. Il est vray cependant qu'il y a de la différence entre les esprits ou intelligences et entre les âmes et qu'on y peut joindre peut-être des âmes ou *entelechies* inférieures aux âmes. Mais tout cela ne compose qu'un monde qui se continue et qui comprend tous ces différents être doués de corps organisés suivant leur portée. Si toutes ces *entelechies* sont dans un genre, comme prétend nostre auteur, en sorte que la plus basse puisse arriver à l'estat des plus nobles, c'est ce qui n'est point décidé. La différence entre les corps visibles et invisibles n'est que selon nous, et ne change point le genre; ainsi, si le *ruah* n'est autre chose qu'un corps subtil, on ne le doit point distinguer des autres corps, que comme la petite poussière qui voltige dans les rayons de soleil se distingue des cailloux.

Quoy qu'il en soit, l'auteur, suivant les cabalistes, appelle le monde des créations *briah*, celui de formation *jezhirah*, et celui de faction *asiah*, mots qui se trouvent tous

trois dans Isaïe, chap. xlivi; il monte même encore plus haut et conçoit un monde que les Hébreux appellent *azilath*, qui signifie: ce qui est le plus prochain de Dieu ou de l'Estre meilleur et suprême; mais ce monde n'appartient qu'à l'Estre moyen entre Dieu et les créatures, qui est le Messie, et l'auteur dit plus bas (question 24, sur l'*Apocalypse*) que, outre *psyche* ou *nephesch* tiré du monde *asiatique*, *ruah* du *jeziratique* et *nishmar* [*neshama*] du *briatique*, il y a une quatrième vie nommée *chaja*, qui vient du monde *azilutique*, et qui par conséquent doit estre l'habitation intermédiaire de l'esprit de Jésus-Christ. Ainsi, le monde *azilutique* est du Messie, le *briatique* des âmes, le *jeziratique* des anges non consommés, et l'*asiatique* des hommes revestus de corps visibles. Il est vray que les Hébreux comptent encore douze émanations dans le monde *azilutique*, mais leur différence n'est que modale. Ce monde dure toujours, mais il y a une infinité de *briatiques* ou mondes que Dieu crée de temps en temps dont naissent continuellement de nouveaux mondes *jeziratiques* et *aziratiques*. C'est pourquoi Salomon a dit "qu'on ne sauroit trouver le principe des œuvres de Dieu." Si par le monde *azilutique* l'auteur entend le monde intelligible qui est dans la pensée de Dieu, on le peut admettre, mais alors il ne faut point dire qu'il tient le milieu entre Dieu et les créatures, puisqu'il appartient à Dieu mesme. Quant aux autres mondes, j'ai déjà dit ce qu'on en doit juger. On pourroit même distinguer encore deux sphères ou si vous voulez deux mondes intelligibles en Dieu, scavoir celuy des idées simples qui est le monde de l'entendement divin et celuy des décrets, c'est-à-dire des idées résolues ou projetées qui est le monde de la volonté divine. Et ce monde exécuté est l'univers des natures, composé de deux règnes qui sont: celuy des esprits dont les loix sont morales, et tendant au meilleur, et celuy des corps dont les loix sont mathématiques et tendent au plus grand, et cette combinaison fait tellement la perfection des choses, que ce qui s'exécute est toujours le plus grand bien possible.

L'auteur ne doit pas nier la création présente de âmes, sous prétexte que rien ne se crée ici; c'est tout le contraire, et il faut plutôt dire que tout se crée continuellement, et que sa conservation est une création continuée. Ainsi, il est inutile de disputer de la préexistence des âmes, car soit qu'elles ayant déjà esté ou non, il est toujours vray que Dieu les crée présentement. De dire que les âmes descendent d'un monde supérieur dans un monde inférieur, ce sont des expressions métaphysiques, et tout ce qu'il y a de vray, est qu'une âme peut changer d'estat et monter ou descendre en perfection, sans qu'on en puisse déterminer le détail, puisque la révélation ne nous l'explique point, car, suivant la raison, si des différents degrés des créatures forment différents mondes, il n'y auroit rien qui nous obligeroit à nous borner aux trois mondes de l'auteur. Et si, au-dessus du monde *jeziratique* il y a un *asiatique*, pourquoi n'y auroit-il pas encor un autre au-dessous de celuy-ci et cela à l'infini? Ainsi, il est plus raisonnable de reconnoistre une infinité de degrés dans les perfections des créatures du mesme monde, que d'en faire des différents mondes: ce qui ne sert qu'à estonner les gens par la nouveauté de l'expression. Si l'auteur veut appeler différents mondes les différents règnes qui se pénètrent, il n'en trouvera que deux véritables dans les créatures, le règne moral des esprits et le règne mécanique des corps grossiers, mais ils n'en pénètrent que les corps, au lieu que les corps subtils ou grossiers sont également pénétrés par les âmes et entelechies qui leur sont intimement présentes."

204. Pertz, ed., *Tagebuch*:

"10 August... Mit M. Helmont speculiret. Seine Erklärungen der Heil. Schrifft sind oft wunderlich; unterdessen stecken einige gute Gedancken darunter, damit ich einig. Wir haben fast den ganzen Nachmittag davon geredet. Wegen metempsychosis kan ich von ihm keinen zulänglichen Beweiss höhren (p. 193)..."

12 August... Habe mit Hrn. Helmonts Gedancken diesen Morgen zu thun gehabt, umb ihm meine Meinung deswegen mitzutheilen (p. 194)..."

- 16 August... Mit M. Helmont etliche Stunden geredet von seinen Gedancken, dabey ich nicht wenig Gutthes find, womit ich einig; viel aber mir zweyfelhaft vorkomt; und sonderlich enige wunderliche Interpretationes der heil. Schrift mir nicht anstehen. Seine intentiones und Gemüth finde sehr guth und löblich; auch ist seine Gelassenheit hoch zu schätzen (p. 198)...
- 28 August. Nachmittag meist mit Hern. Helmont zubracht (p. 207).
 Diese Woche bin mit vielen Geschäftten, Visiten, Briefschreiben und Fremden distrahit gewesen, daß ich das Journal vergessen. Will etliche Dinge notiren, so zu behalten dienlich. Habe viel mechanico-physica von allerhand Künsten, Manufacturen und Handwerkern mit Hern. Helmonten überleget, und etliche Bogen damit vollgeschrieben (p. 208)...
205. *Ibid.*: "8. September... An Hrn Lipper zu Lüneburg wegen der Teutschen Version Consol. Phils. Boetii, die er verlegen will (p. 210)... 12. September: ... Freytag soll Exemplaria haben von der Harmonia Evangeliorum, die Ussorio zugeschrieben. Es sind etwa 3 oder 4 Bogen in Druck davon gelassen worden, die hat man ausgelassen. Ist von Hrn. Rosenroth. Soll Herzog Rud. Aug. Durchlaucht geschickt werden, aber an Hern. Herzog Ant. Ulr. das übrige von Messias puer (pp. 212–3)..."
206. LH I, Theologie, V, 2, 25r (9 June 1696): "Deswegen ich vor vielen jahren schon iemand gesuche der in allen stücken ohne zusaz oder abgang eigentlich nach der Urhebers meynung besagte verse oder Reimen geben möchte: endlich auch zu Sulzbach in der Obern Pfalz einen in aller Philosophischen Wissenschaft wohl erfahrenen Mann, Herr Christian Knorr von Rosenrot angetroffen; welcher nicht allein die Lateinischen verse in Teutsch Reimen auf mein ansuchen zu übersezzen auf sich genommen, sondern auch so glücklich darin gewesen, daß viele verständige Leute zwischen dem grund-Text und der Übersetzung keinen unterschied gefunden, and dafür gehalten, man möchte mit fug urtheilen daß wenn beide zu gleicher zeit herfür kommen, zu zweifeln gewesen seyn würde, welches der ursprung, und welches vom andern genommen, oder welchem der Vorzug gebühre.
 Nun hat es sich kürzlich begeben, daß ich nach Hanover gekommen und die Durleuchtigste Churfürstinnen zu Brandenburg und Braunschweig deselbst vorgefunden, und als ein alter bekandter diener denselben aufgewartet; da geschahe daß beyde Churfürstinnen mir manche Christliche und Lehrwurdige weise Fragen, ja fragen auf fragen, vorlegten, die erkäntnis, damit Sie von Gott begab zu vermehren, nach bedeutung beyder Churfürstlichen Person Taufnamens, Sophia. Denn gleich wie Sie von Scheinheiligkeit und gleisnerey entfernet, also lassen Sie sich die wahre Gottesfurcht, so der Weisheit anfang, recht angelegen seyn, und wenden ihre Gemüths-Kräfte an, zu erkennen das wahre liecht und den brunquell alles guthen, suchen auch solches nicht mit leeren worthen, sondern mit der that darzuthun, in dem Sie sich der von Gott verliehenen Hoheit bedienen vielen andern guthes zu erweisen, und reden von nichts lieber, als was zu diesem Hauptzweck der Erkentnis und Liebe diene kan.
 Unter andern kam auch dieses Böetii Büchlein genant Trost der Weisheit in erwehnung da dann der Churfürstin zu Braunschweig durchleuchtigkeit bezeigeten daß Sie solches nicht allen selbst mit großen vernügen gelesen, sondern auch damit bey andern nuz geschaffet, und als Sie das von mir bekommene exemplar einer person gegeben, so in melancholey gefallen, solche durch lesung dessen ganz wieder recht gebracht werden, daher ward ich bey meinem abscheid erinnert dasselbe, wenn ich wieder nach Sulzbach käme, aufzusuchen und davon eine anzahl exemplarien zu übersenden. Weilen aber wie vorgemeldet wenig mehr zu finden gewesen, habe ich bey meiner rückreise zum zweiten mahl zum druck beförtern wollen, der hofnung daß es manchem wohlgesinten gemüth zur erbauung und erquickung dienen werde. Gegeben 9. junii MDCXCVI."
207. 13. September. Hr. Helmont heut früh Abschiedt genommen: geht über Cleve und Geldern nach Holland (p. 213)... 23 September. Einen Brief von Hern. Krafft erhalten,

darin er confirmirt, dass er mit seinen Spiritu 100 pro 100 gewinnen wolle, ob gleich der Span. u. Frz. Brandtwein umb 1/3 abgeschlagen. Er soll aus Fruchtbrandtwein seyn, und habe er eine Invention treflich compendiose ohne Helm zu distillirn. Queritur: ob Herrn. Helmont an Hand zu gebe, darein zu inquiriren...

Hrn. Helmonts Adresse in Amsterdam ist bei Hrn. Christianus Messman, ist ein Kaufman von Hamburg bürtig, wohnt, glaubt er, auff der Kaysers Gracht. Doch ist genug zu setzen à M. Christian Messerman, weil er auff der Post bekand seyn wird (p. 217)...

- 26 September... Ein Urmacher zu Hildesheim hat seinter Frauen vorigen Mannes Bruder bey sich, so taub und stumm, aber sehr gute kleine Uhren machet: hat es mit Zusehen gelernt. Kan den Leuten allerhand mit Zeichen bedeuten und sie ihm. Er verstehet auch die Ziphern (p. 218).
208. G VII: 539–541 (following Klopp, Gerhardt thinks this was written in March. Aiton suggests it was written immediately after van Helmont's departure, *Leibniz*, p. 202): "Mr. Francis Mercury Baron of Helmont, son of the celebrated physician of that name, is an old acquaintance of Madam the Electress of Hanover. He had been a Roman Catholic. Afterwards he became a Quaker, and during the time he was at Hanover, he called himself a seeker. Madam the Electress used to say about him, that he didn't understand himself. He was dressed in a suit of brown cloth in the fashion of the Quakers. He also wore a coat of the same color and a hat without feathers [sans audaces], so that one would have taken him for an artisan rather than for a Baron. He was seventy-nine but at the same time very alive and alert. He knew many trades and worked, for example, at that of a turner, weaver, a painter, and the like. He also perfectly understood chemistry and medicine. He was well versed in Hebrew and was the intimate friend of Mr. Knorr, Chancellor of Sulzbach and author of the *Kabbala denudata*. He furnished him with many Jewish manuscripts on this matter. The *Paradoxes concerning the Macrocsm and the Microcosm* of Mr. Helmont were translated from English into German and printed in Hamburg. The principle opinion he maintained was that of metempsychosis, namely that the souls from dead bodies passed immediately into newly-born bodies, and that, thus, the same souls always played their parts in this theater of the world.

I agree with all the world that animals have real sensitive souls. I maintain also with most of the ancients that all of nature is full of force, of life, and of souls, since one learns through the medium of microscopes that there are a great quantity of living creatures which are not perceptible to the eyes and that there are more souls than grains of sand or atoms. But I further maintain, as Plato already did and Pythagoras before him, who took this opinion for the East, that there is no soul that perishes, not even those of animals. Mr. Helmont agrees with me, although I cannot understand his arguments and proofs. Every body has parts and is nothing but a heap or multitude, like a flock of sheep, or a pond full of drops of water and fish, or a watch that has many springs and other necessary parts. But as all numbers consist of one and one, so all multitudes are composed of unites. Thus unites are the true source and seat of every being, of all [their] force, and of all their sense, and all this is nothing else than souls. From this it incontestably follows, not only that there are souls, but further, that everything is full of souls, what truly constitutes a soul, and, finally, why each souls is incorruptible. Unites have no parts, otherwise they would be multitudes, and what has no parts cannot decay. Thomas Aquinas has already said that the souls of animals are indivisible, from which it follows that they are incorruptible. Apparently he did not wish to explain himself more openly but contented himself with proposing the foundation. One might say that all this could well be but with very little consolation, since although our souls and those of other animals remain, they do not remember the past. But I am of another opinion. I acknowledge that after death we do not remember at first what we were, which would not be proper or seemly for nature. I believe, however, that whatever has once come to a soul, is eternally imprinted on it,

although this does not always return to the memory. In the same way we know many things which we do not always remember unless something gives us the occasion to think about them. Who can remember everything? But because nothing in nature occurs in vain and nothing is lost, but everything tends towards its perfection and maturity, in the same way each image which our soul receives will finally become a whole with all the things that are to come in such a way that we will be able to see everything as if in a mirror and to take from that whatever we find most suitable for our satisfaction. From this it follows that the more we will practice virtue and do good works, the more joy and satisfaction we will have. We must then conclude from this that we must be satisfied at present because in doing good, everything that happens is so well ordered that we could not do better, even if we were very intelligent about these matters.

Our souls are capable of knowing and of governing and they do in the little world what God does in the great world. They are like little Gods who make worlds that perish no less than the universe of which they are the image. Just like the great world, they also tend towards their end. From this it follows that the other souls and bodies should serve those that have some rapport with the divinity in order to achieve their happiness. But at the same time they serve these other souls, they also tend to a greater perfection because the world is like a body which goes to its end without any resistance, since there is nothing in itself that can impede it and nothing outside it that can impede it."

209. On wonders if this was the alchemist Leibniz had helped to finance (see above p. 7).
210. LBr 389, f. 82 ((Borg le 1/11 Mars 1697): "La raison de mon silence c'est ma maladie, laquelle a été si violente qu'on m'a déclaré mort, comme j'en ay donné part à S.A. Madame l'Electrice, dans ma precedente du mois passé.

Pour donner reponse à vos lettres, dont la premiere parle de faire du grain de l'eau de vie, égale à celle du vin, et que j'en pourrais parler à Mr. Krafft comme de moy même; je vous diray, que je m'éloigne volontier de telles personnes; mais à Vous je puis dire que s'il estoit à moy à faire des essais aisés et sans frais, je voudrois prendre de la biere forte et claire de plusiers sortes, et distiller deux ou trois pots de chacune, pour voir si en la seconde distillation je pourrois avoir de l'eau de vie qui seroit sans mauvais goût; afin que la seconde distillation, en y ajoutant de la lie du vin (qu'on appelle Wyn droesen) elle pourroit acquerir le goût de l'esprit de vin. La consideration que j'ai, que le grain qu'on distille, ne peut avoir une telle vertu, c'est qu'on pretend de la faire par la violence du feu, et par une fermentation soudaine, ne considerant pas, que les grapes de raisin se fermentent doucement deux ou bien trois semaines avant qu'on en presse le dit most, et non pas vin; après cela on le laisse fermenter long temps, afin qu'il devienne vin, clair et propre à estre distillé pour en faire de l'esprit. De même on pourra dire de la biere qu'il doit avoir du temps pour fermenter doucement, afin de devenir clair et forte pour estre propre à donner son bon esprit, etc.

La seconde demande, touchant mon avis ou mon opinion pour faire de grands miroirs de verre, s'il estoit à moy à en faire des essais je les voudrois faire d'une maniere naturelle, savoir qu' après avoir bien consideré des parties necessaires pour parvenir au but sans peine et sans frais, je voudrois prendre du Verre fin, propre a en faire des miroirs, et le piller dans un mortier de fer, qui rend le verre bon et noirâtre, au lieu que le cuivre le gate.

Quand j'ai fait quelque fois des verres pour l'optique, j'ai mis de cette poudre, dans une moule faite de la craie blanche, moulee fort menue et pressée dans un cercle de fer, et l'ai mise dans une four, qui reverberoit à foundre, et cela se fondoit fort aisement et fort soudainement, le verre n'estant pas épais. Tout l'art et tout la peine seroit de trouver un four proportionné à la grandeur du verre. Mon avis seroit de le faire de même comme on fait le four pour raffiner quelques centaines marcs d'argent, ou l'on remue aisement la Coupelle ou totis.

Pour l'avis de la Princesse de Chimay j'en ay donné mon sentiment le mois passé à Son Altesse Serme Madame l'Electrice. Plusieurs personnes sont imbu de moy que j'ay la Medecine universelle, et plus que je le denie, plus le croient-ils. Mais les gens d'esprit sont persuadés entierement, qu'une telle Medecine ne se trouve point dans le monde, car elle seroit contre la nature: quaedam sunt in potestate nostra; quaedam autem non sunt. Pour la Personne malade plusieurs m'ont demandé des remedes; mais n'estant pas Medecin, je n'ay pas l'autorité comme eux, et je ne la voudrois pas avoir pour ne pas tromper le monde, et à l'egard de la sudsit personne, qui est ce qui me pourra dire ou assurer, qu'elle pourra parfaitement estre guerie?

Au reste j'ay lieu de soupçonner qu'une Maladie est arrivée à Boetius faute de correction.

Je Vous suis obligé du bon avis que Vous m'avés donné à l'egard de la maniere, dont je pourray me servir pour escrire aisement, et pour cet effet je vous envoie un Plan, pour faire plusieurs reponses en bref au demandes du Gentilhomme, né sourd et muet et à cette heure parlant, qui fera la preface du Livre, vous suppliant de la traduire au premier jour en Latin si vous scavés autant le flaman. Je souhaiterois de l'avoir pour le plus tard en trois semaines, parce qu'alors je voudrois aller en Hollande, de memo Vous trouverés l'entreé dudit livre etc. Monsieur je demeure, comme vous savez

H

NB. La Medecine que Madame la Princesse de Chimay et plusiers autres demandent n'est pas universelle; mais elle est bonne et se prepare d'un Cinabre mineral, qui se trouve en Hongrie, comme aussi au Necker dans le Palatinat. J'en avois recu du Docteur Faust le Vieux, Professeur à Heydelberg. Je l'ay autrefois trouvé à vendre à Amsterdam ou on le vendoit à la mode de Hollande à grand prix. Si on le pouvoit avoir de Necker ce seroit commode. Je me suis defait du mien. Je pourray Vous en communiquer la préparation et la vertu à nostre entrevue."

211. LBr 389, f. 23 (1 March 1696): "...je me rapporte à nos discourse, et je serai bien aise d'apprendre, que vous ayés pris la resolution de communiquer bientost au monde quelques unes de vos belles et importantes pensées."
212. *Ibid.*, f. 49 (Ter Borg, October, 1696): Monsieur et tres cher Amy.

Vous aures ici Le 150 Aphorismes joint le Livre du retour des ames, auquel iesus entre autre Contrarie les douze Retours, et Au dit livre Vous trouverés audict titre inclose le titre angloise Promise du nom de l'Auteur de Livre de L'Enfer.

Les autres escripts pour Mr. le Professeur de Hart pour joindre au Livre de la Concordance de Nouveau Testamt., que Mr. Knor de Rosenrot et l'Auteur, Vous supplie de lui les seur addresser en faisant mes baise mains, et lui dire, quil pourra faire et disposer à l'imprimerie en Liberté selon qui trouvera bon, puis que iay connue, quil est sage et discret.

Les escripts de Mr. Knor de Rosenrot, qui S.A. Serme. Monseigr. le Duc Antoine Ulric de Bronsvic demande, pur le faire imprimer. je iuge a propos comme en peu de jours ispere daller a Amsterdam de les prendre avecq moy pour voir si La ie les peu mieux faire imprimer quoys faisant Vous aures part de mesme ie donnerey a S. A Le Serme. Je demeure Comme Vous saves, Monsieur.

H

De brieven konnen geaddresseert werden aan my ten Huyse van Mad. la Baronne de Merode dict Mutzfeld à Emmerick om vort te bestellen naer ter Borg.

213. *Ibid.*, f. 53 (18 October 1696): "Je Vous remercie, Monsieur, des Aphorismes chymiques, du titre Anglois du livre de l'enfer, et des deux cens problemes faits en faveur de la revolution. J'auray soin d'envoyer à Mr le Professeur Hart pour M. le Duc Rudolfe

Auguste, les Supplemens de L'Harmonie des Evangelistes de Mr. de Rosenroth et je feray savoir à M. le Duc Antoine Ulric ce que vous voulés faire de l'autre ouvrage, dont le titre est *Messias puer*.

Je voy que les Aphorismes, qui demandent que [symbol for iron] et [symbol for copper] soyent joints avec [cinnabar?], sont marqués par une ligne, qui semble les effacer. Je crois que ce n'est pas sans dessein.

Je souhaite que quantité de belles pensées, que vous avés encore dans la Metaphysique, Mecanique, Morale se publient de vostre vivant. Car quoynque rien ne se perde dans le monde, neanmoins si elles se publient plustost, elles pourront encore fructifier.

Comme presque tous vos deux cens problemes sont fondés sur la Sainte Ecriture, Mad. l'Electrice, qui aimeroit mieux de voir comment on pourroit encore confirmer davantage vos sentimens par la raison, souhaiteroit une centaine ou deux de preuves fondées sur la raison, sur l'ordre et sur l'experience. Et comme les problemes n'ont point de liason entre eux, et sont autant de pièces detachées, Elle seroit bien aisé de voir quelque chose de semblable à l'egard des raisons. Et je me souviens, Monsieur, de vous en avoir déjà parlé. Il suffiroit, que vous prissiés un papier, et sans vous attacher à le remplir tout d'un coup par une Meditation suivie, qui vous fatigueroit aussi bien que les Lecteurs, peu stiles aux Meditations, Vous pourriés marquer sur ce papier de temps en temps des preuves detachées, ou indices, à mesure qu'elles vous tomberoient dans l'esprit, sans vous mettre en peine de l'ordre, ni de la liason, qu'il vous seroit aisé de leur donner après, s'il il en estoit besoin, apres avoir amassé la matière, d'autant plus, qu'il n'y a rien qui presse.

Mad. La Duchesse d'Orleans allegue contre vostre example des lievres, l'experience contraire des lieux de sa connoissance, ou on les a detruit à force de chasser. Mais tout doit estre entendu avec moderation. Les Espagnols one bien detruit les hommes de quelques Isles de l'Amerique. La question est seulement, s'il est vray selon vostre sentiment, que, lorsqu'on laisse assez de quelque espece, pour propager la race, les naissances sont plus frequentes après une grande mortalité. C'est un fait qui meriteroit une vérification plus exacte."

214. "Comme il pensait toujours, il jetait sur le papier, n'importe où il fût, même en voyage, les idées qui lui venaient incessamment à l'esprit; puis il mettait de côté ces brouillons, et ne les relisait jamais; en effet, leur accumulation même l'empêchait de retrouver celui dont il eût eu besoin, et il avait plustôt fait de l'écrire à nouveau..." (Couturat, *La Logique de Leibniz*, pref. viii).
215. LBr 389, f. 29 (Helmstadt, 11 July 1696): "Helmontii ingenium miratus sum. Multaque ex viro scrutatus sum quae non nisi ex viro cognosci possent. Antiquae Philosophiae Pythagorico-Platonicae, Cabballisticae priscae, non vestigia, sed ideam in hoc sene perspexi. Ut ergo antiqua isthaec philosophia moralis et symbolica, ita et arguta est, nostris seculis difformis. Duo principia fundamentum aedificio suggestunt: Praexistentia animarum, ac revolutio, aut migratio earundem! Ex his cetera fluunt omnia. Non illepidus quoque, uti praesentis ubique animi est."
216. Schuchard, "Swedenborg, Jacobitism, and Freemasonry," p. 362.
217. Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont," p. 121: "La transmigration surtout excite ses sarcasmes; ces "pensées extraordinaires et peut-être allégorique" qu'il nous "débite" prêtent à rire. Le ton d'une lettre qu'il lui envoie de Hanovre le 18/28 octobre 1698 en témoigne."
218. LBr 389, f. 104 (18/28 October, 1698): "Nous avions peur tout de bon, Madame l'Electrice et moy, que vous n'eussiés été enlevé de nouveau pour estre envoyé une seconde fois à l'Inquisition. Vous avés grand sujet, Monsieur, de menager maintenant vostre santé, et de vous donner du repos jusqu'à la revolution du printemps; ou nous souhaitons que vous nous reveniés avec les hirondelles; ce retour valant mieux pour à present que celuy des ames. Je crois véritablement que les bons desseins que nous

ne pourrons point achever dans cette presente vie, ne periront pas pour cela, ni pour la nature, ni même pour nous. Mais il vaut toujours mieux d'achever ici le plus qu'on peut, pour gagner le temps, de sorte que je seray bien aise de voir encore beaucoup de vos ouvrages. Il ne sera pas mauvais de les faire par demandes et par réponses. Ainsi ceux, qui vous parleront, vous donneront occasion d'écrire. Je vous souhaite d'employer encore autant d'encre et de papier, que M. Hübener [there is an asterisk in the text with the following note at the bottom of the page: Ceci sert admirablement bien à faire adroitement remarquer à M. de Helmont, que Madame l'Electrice nous a fait la grace de nous lire la Lettre] n'en a employé jusqu'ici, et je suis, L."

219. *Ibid.*, f. 129 (27 December 1698): "Je n'ay point manqué de porter vostre lettre à Madame l'Electrice de Bronsvic, qui vous aura répondu d'abord. Mais Elle m'a témoigné plus particulièrement ses regrets de la mort d'un aussi excellent et grand personnage, que l'estoit feu Mr. le Baron d'Helmont qu'Elle honoroit de son amitié d'une manière toute singulière. Vous pouvés juger, Madame, combien cette touchante nouvelle me doit avoir été sensible. Car je me faisois un très grand plaisir de me figurer son retour dans l'année où nous entrons. Mais Dieu en a autrement disposé. La solide vertu qu'il faisait paroistre en toute sorte d'occasions et le grand zèle qu'il avoit pour le bien général, que je considere comme un effect de l'amour de Dieu sur toutes choses me font esperer qu'il est heureux, et je crois même que les semences de la vérité qu'il a repandues dans le monde, ne seront pas inutiles.

S'il a adjouté quelque chose qui n'estoit pas entièrement assuré, cela ne fait rien. Il est permis aux grands genies de proposer encore leurs conjectures. Il seroit à souhaiter, que rien ne se perdit de ses pensées, dont il pourra avoir laissé des traces. Et vous jugerez, Madame, s'il sera à propos d'envoyer ses papiers en quelque endroit, où on les pourra garantir de la perte. Surtout il faudroit s'informer, s'il n'a rien laissé chez des personnes de sa connoissance.

J'ay fait l'Epitaphe que voicy, pour executer vos ordres et pour marquer mes sentimens pour le defunct. Mais il avoit fallu un plus habile homme pour parler dignement de lui. Au reste je suis

Leibniz

P.S. j'espere que son dernier écrit qu'il a commencé chez vous, contiendra quelque chose d'essentiel."

220. (27 December 1698) quoted in Nicolson, *Conway Letters*, p. 456: "Il faut malgré moy que je vous mande la mort de Mons. Helmont."
221. (9 January 1699) *ibid.*: "Les cérémonies sont pour les Princes; nostre bon Mons. Helmont a été délogé sans trompette et sans carillon."
222. *Ibid.*, f. 133ff. (Ter Borg, 28 June 1699): "... Selon vôtre avis, Monsieur, j'ay fait moy même un voyage en Hollande pour trouver quelcun de ses amis propre à receuillir ce qui se trouve de ses papiers, et même à mettre par écrit ce qu'il m'a dit de bouche pendant les sept dernières semaines de son séjour chez nous. Ses derniers Ecrits ne sont que des preludes parsemés néanmoins de plusieurs profondes considerations. Et a fin que rien ne s'en perde, et que l'on cherche partout deterrer encore ce que l'un ou l'autre en tient, j'ay été trouver un de ses grands amis, qui étant fort honnête et discret en veut avoir soin, au cas que je me relève de mes couches fort proches. Mais, s'il plaît au Seigneur et ce Maître de la Vie de me continuer la mienne, j'en aurai précisément soin moi-même. J'ai eu beaucoup d'attaques tant des Juifs, que d'autres personnes, touchant les sentiments du feu Baron de Helmont. Mais je les ay renvoyé jusqu'à ce qu'ils me puissent montrer le contraire par des Preuves véritablement fondées, et come la plupart a mal conçu ses pensées, jai eu occasion de leur en donner des pensées justes et sans autre contradiction que d'être contraires aux sentimens de nos Theologiens; mais cette autorité ne prouvant rien à mon avis, je crois que les Sentimens du feu Baron de Helmont, ayant l'autorité de l'Ecriture, de la nature et de la raison de leur coté, paroissent bien plus probables. Je

cherche un livre écrit en Latin contenant quatre cents passages de l'Ecriture sainte, pour prouver la Revolution que feu Mr. de Helmont avoit en main pour le faire imprimer, et come je n'en puis rien apprendre dans ces quartier-ci, je pense de le trouver chez vous, Monsieur, ou du moins d'en recevoir quelques nouvelles, pour savoir si vous l'avés vû quelque part, puisque feu mon Cousin, en faisant son dernier tour en Allemagne, l'avoit reçu d'une Personne illustre à condition de le restituer à son propriétaire qui m'en presse, outre que j'ai à present une tres bonne occasion de la faire translater et imprimer pour être utile a plusiers qui rechercent les sentimens du feu Baron de Helmont avec empressement. Vous me ferés grand plaisir, Monsieur, si ledit Livre vous est connu, de m'en donner quelque nouvelle. Il me souvient d'avoir oui parler mon Cousin de l'impression de ce live; mais l'endroit m'est echappé de la memoire. Dans cette attent je Vous souhaite le.vray bien..."

223. *Ibid.*, f. 135 (25 August 1699): "Vous faites conformement à la derniere volonté de feu Mr Vostre Oncle, quoyqu'il ne nous l'ait point dites, en travaillant à conserver ses pensées. Il ne nous a jamais monstré ce livre des passages de l'Ecriture, dont vous parlez, et il faudra le chercher par tout ailleurs plutost que chez nous; peut-estre qu'il se trouve à Sulzbac. Je voudrois, qu'on publierat des Memoires de sa vie, qui seroient curieux et instructifs; mais je crois que c'est encore à Sulzbac, qu'il les faudroit chercher, et voudrois qu'on fit un receuil de ce qu'il a fait imprimer. Le mal est, qu'il m'a avoué lui-même, que la pluspart des ses livres n'estoient pas entierement, mais seulement en partie, conformes à ce qu'il croyoit véritablement. Je voudrois aussi que ses découvertes Physiques et Mecaniques ne se perdissent point, et qu'on donnât, par exemple, la Description et figure de son instrument pour filer à deux mains, et autres choses semblables.

Lorsque M. d'Helmont fut la derniere fois chez nous, il fût trouvé par un homme de Danzic, qui avoit fort paru donner dans ses sentimens. Il ne nous en a pas dit le nom; peut-etre que ce personnage, si on le connoissoit, pourroit donner des nouvelles de l'Ouvrage de Question.

224. Leibniz is probably referring to Philipp Wilhelm, Duke of Neuburg, who had van Helmont arrested and imprisoned by the Inquisition. See Coudert, "A Quaker-Kabbalist Controversy," and "The *Kabbala Denudata*: Converting Jews or Seducing Christians."
225. LBr 389, ff. 142ff: "... Quelques curieux m'ont demandé des particularités de la Vie de Mr. Helmont. Je crois qu'il faudra avoir recours pour cela à M. Le Prince Regent de Sulzbac, qui le connoist de plus loin.

Si le bon homme avoit continué de vivre et d'écrire, il auroit eu une guerre formelle avec les Theologians, quelqu'un entre eux a déjà donné une *Theologie Helmontienne* dans une Dissertation, imprimée à Helmstadt, où il ne parle pourtant que de la Religion du père, Jean Baptiste van Helmont, fameux Medecin et Chymiste, qui avoit mêlé aussi la Religion avec la Physique. Mais comme le fils l'a fait incomparablement d'avantage, ce même Auteur, qui a écrit contre le père, menaçait le fils d'une pareille dissertation. En ce cas je lui avois conseillé de faire une alliance avec Mr. le Raugrave; comme de l'autre côté j'avais voulu procurer des Alliés à Mr. Helmont. Car il n'y a pas long temps qu'on a imprimé un petit livre à Paris sous le titre de *Meditations Metaphysiques* qui tend à établir aussi la Transmigration des âmes. C'est dommage que cette grande guerre, qui nous avoit fourni un Opera, est tombée par la mort du bon homme. Je ne sais si c'est un écoulement de son âme, comme il disoit, mais je sais toujours que c'est son idée qui nous donne encore du plaisir..."

226. "... Leibniz prend la Cabale sous sa protection... Ces échos [des Cabalistes] confirment l'intérêt singulier que Leibniz avait accordé à la Cabale et au Cabalisme de Spinoza" (Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, p. 156).
227. "Knorrius ait autor non tam Cabbalam seu philosophiam occultam Hebraeorum quam inania assumpta denudasse: Sed Knorius dedit utrumque ut invenit, bonum et malum" (Foucher de Careil, *Réfutations*, p. 6).

228. "Cabalistae videntur dicere materiam nec creari ob vilitatem essentiae nec existere posse, proinde vel nullam esse in universo materiam, vel spiritum et materiam unum idemque esse, ut habet Henricus Morus in thesibus Cabalisticis. Spinoza quoque negat ullam massam corpoream et materialem quae sit subiectum hujus mundi a Deo creari potuisse, quia inquit ex qua divina potentia creari potuerit dissentientes ignorant. Est aliquid in his veri, sed credo non satis intellectum. Materia revera est, sed non substantia, cum sit aggregatum seu resultans ex substantiis: de materia in quantum secunda seu massa loquor extensa quae minimè homogeneum est corpus. Sed id quod homogeneum concipimus et materiam primam vocamus, id est aliquid incompletum cum sit mere potentiale. Substantia autem plenum est aliquid atque activum" (Foucher de Careil, ed., *Réfutations*, pp. 26–8).
229. "Verissimum est, Spinosam Cabala Hebraeorum esse abusum: et quidam qui ad Judaeos defecit et se Mosem Germanum vocavit, pravas ejus sententias prosecutus est, ut ex refutatione hominis Germanica a Dno. Wachtero, qui eum noverat, scripta patet. Sed fortasse Hebaei ipsi et alii veteres, praesertim commodum itidem sensum admittunt; Spinoza vero ex combinatione Cabalae et Cartesianismi, in extremitates corruptorum, monstruosum suum dogma formavit, neque intellexit naturam substantiae verae seu Monadis... (G III: 545).
230. Garber & Askiew, eds., pp. 37–38.
231. "5. I concluded... that we must not mix up indifferently, or confuse, minds or rational souls with other forms or souls, for they are of a superior order and have incomparably more perfection than have the forms which are sunk in matter, which I believe are found everywhere. For, in comparison with these, minds or rational souls are as little gods made in the image of God and having in them some ray of the light of the Divinity. This is why God governs minds as a prince governs his subjects or indeed as a father cares for his children, while he deals with other substances, instead, as an engineer handles his machines. Minds thus have special laws which place them beyond the revolutions of matter, and one can say that all the rest is made only for them, these revolutions themselves being adapted to the happiness of the good and punishment of the evil" (LII: 742). The idea that "minds" are like the "children" of God is also in section 36 of the *Discourse*.
232. Garber & Askiew, eds., p. 71, axiom 24.
233. I thank Dr. Eva Engel-Holland for this interesting piece of information.
234. This subject has been much debated. Ludwig Stein argues against this idea. He points out that Leibniz only mentions Bruno's name in 1666, 1682, and 1690. In 1691 he referred to Bruno's *De Monade*, but he did not seem to know much about Bruno's philosophy as a whole. In a letter to La Coze in 1708 Leibniz misspelled the title of Bruno's *Lo Spaccio* as "specchio," which, according to Stein, shows he had no clear idea of Bruno's philosophy (Stein, *Leibniz und Spinoza*, pp. 198, 201, 204, 206). Thouverez believes that Leibniz did borrow the term from Bruno, but he recognizes the influence of van Helmont and von Rosenroth in orienting Leibniz's philosophy in the direction of the monadology. Bréhier also come out in favor of Bruno (*Histoire de la Philosophie*, ii, prem. partie, p. 247).
235. LBr 389, ff. 1ff. (1696): "Leibnitii lene iudicium de *Fr. Mercurii Helmontii* doctrinis:
 Es ist nicht ohne, daß meines Ermessen von Herrn Helmonts Sachen viel noch dunckel und unbewiesen blieben, und zwar sonderlich sein haupt-artikel von der Seelen Leibwechsel, dass sie nehmlich aus den todten cöpern gleich wieder in frische Leiber ziehen, und also stets einerley Seelen auf diesen Schauplaz spielen sollen. Er meinet zwar dergestalt; es bleibe allezeit ohngefähr einerley Zahl der Menschen auf Erden, so wohl als von einem iedem andern geschlecht der Thiere; ich solte aber fast aus den Historien daran zweifeln, und glauben, daß die Welt nicht allemahl gleich bewohnet. Und weiss ich nicht, ob man mit Grunde sagen könne, daß eben deswegen anderswo mehr

Wölfe enstanden, weil die Wölfe in England ausgerottet worden. Es wird sich auch aus dem gedruckten Taufe und Sterb Registern der Stadt Londen finden, daß nach der großen Pest der Abgang nicht eben durch eine so überaus große Zahl der Geburten, sondern durch Zulauff neuer Einwohner ersetzt worden. Inzwischen ist nicht ohne, daß alsdann mehr und frühere Heyrahten geschehen, weil die Leute nach solchem grossen Aufräumen mehr Platz zur Nahrung finden, und also sich wiedermehren. Inzwischen bin ich in vielen dingen mit ihm einig, worin weder den gemeinen Lehrsäzen, noch den neuen Meynungen der Cartesianer beypflichten kan. In gemein sagt man die Thiere hätten Seel und Leben, aber solche Seele vergiene mit der Zerstörung ihres Cörper: den Menschen allein nimt man aus; welches manchem verdächtig vorkomt. Zumahl wenn man deswegen sich bloß auf den Glauben beruffen will, so einem behelfl ähnlich scheinet. Die Cartesianen, solcher sehend und besorgend, daß, wenn der Thiere Seelen sterblich, auch diese, eben der Menschen, gleiche Gefahr lauffen möchten, haben fürgegeben, der Mensch allein hätte wahrhaftig eine Seele; die Thiere aber seyen nichts anders als Künstliche uhrwercke, von feuer und windt getrieben, ohne alle empfindung, also daß, ihrer meinung nach, die thiere, wenn sie schreyen, nicht mehr fühlen, als eine orgelpfeiffe. Allein es widerspricht ihnen starck die ganze Natur, welche auf viele weise zuerkennen gibt, dass bey den Thieren auch eine Empfindung, und sie keine bloße puppen oder marionetten seyn. Man siehet auch clärlich, dass die Cartesianen ihre Meinung nicht auf die Vernunft, oder Erfahrung, sondern auf ihre Eigentliebe gründen, weil sie sich selbst liebkosken, und nur dasienige annehmen wollen, was die menschliche Natur hoch erhebet, gleich als wenn das wahr seyn müsste, was man gern hätte; wiewohl sie inzwischen nicht unrecht haben, wenn sie alle Seelen hierin ubereins nehmen, und begreiffen, daß sie entweder alle sterblich, oder alle unsterblich seyn müssen. Ich bin demnach mit der gemeinen Lehre darin einig, daß die Thiere wahrhaftig Seelen und Empfindung haben; ja ich hätten mit vielen alten weisen Lehren dafür, daß alles in der ganzen Natur voll Kraft, Leben und Seelen sey. Wie dem folget, daß jemehr man Tugenden gehabt, und Gutes getan, je größer denn auch die Freunde und Vergnigung seyn werde. Dessen ich noch viel mehr Gründe aufführen könnte, daraus zu schließen daß man bereits iezo ursach hat vergnügt zuseyn, nicht allein weil alles, was seyn wird, seyn muß, sondern auch weil alles, was geschicht, so wohl geordnet, daß wir es selbst, wenn wir es selbst recht verstünden, nich besser wünschen würden. Und hierum ist der Unterscheid zwischen den vernünftigen, und andern Seelen, daß die versorgen der Wissenschaften und regirung fähig, mithin einigermaßen in ihrem bezirk und kleine welt das thun, was Gott in der ganzen welt: also selbst wie kleine Götter kleine welten machen, die so wenig vergehen, oder sich verlieren, als die große, deren sie bilde seyn. Sondern vielmehr sich mit der Zeit ihrem Zweck nähren, wie auch die grosse welt mit ihnen thut. Daher dann auch die übrige Seelen, und alle Cörper, denen Seelen, die allein mit dem großen Gott in einer art von Gesellschaft und Vereinigung stehen, zu ihrer gluckselligkeit dienen müssen; wiewohl sie durch solch ihr dienen auch selbst immer zu mehrer vollkommenheit gelangen. Denn die ganze welt ist wie ein Leib, der ohne hinderung zu seinem zweck fortschreitet, weil nichts von sich selbst allein gehindert werden kan, und nichts außer ihr ist, so sie hindern könne. Was die Sonne betrifft, so ist nicht ohne, dass wir in ihrem bezirk begriffen: dem nunmehr ausgemacht, daß die Erde selbst, die wir bewohnen, und beherschen, nichts anders sey, als einer der Planeten, so umb die stillstehende Sonne herumb gehen. Daß aber die hayden die Sonne vor den Siz des Allerhöchsten gehalten, dann haben sie geirret, weil sie das weltgebau nicht verstanden. Anitzo weiß man, daß ein jeder Fixstern eine eigne Sonne sey, die allen Ansehen nach auch seine Planeten, oder Zugeordnete welten hat, wie unsre Sonne. So zweifle auch nicht, dass alle Sonnen zugleich einer hohen Regierung unterworffen, und das alle solche Regenter wiederumb regiret werden; wiewohl endlich alles unter dem allerhochsten Regirer steht. Und daher fänget man erst zu unser Zeit an, das geheimnis der kleinen sowohl

als grossen welt zuerkennen, nachdem eines theils der umlauf des bluts in uns, andern theils der wahre himmelslauff durch die fernglässer recht entdecket worden. Fahren die Menschen so fort, wie sie innerhalb 100 Jahren gethan; so werden sich noch wunderbare schöne dinge von der Nature zeigen, und immer mehr Ursachen dargeben, deren Urheber hochzuschätzen, und ein gefallen an seinem Thun zu haben. Es wäre zuwünschen gewesen daß der große König in Franckreich von etlich 30 Jahren her, an statt des Krieges der Europa unglücklich gemacht, durch beförderung der Wissenschaften, wie er angefangen, der Menschen Glückseligkeit ferner vermehren wollen, oder können; so würden wir schon viel erlebet haben, so erst unsere Nachkommen sehen werden, Nichts desto weniger bin der meinung, daß zumahl hohe personen, die viel gutes schaffen können, nicht unterlassen sollen solches zuthun, wenn auch gleich nach langer zeit der Nutz davon erscheinen könnte, nicht nur wegen des Ruhms, sondern auch weil gewiß daß diejenige, die etwas gute pflanzen [sic], und doch den aufgang hier nicht erleben, dennoch die früchte davon zu ihrer mehrem herrlichkeit dermahleins genießen werden, indem solches die unveränderliche höchste ordnung mit sich bringet... [A break in the text appears here] auch die Glässer unzählbare lebende sonst unsichtbare Geschöpfe zeigen, also daß der Seelen ungleich mehr seyn als Körner oder Sonnen stäublein. Allein ich stehe auch dabeneben in den Gedancken die schon *Plato* gehabt, und vor ihm *Pythagoras* aus den Morgenländern mit sich gebracht, daß keine Seele vergehe; auch nicht einst die Seele eines thiers. Herr *Helmont* ist auch hierinn gleicher Meynung mit mir; wiewohl ich seinen beweiß oder grund noch nicht gnugsam sehn können. Meinen grund belangend, so habe ich einsmahl deswegen mit dem berühmten Herrn Arnaud, weiland Haupt der Jansenissen, briefe gewechselt, und mich hauptsächlich darauf beruffen, daß alle Körper theile haben, mithin nichts anders seyn, also hauffen oder vielheiten, wie eine heerde schaffe, oder ein teich voll wassertropfen und fische, oder wie ein urwerck voll räder und zugehör, aber gleich wie alle zahlen bestehen aus eins und eins, also müssen alle vielheiten bestehen aus einigkeiten. Derowegen sind die Einigkeiten die rechte wurzel, und der Sitz alles Wesens, aller Kraft, und aller Empfindung; und dies sind die Seelen. Hat man also hierinn einen unwiedertreiblichen beweiß, nicht nur daß Seelen seyn, sondern auch daß alles voll Seelen seyn müsse, und worin eine Seele eigentlich bestehe, auch endlich, warumb eine jede Seele unzerstörlich sey. Denn die Einigkeiten haben keine Theile sonst wären vielheiten; was aber keine Theile hat, ist unzerstörlich. Herr Arnauld selbst, so scharfsinnig er auch war, nachdem ers recht eingenommen, hat nichts dagegen zusagen gewußt, als nur, daß ihm die sach wunderlich, frembd, und neu vorkomme. Ich finde aber, dass ein hochberühmter Lehrer der Römischen Kirchen, den man nennet S. Thomas von Aquino, eben so gar weit nicht hiervon entfernet, weil er saget, daß auch der Thiere Seelen ohntheilbar seyn: daraufs denn ihre ohnsterblichkeit folget, welche er vielleicht nicht so deutlich heraus sagen wollen, sondern sich vergnuget den Grund zulegen.

Man möchte aber darauf ferner einwenden, daß zwar alles, was ich sage, wahr seyn möge; aber doch wenig Trost gebe denn obgleich unsere und andere Seelen bleiben, so verliere sich doch die Erinnerung des gegenwärtigen. Ich habe aber davon eine andere Meinung, und ob zwar nicht ohne ist, daß wir uns vielleicht nicht so gleich nach dem Tode des iezigsten Thuns besinnen, welcher wohl der Natur nicht gemäß, noch anständig; so hatte doch dafür, daß alles, was uns einmahl wiederfahret, vor ewig der Seelen eingedrücket bleibe; ob er gleich nicht jedesmahl einfällt: gleich wie wir viel dinge wissen, deren wir uns nicht erinnern, wenn nicht eine besondere ursach dazu gelegenheit gibt, und uns daran dencken machet. Denn wer kan immer an alles dencken? Weilen aber gleichwohl in der Natur nichts vergebens, noch verloren gehet. Sondern alles zu seiner vollkommenheit und reife kommt; so wird auch jedes bildnis so unsre Seele angenommen, dermahleins mit dem Kunfftigen dergestalt ein gantzes machen, dass man

- alles endlich gleich als in einem hellen spiegel wird überblicken, und das beste daraus zu einer mehrem vergnügen nehmen können. Daraus denn folget...
236. Grua I: 140 (29 September 1698): "... Il (Helmont) m'a donné un exemplaire de son livre sur le commencement de la Genèse. Il est aussi du sentiment d'Origene. Je me souviens qu'il m'a dit que M. Wetstein à Amsterdam l'a imprimé en latin apres une edition angloise [Grua inserts the following note here, "Alibi cachant sa collaboration"]. Il y en a aussi une en allemand. Il a plusiers pensées fort bonnes, mais il en a aussi dont je ne vois point la preuve: comme est particulierement sa Metempsychose. Au rest, je l'estime becucoup pour plusieurs raison..."
237. Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont."
238. "Quandam sententias amici exprimere voluerim... [m]ultas etiam meas meditationes admiscui, non abhorrentes a nonnullis amici sententiis." As Becco (*Ibid.*, p. 128) points out, Grua left out the all-important "non" before abhorrentes in his version of the text (I: 98). See the original MS (LH I, V, ad 2, g). As reported in *Unschuldige Nachrichten von Alten und Neuen Theologischen Sachen*, Leibniz revealed his interest in van Helmont's interpretation of Genesis in a letter to Herman von der Hardt: "Von dem Francisco Mercurio Helmontio schreibet der Herr von Leibnitz daß er gar ingenieus und von scharffsinnigen Conjecturen sey. Er halt zwar gar zu viel auff die Cabbala und mysteria apicum, doch könne auch hierunter bißweilen etwas gutes seyn. Er möchte gerne jemand haben/der seine meditata über etliche Schriftt-Stellen, absonderlich über den Anfang des ersten Buchs Mosis/in Ordnung brächte" (1716, p. 150).
239. *Cogitationes super quatuor priora capita ... Genesis*, p. 3 (also in Grua, I: 98): "... Itaque creatio ex nihilo non fundatur in scriptura Sacra, sed potius in quadam traditione; & sano sensu quidem accipi potest, sed, ut vulgo sumitur, errore non caret. Verum quidem est, non exitisse Chaos vel Atomos, vel aliud materiale Deo coëternum, ex quo factus sit Mundus; sed tamen falsum est mundum proprie ex nihilo, quasi ex materia, factum esse, cum aeterna veritatis est, ex nihilo nihil fieri. Rectius igitur dicitur cum autore epistolae ad Hebreao s cap. 11. vers. 3, *Visibilita ex invisibilibus esse facta*, id est in Mundo eminente ipsius Aelohim latuisse ideali quodam, seu spirituali modo, semina hujus mundi corporei, quae tandem aliquando fuere producta et exclusa."
240. *Ibid.*, p. 17 (Grua I: 99): "... Vidit, Consideravit, cogitavit; intra se quidem, sed tamen tanquam objectum à se diversum: talis autem visio revera quaedam productio est per verbum Mentis, ut jam aliquoties notatum est. Nec ita debet accipi, ut vulgo solent, ac si Elohim creasset prius lucem, deinde vidisset velut per experimentum, quod esset bona. Qui modus bonitatem rerum videndi indignus est Deo, cui convenit videre res a prior, imo indignum est omni sapiente primum & deinde considerare an bene sit factum; *far primo, e pensar puoi*, ut Itali dicunt. Revera igitur, dum vidi fecit, vel dum vidi dixit, vel dum vidi quod esset bona, voluit; dum voluit, fecit."
241. KD, I, 2: 308–312. This dialogue was later translated into English as *A Cabbalistical Dialogue in Answer to the Opinion of a learned Doctor in Philosophy and Theology, that the World was made of Nothing...* London, 1682. In "Leibniz and More's Cabbalistic Circle," p. 83, Brown suggests that Leibniz may have been influenced by "Theses Cabbalisticae" that appear in the first volume of the KD as well (I, 2: 150–72) and also by the 16 kabbalistic thesis prefacing More's "Fundamenta Philsophiae" (KD I, 2: 293–307). But I would argue for the influence of van Helmont's short treatise because it lacks the mythological intricacies of the Lurianic system described in the "Theses Cabbalisticae" and expresses kabbalistic ideas in a more philosophical sense and would therefore have appealed more to Leibniz.
242. Grua II: 509, 570.
243. "Ad Fundamenta Cabbalae Aëto-Paedo-Melissaeae Dialogus," KD I, 2: 309: "... particula Ex tantum est characteristica *materiae*; nec propriè ad spiritum pertinet; qui tamen potissimum est creationis propriè dictae subjectum: deque hoc nullatenus dici potest,

quid fit vel non fit *ex aliquo*, sed tantum quod *ab aliquo*: sicut nec dicimus ideam fieri ex anima, vel mente, sed ab illa: vel spiritus creati radios fieri ex centro (nisi forte localiter) sed à centro: vel manus aliave angeli apparentis membra formalia fieri ex angelo, sed ab illo.”

244. Aiton, *Leibniz*, pp. 206–7.
245. “Ad Fundamenta Cabbalae Aëto-Paedo-Melissaeae Dialogus,” KD I, 2: 310–11: “Materia, quâ talis non est spiritus; sed illa ipsa tantum substantia, quae sub formâ materiae appetet, in caecitate nimirum & quiete illa, atq; privatione prioris felicitatis, aliquando spiritus fuisse, & adhuc fundamentaliter & radicaliter talis esse, & talis aliquando iterum fore formaliter, diceretur... materiam *factam* statuerem è coalitione monadum spiritualium torpentium... [p. 311] quippe cjs definitionem ne unicus quidem terminus positivus jure meritò ingredi debet...”
246. *Ibid.*, p. 311: “Materia quâ talis, seu formaliter considerata non tantum non existit ex se, sed ne existit quidem positivè, sed privativè, sed privativè, sicut umbra, quies, &.
247. Coudert, “Henry More, the Kabbalah, and the Quakers,” p. 38ff.
248. KD I, 2: 312: “Essentiam autem diviam essentiam... dividi posse, non admittimus, sed unitatem in eâ quam maximè veneramur. Sicut ex. gr. cum in fonte quodam limpidissimo occultae latent particulae aliquae terrestres & petrosae, & illae deinceps separantur & concrescunt, nemo dicit fontem dividi in lapillos, sed lapillos separari: ita Creator primò quidem produxit infinitas spirituum myriades, cum ipso in summo felicissimae perfectionis gradu unitas... ita ut Deus esset omnia in omnibus: deinde autem ob varios adhibiti arbitrii proprii gradus, horum facta est secretio, tot graduum, quot sunt cognitionis; ad extremem usque, qui est istius privatio; adeoque mors illa, aliquando iterum absorbenda... haec particulae è quibus mundus materialis constat, non possunt dici, *esse Divina Essentiae*, sed illius naturae, quae à divinâ Essentiâ effecta, constituta, producta, facta, creata, extra posita fuit. Potestque constrictio haec vocari somnus... vel mors, &. Et evigilatio... quae à nobis vocatur *Secretio scintillarum*, tot habet gradum ascensū, quot statui possunt descensū; quorum extrema tamen non sunt alia, quam ultima Deo contrapositio in statu mortis, & summa cum Deo unio, (licet non unitas:)...”
249. G III: 260. Letter to Thomas Burnett (1699; exact date uncertain): “Dans les corps je distingue la substance corporelle de la matière, et je distingue la matière première de la seconde. La matière seconde est un aggregé ou composé de plusieurs substances corporelles, comme un troupeau est composé de plusieurs animaux. Mais chaque animal et chaque plante aussi est une substance corporelle, ayant en soi le principe de l’unité, qui fait que c’est véritablement une substance et non pas un aggregé. Et ce principe d’unité est ce qu’on appelle Ame ou bien quelque chose, qui a de l’analogie avec l’ame. Mais outre le principe de l’unité la substance corporelle a sa masse ou sa matière seconde, qui est encor un aggregé d’autres substances corporelles plus petites, et cela va à l’infini. Cependant la matière primitive ou la matière prise en elle même est ce qu’on conçoit dans les corps, tous les principes de l’unité mis à part, c’est à dire ce qu’il y a de passif, d’où naissent deux qualités: *resistentia* et *resistantia vel inertia*. ”
250. Garber, “Leibniz and the Foundations of Physics: The Middle Years,” p. 68.
251. G III: 227: “Mon opinion est donc que la matière n'estant qu'une chose essentiellement passive, la pensée et même l'action n'en scauroient estre les modifications, mais de la substance corporelle complete qui reçoit son accomplissement de deux constitutifs, scavoir du principe actif et du principe passif, dont le premier s'appelle forme, ame, entelechie, force primitive, et le second s'appelle matière première, solidité, résistance.”
252. Describing this letter, Wilson says: “... he tells de Volder that matter is not, strictly speaking, an aggregate of monads, but that, in more precise terms, the phenomena of aggregates arise from the reality of monads” (Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, p. 192).
253. L II: 863–4.
254. L. J. Russell, “The Correspondence between Leibniz and de Volder.”

255. Letter to de Volder (G II: 275): “Ego vero non tollo corpus, sed ad id quod est revoco, massam enim corpoream quae aliquid praeter substantias simplices habere creditur, non substantiam esse ostendo, sed phaenomenon resultans ex substantiis simplicibus quae solae unitatem et absolutam realitatem habent.”
256. L II: 830.
257. *Ibid.*: 832.
258. L II: 840.
259. *Ibid.*: 873–4.
260. Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 100.
261. L II: 908.
262. Garber & Askew, eds., p. 77.
263. *Ibid.*, pp. 74–5.
264. *Theodicy*, par. 20, p. 135.
265. L II: 904–5.
266. Coudert, *Alchemy*, p. 28.
267. See the articles by Sheppard in the bibliography.
268. Goltz, “Zur Geschichte der Sublimation.”
269. Pagel, *Joan Baptista van Helmont*, p. 10.
270. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
271. J. B. van Helmont, *Oriatrike*, p. 29.
272. Pagel, “J. B. Van Helmont, *De Tempore*, and biological time.”
273. A similar leap from mytho-poetic thought to science was made by Kékulé, who admitted that musing about the ancient gnostic symbol of the *ouroboros* led him to the structure of the benzene ring. Coudert, *Alchemy*, p. 147; Rudofsky & Wotiz, “Psychologists and the Dream Accounts of August Kekulé.”
274. Ross, *Leibniz*, pp. 43–4.
275. Loemker, *Struggle for Synthesis*.
276. The literature on whether or not Leibniz’s philosophy is determinist is enormous, as a look through *Studia Leibnitiana* and collections of essays on Leibniz makes readily apparent. For an interesting argument see Pauline Phemister’s article. I support her argument that Leibniz defined freedom in terms of rationality and activity, although on different grounds.
277. L I: 226.
278. Wilson, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics*, p. 91.
279. L I: 227–8. See N. Rescher, “The Infinite analysis of Contingent Truths.”
280. Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 112.
281. L I: 205 (1670–1).
282. Leibniz often referred to “Fatum Mahometanum” to describe a false conception of necessity which led to fatalism and inaction (see *Theodicy*, pp. 54–5).
283. Quoted in Seidler, “Freedom and Moral Therapy in Leibniz,” pp. 31–2.
284. *Theodicy*, preface, p. 52.
285. *Ibid.*, par. 101, p. 179.
286. *Ibid.*, par. 102.
287. Seidler, “Freedom and Moral Therapy in Leibniz,” p. 22.
288. *Theodicy*, par. 64, p. 158.
289. *Theodicy*, par. 32–3, pp. 142–3.
290. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Moshe Idel does not believe that Luria’s theories were a response to the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula. He argues instead that the Lurianic Kabbalah simply developed existing kabbalistic ideas (*Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 265).

291. "De Revolutionibus Animarum," KD II, 2: 415: "... nihil in mundo est, ne quidem inter Silentia, v. gr. pulvis terrae atque laides, cui non sit vita quadam, & natura Spritualis, & planeta suus atque praefectus in supernis."
292. Josef Schlomo Delmedigo, quoted in G. Scholem, "Seelenwanderung," p. 103: "Und Gott hebt sie allmählich von Stufe zu Stufe; zuerst bringst er sie in *Gilgul* in Gestein, von dort in Pflanzen, von dort in Tiere, von dort in Heiden und Sklaven, und von dort in Israeliten."
293. KD II, 2: 419: "... qui discipulus Sapientum est, cibosq; suos comedit debita attentione: elevare & restituere potest multas animas revolutas. Qui vero non attentus est, ille non tantum nihil restituit, sed damnis quoqu; afficitur ab illis." On the subject of eating as a metaphor for the *unio mystica* see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah*, p. 70ff. and Louis Jacobs, "Eating as an act of worship in Hasidic Thought."
294. *Genesis* [English version], p. 76; Latin edition, p. 40.
295. Idel, *Kabbalah*, p. 179.
296. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
297. Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, p. 41.
298. H. C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, p. 460.
299. Quoted in C. H. Josten, *Truth's Golden Harrow*, p. 97.
300. A. E. Waite, ed., *The Hermetic Museum*, 2 vols (1893), repr. London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973, p. 93.
301. H. Kopp, *Die Alchemie in älterer und neuer Zeit*. Heidelberg, 1886, I: 254.
302. Schuler, "Spiritual Alchemies."
303. Yates, "The Hermetic Tradition in Renaissance Science," p. 263.
304. See, for example, Hesse, "Hermeticism and Historiography: An Apology for the Internal History of Science;" Vickers, "Frances Yates and the Writing of History;" "Analogy and Identity;" "On the Function of Analogy in the Occult;" Westman & McGuire, *Hermeticism and the Scientific Revolution*; Schmitt, "Reappraisals in Renaissance Science."
305. Popkin, Pagel, Dobbs, Webster, and Merkel & Debus. For a thorough analysis of Leibniz's indebtedness to occultism, see Knecht.
306. Ross, *Leibniz*, p. 5. Couturat suggested this in *La Logique de Leibniz*, p. 131, note 3.
307. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 387–88, note 5. Leibniz's memoranda describing the Society of Sciences he envisioned is also in line with Rosicrucian ideals (Foucher de Careil, ed., *Oeuvres* 7: 599–618; see also Klopp, *Die Werke von Leibniz* 10: 328–30).
308. *Two Hundred Queries*, pp. 163ff.
309. *Theodicy*, preface, pp. 58–9.
310. On this issue see D. P. Walker's classic study *The Decline of Hell*.
311. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *De L'Horizon de la Doctrine Humaine* (1693); Ἀποκαταστάσις πάντων (*La Restitution universelle* (1715)). Textes inédits, traduits et annotés par Michel Fichant: *idem*, "Ewige Wiederkehr oder unendlicher Fortschrift: die Apocatastasisfrage bei Leibniz." I am extremely grateful to Salvatore Tedesco for telling me about Fichant's important work.
312. It is difficult to know precisely how to translate Leibniz's title, which he gave in French as "Horizon de la Doctrine Humaine" and in Latin as "Horizon Doctrinae Humanae" (Ficant, p. 39), in order to make it clear that Leibniz was only referring to those thoughts which could be enunciated and written down. As Leibniz says, "Et je donne l'exclusion ici à toutes ces choses qui ne s'expriment pas. C'est pourquoi j'ai voulu appeler cette estime du nom de l'Horizon de la doctrine humaine, et non pas de la pensée ou de l'esprit humain, car tout ce qui appartient à la doctrine est énonçable. J'entends les énoncations qu'on peut mettre par écrit; et je distingue entre énonçable et prononçable" (*Ibid.*, 41).
313. See Fichant's article in *Studia Leibnitiana*, which is described in the résumé as follows: "L'article examine les présupposés de l'argument de Leibniz du point de vue de sa

conception de la connaissance historique. Il esquisse ensuite quelques points saillants de l'histoire du mot et de l'idée d'*αποκατάστασις* à partir d'Origène et du stoïcisme tardif, afin de dégager le sens original que leur confère Leibniz. Enfin, il montre que la loi de continuité et l'idée d'harmonie, qui gouvernent le cours des choses, permettent à Leibniz de surmonter la contrainte apparente de l'argument tiré de la Combinatoire: une perspective de progrès infini s'ouvre alors aux esprits 'qui connaissent et recherchent la vérité'; il n'y a pas pour eux 'd'horizon de leur science future,' ni de retour à l'identique" (p. 133).

- 314. It is interesting to see how these various sources overlap. Writing to Leibniz about the eventual restitution of all things (22 February 1698), Morell mentions Jane Leade, a leader of the Philadelphians, Gichtel, the editor of Boehme, and Origen in the same breath: "... une Maistre angloise, Jeane Leade, laquelle va plus avant et parle de la restitution de toutes choses crées, non seulement de tout l'abre Adamique, mais aussi des Demons ce qui a été l'opinion d'Origene. M. Gichtel vous pourra enoyer ces livres et a contribué à les faire imprimer, quoiqu'il n'approuve point toutes les opinions de cette Leade" (Grua I: 124).
- 315. *Theodicy*, par. 147, pp. 215–6.
- 316. Fichant cites Terence as the reference (p. 108, note 24).
- 317. "Si le genre humain duroit assés long temps dans le présent état, et si tous les 100 ans, ou tous les millions d'années, ou quelques autre intervalle encor plus grands, produisoient chacun pour le moins une nouvelle enontiation ou proposition; il s'ensuivroit nécessairement, qu'enfin toutes les propositions enonçables se trouveroient epuisées; et ce qui viendroit par apres eroit une parfite repetition mot pour mot, de ce qui auroit déjà dit, ou enoncé autres fois. On ne pourroit faire aucun sermon, ni poësie ou Roman, ny livre qui n'auroist déjà esté fait par un autre. Et ce moit vulgaire, *nihil dici quod non dictum sit prius*, seroit véritable à la lettre. Je trouve pourtant que l'hypothese d'un certain intervalle d'anneées produisant au moins une nouveauté, n'est pas certaine, ny même raisonnable. Il semble plustost, que la difficulté de produire des nouveautés croistroit toujours; ainsi peut estre que le nombre des verités enonçables bien que fini, ne s'epuiseroit jamais, comme dans les asymptotes l'intervalle entre la droite et la courbe de l'Hyperbole, ou de la Conchoide bien que fini n'est jamais epuisé. Et mèmes si nous voulions feindre, que le genre humain tel que nous le connoissions presentement eût subsisté depuis toute l'éternité, il ne s'ensuit point nécessairement que tout ce qui se peut dire ait déjà esté dit. Cependent il est vray que si le genre humain duroit assez long temps, presque tout ce qu'on pourroit dire ne seroit que redites. Et s'il y avoit souvent des nouveautés, on seroit enfin reduit à n'en pouvoir plus fournir. Et quoique à cause des intervalles immenses des temps, qui auroient détruit toute la memoire des auteurs precedens, ces redites paroistroient des nouveautés, cela ne laisse pas de choquer l'harmonie des choses, et de nous faire croire, que l'estat present du genre humain ne durera pas assez pour cela. Mais laissant là des propositions, qui ne sont pas entièrement demonstrées, contentons nous d'avoir rencontré une espece d'horizon, qui borne la doctrine humaine, et d'avoir élevé nostre esprit à des reflexions qui le fond reconnoistre en quelque façon ces bornes que la nature luy a données" (Fichant, pp. 52–3).
- 318. The great platonian year was the name given to the period it took for the seven planets known to Plato, together with the fixed stars, to return to the same position relative to the earth and to themselves. This is described in the *Timaeus*, 39c–d.
- 319. "Posito satis durare humanum genus, tempus venire necesse est ubi nihil dicatur, quod non dictum sit prius. Etsi certum non sit, tempus affuturum quo nihil dici possit, quod non dictum sit prius. Fieri enim potest ut quaedam etsi tota impenderetur aeternitas, nunquam dicantur, ea ergo semper supererunt dicibilia et non dum dicta. Nunquam dantur regressus perfecti, ut circulorum et ellipsium, nec fieri potest, ut unus locus aut unum tempus universi alteri perfecte sit simile sed tantum ad sensum.

Posito autem aliquando nihil dici quod non dictum sit prius, oportet esse tempus quoque, quo redeant etiam eadem gesta, nihilque fiat quod non factum sit prius, nam quae geruntur materiam praebent serminibus.

Imo necesse est esse periodos quasdam anno platonico similes, ita ut toto aliquo seculo exacte ad sensum eadem fiant quae aliquo alio seculo jam sunt facta; nam totius seculi res pro magno aliquo facto, et totius seculi Historia pro magno aliquo dicto haberi potest, quaelia et ipsa necesse est vel repeti vel exauriri, id est post exhaustionem etiam repeti. Quae de diversis temporibus eorundem locorum seu earundem rerum, extendi etiam possunt ad diversa loca ejusdem temporis, ut eadem recurrent; imo in unaquaque mente tales intelligi possunt periodi, cum cogitet semper, etiam cum confuse et sine animae attentione.

Et licet ponamus venire tempus, quo non supersit humanum genus; si tamen supersint intelligentes substantiae, quae non aliis quam nos cogitandi materiis, sive notionibus, utantur, idem de illis contingere oportet.

Hinc porro, quia dignitati naturae consentaneum non est, ut priora tantum repeatantur, consequens est, ut eatur ad intelligentias factas perfectiores, quae alias habeant notiones profundiores, et quae capaces sint majorum et magis compositarum veritatum; ita sciendo profici poterit infinitum.

Itaque conveniens foret, si durarent humanae mentes, et platonicos quosdam annos haberent, eundem hominem reverti, non ut simpliciter in orbem redeat, sed ut velut spiraliter aut tortuose, inde progrediatur in aliquod majus. Est regredi ad prosiliendum magis, ut ad fossam.

Fieri tamen etiam potest, ut progressus sit non spiralis aut aliter regressivus; qualis cycloidum secundararium; sed directus, qualis in cycloide primaria. Et fortasse quaedam creaturae platonicas habent periodos, aliae secus.

In periodicis foret non tantum animae immortalitas, sed et aliquid corporis resurrectioni aequipollens, si non ipsa sit. Imo illud video periodos platonicas evitare non posse, saltem in notionibus quae manere debent seu quae sunt distinctae, ubi non detur materiae novitas, sed formae seu combinationis quae terminatur. Et revera confusae notiones si quis intelligerer resolvuntur in distinctas; cum ergo etiam mentes quae eunt ad majorem perfectionem tantum majores faciunt propositiones, quae ex minoribus componuntur, erunt acta earum composita ex majore tantum combinatione anteriorum actarum, atque ade progressione spirali seu anno platonico cum augmendo, ita ut credi possit redire saepe eosdem ad telam persequendam..." (Fichant, pp. 59–60).

320. "... Caeterum vel ex his judicari potest genus humanum semper in hoc statu non esse mansurum; quia divinae Harmoniae consentaneum non est eadem semper chorda oberrare. Credendumque est vel ex naturalibus congruentiae rationibus res vel paulatim, vel etiam aliquando per saltus in melius proficere debere. Quanquam enim subinde in pejus ire videantur; hoc ad eum modum fieri putandum est, quo interdum recedimus ut majore impetu prosiliamus.

Denique etiamsi non semper duraturum sit quale nunc est genus humanum; modo tamen semper ponamus existere mentes veritatem cognoscentes et indagantes; sequitur aliquando mentes eo per venturas, ut veritates a sensuum testimonio independentes seu Theorematum purae scientiae, quae scilicet exacte per rationes demonstrari possunt, quae jam inventa sunt, magnitudinem (verbi gratia paginae si scribantur) non excedentia; et multo magis breves sententias quae verbis scribi possunt; redire necesse sit.

Ita nova theorematata invenienda oporteret crescere magnitudine in infinitum, quemadmodum videmus quasdam esse propositiones Geometricas satis longas, et tamen pulchras.

Hoc si fieret, necesse foret mentes etiam quae nondum satis capaces essent, fieri capaces, ut tam magna theorematata capere et excogitare possent, qualibus etiam opus foret ad cognoscendam penitus naturam, veritates physicas revocando ad Mathematicas, v.g.

ad cognoscendam machinam animalis, ad praevidentum quaedam futura contingentia certo verisimilitudinis gradu, atque adeo etiam ad mira quaedam in natura praestandum, quae nunc suprant humanum captum...

Et quaevis mens horizontem praesentis suae circa scientias capacitatis habet, nullam futurae" (*Ibid.*, pp. 75–6).

321 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

322. Petersen was born in Lübeck. He studied in Giessen, Rostock, Leipzig, Wittenberg, and Jena. He met Philipp Jacob Spener, one of the founders of the Pietist movement, in 1675. In 1680 he married Johanna Eleonore von und zu Merlau. With her he embraced millenarianism, which led Lutheran officials in Celle to remove him from his position in Lüneburg as superintendent of Churches. After reading the work of the English mystic and follower of Boehme, Jane Leade (1623–1704), both Petersen and his wife accepted the doctrine of *apocatastasis*, or universal salvation, both publishing books in support of it.
323. Fichant is the first to have published this manuscript (LBr 720, f. 2v): "Ego qui saepe cogitare soleo, quomodo fieri queat ut dotes magnorum hominum maxime in communia commoda proficiant, vidi a Te posse profiscisci, quod saepe optavi, justum opus rerum coelestium heroico carmine comprehensum. Theologia enim sublimior etiam in prosa splendet, qui si induat virgilianam majestatem, quam tu unus et omnium optime circumdare posses. Materia tanti operis: primum Deus in abdito aeternitatis sibi perpetuo sufficiens, tum Cosmogonia, mox Oeconomia providentiae in gubernatione rerum; sed altera pars operis de futuris, sive ad corpora sive ad animas pertineant et ad hunc vel alium, ubi de purificatione animarum et restitutione rerum, vel potius amplificatione et exaltatione per gradus. Novissimam nec infimam partem dari optem magnitudini coelestis regni et ut sic dicam Aulae divina, ibi admiranda Angelicarum virtutum pingenda essent vivis coloribus et beatarum animarum celebranda felicitas, quibus non noster tantum sub pedibus orbis sed innumerabiles mundi paterent, et variis in omne aevum spectaculis divinae sapientiae et bonitatis, incederent magis magisque amorem et venerationem supremae Mentis. Hic castus elegantissimarum fictionum locus esset; etsi nihil a nobis tam pulchrum fingi possit, quod non veritate supereretur. Praeter Te autem, a quo tale quid sperari posset, neminem novi, cui et divinarum rerum recessus interiores patent, et vim eloquendi entheam" (Fichant, pp. 25–6).
- 324 "...L'auteur ajoute que quelques-uns ont encore soutenu cette doctrine, surtout au temps de la Réforme. La *Comtesse anglaise*, dans les *Opuscula philos. quibus continentur principia philosophiae antiquissimae et recentissimae*, 1690 (Opuscules philosophiques, où sont compris les principes de la philosophie la plus ancienne comme de la plus récente), écrit: "Le Christ a sanctifié dans la nature de l'homme la nature de toutes les créatures... afin de restaurer les créatures de la corruption." (Cette Dame était une Comtesse de Connaway, et soeur du Chancelier Henneage Finch, comme on se souvient l'avoir entendu du sieur Helmont...)
- M. François Mercure van Helmont a voulu soutenir de diverses façons dans ses *Cogitata in Genesim* (Pensées sur la Genèse), et ailleurs aussi, la Restitution et le progrès vers le mieux; mais il considère que l'état ordinaire des âmes est une métempsyose; il demeure toujours un nombre déterminé d'âmes humaines (et de chaque espèce); elles seraient amenées par les révolutions des corps à des corps toujours supérieurs et toutes ensemble glorifiées en mêmes temps dans leur chef, le Christ; il soutient bien plus que le Christ est lui-même une métempsyose d'Adam, en qui toutes les autres âmes humaines ont préexisté et doivent de nouveaux parvenir à la perfection avec lui et en lui. Suivent d'autres idées aussi extraordinaires qui lui sont venues sa vie durant (*Ibid.*, p. 97).
325. See for example: Johann Wilhelm Petersen, *Das Geheimniss der Erst-Gebohren aller Creaturen von Christo Jesu dem Gott-Menschen* (Frankfurt, 1711), pp. 23–29, 41–44, 187, 190–195; *idem*, Μυστήριον ἀποκατάστασεως πανρπτων das ist, *Das Geheim-*

- nis der Widerbringung aller Dinge...* (Pamphilia = Offenbach, 1700–1), I, pp. 85–86, where he quotes pages of Lady Conway's book.
326. "Leibniz a-t-il pour autant fait sienne la doctrine de la "salvation universelle? La question déborde assurément l'interprétation de l'opuscule que nous éditions; pourtant sa teneur autant que son titre amènent à la poser, au moins aux marges de notre interprétation" (Fichant, p. 200).
327. H. Vital, "Concerning the Revolution of Souls," KD I, 2: 417: "pauci sunt homines, qui evitare queant, ne revolvantur in animal quoddam, vel bestiam, vel avem, vel inanimatum quoddam, vel vegetable aliquod; & sic similiter in aliquam mundi creaturam. Qua ratione quilibet poenam suam sustinere cogitur, quoad corpus & quoad Psychem: quoniam in statum corporeum deducendus est, ut sentire queat dolores illos commeritos. Et omnia quidem pro natura peccatorum."
328. See my articles in the bibliography.
329. A new edition and translation of this extremely interesting work is scheduled for publication by Cambridge University Press in 1985. See Coudert & Corse, eds., *The Principles of the most Ancient and Modern Philosophy...* by Anne Conway.
330. *Paradoxial Discourses*, pp. 106–7.
331. *Ibid.* pp. 136–7.
332. F. M. van Helmont, *Two Hundred Queries*, p. 115.
333. Coudert, *Alchemy*.
334. *Memoirs*, fols. Cr(-D) : "The Anatomy which I have made of pain, that pains are good, being a fire transmutative and altering for the better and improving together with the joys following upon the said pain, made that when I was carried from Germany to come in the inquisition, where I continued ten months, when they told me that they would burn me and that they would put me to the Rack, I asked them whether I should have no justice done me, and they told me, no. I only said that if it were so I was happier than severall great Princes who are racked as bad and cannot see their tormentors, whereas I should have the advantage as to see him. And besides, whatsoever punishment happens to a man that is innocent, it doth him much good. And as to burning, I considered and balanced the thing on both sides whether it were better to be burnt, or no. I after all ... found more for than against burning, that is my arguments concluded it rather better to be burnt if it should come to that."
335. In this monograph I have used the new translation of Lady Conway's work by Coudert & Corse, but because it has not yet been published I refer the reader to the corresponding pages in the Loptson edition. *Principles*, p. 193.
336. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
337. *Two Hundred Queries*, pp. 131–2.
338. KD II, 2: 248: "nempe omnes mentes & spiritus & psychae nullâ exceptâ comprehensae fuerint in Adamo protoplaste cum conderetur; its ut quaedam animae pertinerent ad caput Adami; quaedam ad oculos ejus; quaedam ad ipsius nasum, & sic porro ad omnia ejus membra, à quibus quasi dependebant."
339. (26 May 1706). G III: 306: "... M. Mercurius van Helmont croyait que l'âme de Jésus estoit celle d'Adam, et que l'Adam nouveau reparant ce que le premier avait gâté, c'étoit le même personnage qui satisfaisait à son ancienne dette. Je crois qu'on fait bien de s'épargner la peine de réfuter de telles pensées."
340. Grua, *La Justice humaine selon Leibniz*, p. 213.
341. *Genesis* [English version], pp. 58–9; Latin edition, pp. 29–30.
342. *Genesis* [Latin version], p. 4: Producta autem ab Aelohim ex seminibus, cum antea in ipso essent, jam per se subsistunt, sibi relicta, & habent vim activam atque spontaneam, ut possint progredi, vel etiam regredi, seu labi, quemadmodum & Mundus totus in Adamo est lapsus.
343. *Theodicy*, par. 91, pp. 172–3.

344. Becco, "Leibniz et François-Mercure van Helmont," p. 137: "C'est ici que la plus franche cassure intervient entre van Helmont et Leibniz, qui ne peut que sourir à la doctrine de la révolution des âmes ..."
345. KD I, 2: 310–11: "Sed absurdā & incongrua ex vulgari opinione, quod nempe *materia à Deo creata sit ex nihilo* profluentia, haec essent: 1. quod ab Ente summè perfecto, summè intelligente, summè libero, motum per se habente in summo gradu, summè penetrante, summè immutabili, summè positivo, summè vivo, &, produci immediate diceretur ens summè imperfectum; omni scientiā, intellectu, & cognitione in summo gradu carens; summè necessarium, coactum, & ad leges motus passivi in summo gradu obligatum, adeoque omni omnī libertate & volitione destitutum; motu per se in extremis gradibus carens, sed non nisi motibus alienis & impensis subjectum, adeoque per se in summo gradu quiescens & immobile: Omni penetratione tam activa, quam passivā inter se carens; summè mutabile; summè privativum omnique beatitudine & bonorum realium positione orbatum; adeoque summè mortuum & torpidum: & per consequens nihil omnī eorum habens, quae in causa continentur; unde etiam natura Deo planè contraria à pluribus dicta est: Cum tamen causa efficiens sicut non producere potest aliquid sibi planè simile, ita nec aliquid planè dissimile. 2. Et hoc tamen subjetum tam vile atque inane, quod minimam partem universi occupare meritò à nobis dicitur, in eādem hypothesi vulgari, statuitur Deo coëxtensum, imò coësistens, atque coordinatum, adeoque in tantam extollitur existimationem, ut in tota Philosophia gentili omnis doctrina hoc solo subiecto exhauriatur, quae etiam mensura statuitur theorematum de Spiritu & Deo; (quod à posteriori demonstrare appellant,) unde maledictus ille materialismus & per consequens Atheismus. 3. Sicut contradictionem implicant, non esse & esse; ita contradictionis hujus consequens est *Ex non esse, esse, si accurat è & ad leges characterum causalium loquendum est.* 4. Eodem modo Deus dici deberet creasse mortem, peccatum, umbram, monstra, malum, &, quae privationes sunt, ut materia privatio est naturae spiritualis, quippe cuius definitionem ne unicus quidem terminus positivus jure meritò ingredi debet; quia nec discerpibilitas Eadem competit in abstracto & in atomo consideratae. 5. Creatio materiae ex nihilo Sapientiae Dei è diametro repugnat; quippe quae tali in casu cum, quod optimum fuisset, potuisset omnem creaturam facere spiritum, aliquam tamen & tantudem fecisset non spiritum, & non optimum. 6. Contra Bonitatem ejus est, quia creasset aliquid citra communicationem plerorumque bonorum suorum. Imò 8. ab uno extremo statueret processus dari ad alterum immediatus. Unde 9. absurdum esset ad evitandas absurditates incertas & non necessariò ex hypothesi fluentes, absurditates admittere alias plures, naturae animae, & regni Messiani insigniter nocivas, mentemque barathris materialibus caenosis sic immergentes, ut prae naturae spiritualis obliterazione tandem quasi planè materialescat, quod Deus avertat!"
346. L I: 90.
347. L II: 610.
348. Garber & Askew, eds., Section 31, p. 33.
349. *Theodicy*, par. 153, p. 219.
350. Grua I: 94.
351. Grua I: 94, note 47.
352. *Ibid.* p. 94: "De Progressu infinitum [Grua thinks this was written sometime between 1694–1696]: Si omnia inter ascendendum descendant rursus, nec recta progrediantur, quaeritur qua ratione in infinito progressus definitur, sitne ascensus an descensus an neutrum. Si ascendere rem dicamus, dicet aliis rursus descendere post longas periodos, etsi aliquando iterum ascendat. Dico igitur verum esse ascensum, si assumi nunc possit punctum infra quod non amplius descenderetur, et post aliquod tempus utcunque longum rursus perveniretur ad punctum altius infra quod non amplius descenderetur. Atque ita in infinitum. Idemque contra est de descensu. Quod si nullum sit punctum, de quo dici

possit nunc vel aliquando: *huc non redibitur*. revolutio erit in qua nec ascensus nec descensus.”

353. Grua I: 95: “An Mundus Perfectione Crescat [1694–1696]

Quaeritur an totus mundus perfectione crescat aut descrecat. An vero eandem semper perfectionem servet, quod potius puto, tametsi diversae partes perfectionem inter se varie permutent, ut invicem transferatur. Si eadem manet mundi perfectio, non possunt quaedam substantiae perfectione perpetuo crescere, qui alia perfectione perpetuo decrescant. Substantia perfectione crescens aut continue crescit, aut crescit rursusque decrescit, sed ita ut tamen plus crevisse quam decrevisse deprehendatur. Si qua substantia sive directe sive interpositis regressibus progreditur perfectione in finitum, necesse est ut nunc assignari possit gradus perfectione maximus infra quem in posterum nunquam sit descensura, et aliquo tempore elapsu rursus aliis major priore. Nec tamen ideo necesse est, ut promoveatur semper summus gradus ascensionis. Quo casu necesse est infimum gradum ascensionis intra datum tempus, etsi semper promoveatur, tamen certum limitem attingere, vel tandem incidere in summum ascensionis, quo casu tunc substantia in aeternum eundem perfectionis gradum servaret. Si infimus gradus aliquando cesseret promoveri, vel saltem limitem habeat, ultra quem non ascendat, at summus gradus ascensus promoveatur semper, progressus est in infinitum perfectionis, sed is tum perfectus est cum infimus descensus itidem nullum limitem habeat, supraque non sit ascensum.

Sed si substantia in infinitum descendat infra gradum quemvis, et ascendat etiam infra gradum quemvis, videbitur tamen ascendere si magis ascendat quam descendit.

An dicemus mundum necessario crescere virtute, quia animae omnibus praeteritis afficuntur, neque enim, ut alibi demonstravimus, ulla datur apud animas perfectat oblivio, etsi distinctum non recordemus, totum tamen quod nunc percipimus ex partibus consistit, in quas ingrediuntur omnes actiones praecedentes. An igitur animae semper debent evehi per periodos ad expressiores cogitationes. Si fieri non potest ut detur perfectio quae non augeri queat, sequitur perfectionem universi semper augeri; ita enim perfectius est quam si non augeatur. [Voluptas] beatitudo non consistit in summo quodam gradu, sed in perpetuo gaudiorum incremento. Summum illud Ens perfectione non augetur, quia est extra tempora et mutationes, et praesentia futurae eaque complectitur.” Grua places brackets around words or phrases deleted by Leibniz.

354. As Grua points out these refer to *neshamah*, *ruah*, *nefesh*, which are described in *Seder Olam*, para. 41, which Leibniz had read.

355. Insertion.

356. The worlds of *creationis*, *formationis*, *factionis*, are described in both the *Zohar* and the *Seder Olam*.

357. Grua indicates deletions with square brackets.

358. Grua’s transcription is only a resume of the full text (LBr 67, fols. 52–53). De Homine. Beatitudine. Deo. Christo [1694–1696]

- 1) In Homine est spiritus, anima et corpus: seu Mens, Ratio, caro vel sensus. Mens superiora considerat, Ratio aequalia, sensus interiora. Mundi tres, divinus, Angelicus <spiritualis>, sensibilis. Mundus superior eminenter continet inferiora. Inferior est umbra superioris [Angelos omnem mundum inferiorem in sese habet spiritualiter, ut exhibere etiam possit si velit.] Deus continet omnia in uno, et ad hoc unum omnia tendunt, hoc est sumnum omnium bonum. Bonum est internam et externum, illud est verum, hoc est falsi nominis bonum. Internum profluit ex nobis, externum <generali acceptance> fortuna dici potest, nec in potestate est.
- 2) Bona particularia externa sunt fortunae (corporis, ingenii), aequae vel a natura, vel studio, vel casu acquiruntur; possunt tamen omnia certo sensu fortuita dici, et veniunt a caelo (id est universal corporum cursu) et ut dantur a casu, sic ab eo auferuntur.

- 3) Homo terrenus est ex hoc mundo seu limo; unde pendet a caelo seu fortuna; homines dum student fortunae bonis, servos se faciunt astrorum <ut bruta>. Fortuna servos <moto suo> exercet, ut manipuli triturando torquentur. Sed pars hominis immortalis debet fato astrali seu corporis impressionibus dominari. Fato sapientia major (qui parten immortalem sui cogitant, et angelos agnoscent fratres, et Deum patrem et corpus servum). Nam parts nostri melior ut angelica ad imaginem Dei creata est. Qui his contemplandis sese exercent, et aeterna versant, animo a sensibus abducto, illi corporeo contagio eximuntur, et astris dominantur. sub pedibusque vident nubes et sidera coeli.
- 4) Tristesse et joie indument liées à la fortune.
- 5) Elle prête seulement ses dons; tort d'y tenir.
- 6) Tous cherchent le bien supême, diversement.
- 7) Richesses, bien trompeur ou passager, et non honorable.
- 8) Honneur fortuit et leurre.
- 9) Gloire posthume limitée.
- 10) Plaisirs, beauté, passagers. Pas de bonheur sur terre.
- 11) Les biens terrestres se concurrencent. Seul Dieu réunit tous les biens.
- 12) Même réunis, ils ne seraient que l'ombre des vrais biens.
- 13) Vrai bonheur en Dieu, sagesse, justice, félicité essentiellement.
- 14) Dieu unité. Adhérent à Dieu, nous devenons un “teste primogenito” (Jo. 17).
- 15) Les hommes deviennent heureux “adoptione divinitatis”, fils de Dieu par le Christ.
- 16) La fin des choses, c'est le bien. Nous en écartant, nous renions notre être.
- 17) Tout obéit à Dieu. Le mal n'est rien, vient de la privation dans les créatures.
- 18) “Mala sunt quatenus non omnia attingunt summum bonum.” Cependant le mal même sert aux bons.
- 19) Mal faire est impuissance. “Mali serviunt bonis, ut bestiae hominibus”.
- 20) Amélioration par le châtiment.
- 21) Impunité n'est pas chance mais maladie. Pitié pour les méchants.
- 22) Tout événement, providentiel, est bon aux bons.
- 23) “Ascensus a sensibilibus ad intellectualia, a creaturis in Deum... Deus produxit angelos dicendo *fiat lux*. Ex hac luce astra (vel potius formae, archaei, ideae, astrales virtutes) <(+ vel ut magis philosophice dicam, vires actrices primariae universi +)> ex his corpora.
- 24) “Deus maximum infinitate, indivisibilitate minimum ... Christus centrum vitae aeternae...
- 25) Lucifer a cherché son bonheur en soi. C'est une loi de la nature qui condamne cette “philautia” comme idolâtrie. “Ad se converti est ad nihilum tendere. De his vide Theologiam Germanicam, et Kempisium, et Taulerum. Denique Deus omnibus lucet, ut sol, sed occaecati a seipsis eum non vident”.
- 26) Mal possible par aveuglement. “Sed Dei non est violare ordinem rerum supremum”.
- 27) “Theologia vera in cognitione Adami et Christi, nostri et Dei. D'Adam, se tourner ver soi <edere carnem et sanguinem Adae>. Du Christ, s'abandonnera à Dieu <edere carnem et sanguinem filii Dei>.
- “Adam externus non nocet, sed internus; nec Christus externus prodest, sed internus; ergo qui Christum fide induit, is in se habet vitam, lucem, Deum, summum bonum (+ *Omnia ad unum referre, seu ad Deum, est harmoniam rerum concipere.*+) ... In tenebris creaturarum lucet divina lux.”
359. See, for example, LH IV, 3, 8, 3–4, 9–10.; LH I, 5, 2, 15–18.
360. G VII: 544–6 (Hanover 9 May 1697): “Madame. C'est par un ordre de Madame l'Electrice de Bronsvic que j'ose la liberté d'envoyer ce paquet de livres à Vostre serenité Electorale. Monsieur Helmont ayant que de partir d'icy, me chargea de procurer une nouvelle impression de la version Allemand fort bien faite du livre fameux de Boëtius,

consul Romain dans le temps que les Goths estoient maistres de Rome. Quoyque ce livre intitulé: Consolation de la philosophie (dont les exemplaires seront rendus avec cette lettre), ait eu, de tout temps, l'approbation generale des plus habiles, neantmoins Monsieur Helmont a crû avec raison qu'il seroit encor mieux receu à present dans la monde, s'il avoit celle de deux grandes Electrices dont l'esprit n'est pas moins élevé que la qualité, et à qui il semble appartenir, par un don singulier du ciel, de juger sainement de ces matieres sublimes qui passent la capacité des ames vulgaires et profanes. Monsieur Helmont affectionne particulierement ce livre, parce qu'il y croist remarquer les traces des sentimens Pythagoriques. Mais cela mis à part, il faut avouer que l'auteur dit des choses tres belles et tres sensées sur l'ordre de l'univers. Car à voir les succès des mauvais, les malheurs des bons, la brieveté et les maux ordinaires de la vie humaine, et mille desordres apparens qui s'offrent à nos yeux, il semble que tout va par hazard. Mais ceux qui examinent l'interieur des choses, y trouvent tout si bien reglé, qu'ils ne sçauroient douter que l'univers ne soit gouverné par une souveraine intelligence, dans un ordre si parfait que, si on l'entendoit en detail, on ne croiroit pas seulement, mais on verroit même que rien ne se peut souhaitter de mieux. De sorte que les desordres apparens ne sont que comme certains accords dans la musique qui paroissent mauvais, quant on les entend seuls, mais qu'un habile compositeur laisse entrer dans sa piece, parce qu'en les joignant avec d'autres accords, ils en relevent le goust, et rendent toute l'harmonie plus belle. Et comme ce que nous voyons maintenant n'est qu'une tres petite portion de l'univers infini, et que nostre vie present n'est qu'une petite parcelle de ce qui nous doit arriver, on ne doit point s'estonner si toute la beauté des choses ne s'y découvre pas d'abord; mais nous y entrerons de plus en plus, et c'est pour cela mesme qu'il est nécessaire que nous changions de situation. C'est à peu près comme les mouvements des astres paroissent irreguliers à ceux qui ne les regardent que durant peu d'années, cependant la suite des siecles a fait connoistre qu'il n'y a rien de si beau ny de si réglé. C'est pourquoi le vulgaire ne conçoit pas ces choses, il ne s'eleva point à l'ordre general, il ne conçoit pas ces choses, il ne s'eleva point à l'ordre general, il ne connoist pas mesmes sa propre religion et n'ayant que de fausees idées de la divinité, il flotte entre la superstition et le libertinage toujours mal fondé, soit qu'il craigne mal ou qu'il craigne rien. Mais à quoy bon de parler d'avantage de ces choses que Boëtius explique bien mieux, et que votre esprit sublime conçoit encor mieux que Boëtius ne sçauroit dire. J'ay crû seulement qu'il estoit à propos que je donnasse quelque idée du live que j'envoie, estant avec une devotion ardente..."

361. L II: 794–95.

362. *Ibid.*

363. *Ibid.*: 796–7.

364. Leibniz uses the word “cultus.” Loemker translates this as “culture.” In their translation Garber and Askew translate this as “cultivation.”

365. L II: 797–8. Leibniz anticipated some of these ideas in virtually the same words in a letter to Sophie dated 4 November 1696 (LBr 389, f. 66). This provides additional evidence that these speculations were occasioned by van Helmont's theories.

366. Walker, *The Decline of Hell*.

367. *Theodicy*, par. 137, p. 137.

368. “Interdum auditus est dicere, quemlibet in sua fide salvari posse secundum singulare ipsius lumen et lumen conscientiae” (“Information de Helmontio,” May/June 1662, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Archivio della Nunziatura di Colonia 81).

369. *Ibid.*, par. 95 & 98, pp. 175, 177.

370. Frankel, “Causation, Harmony, and Analogy,” p. 58.

371. “La philosophie de Leibniz est, dans le fond, un monisme de l'esprit où, malgré les efforts de l'auteur, la réalité de la matière et ses frontières avec l'esprit sont fuyantes et fragiles... Leibniz aurait désiré que la substance unique du panthéisme parut brisée par sa doctrine

en une infinité d'éclats origineux: il ne parvient pas, cependant, à dissiper l'équivoque qu'implique son mécanisme métaphysique. Dieu est la réalité infinie. En passant de l'essence à l'existence (selon leur perfection ou quantité d'essence), les substances empruntent leur réalité à celle de Dieu. Elles ne *sont* que parce qu'elles sont *de Dieu*. Leibniz les fait sortir hors de Dieu, mais ne peut empêcher qu'en tant qu'existences, elles ne demeurent en Dieu. La distinction entre les créatures et le créateur n'est qu'un aspect de l'univers monadique. Vues sous l'angle de leur réalité (et par consequent) de leur activité propre, de leur puissance), les créatures ne sont pas distinctes du créateur. *Deus adest orbi*. C'est en ce sens que dans la pensée de Leibniz demeurent des traces importantes d'immanentisme. La substance est une, bien qu'éparpillée en une infinité de substances. Chacune d'elles est (*quatenus*) la substance, et celle-ci est en chacune d'elles.

De ce point de vue, l'univers de Leibniz est encore une *physis* antique, refondue par le génie d'un homme de la Renaissance, qui la pénètre d'Harmonie, et d'un moderne, grand mathématicien, qui intègre en elle une notion originale d'infini" (Friedmann, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, p. 213).

- 372. Frankel, "Causation, Harmony, and Analogy," p. 64.
- 373. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 61 [G IV: 170]
- 374. *NE* ii, xxi; quoted in *Ibid.*
- 375. Garber & Askew, eds., p. 75.
- 376. *Ibid.*
- 377. Wiener, *Leibniz Selections*, pp. 494–5; Foucher de Careil, *Réfutations*, p. 60.
- 378. Frankel, "Causation, Harmony, and Analogy," p. 65.
- 379. *Ibid.*, p. 64. Letter to Thomasius, Aril 20/30, 1669 [G IV: 169].
- 380. Monadology 48.
- 381. "On a General Principle, Useful for the Explanation of Laws of Nature" (Wiener, *Selections*, pp. 69–70).
- 382. "A study of Leibniz' mature reflections on the concepts central to his system, substance, force, space, and time, reveals a pervasive habit of thought, which is to distinguish different levels of reality, each linked to the one underlying it by the relation of expression. Monads, as pure, relationless essences, constitute the fundamental level, the "really real," but there are further levels, and monads appear differently at each level.

When monads are considered as objects of God's will as well as of his intellect, that is, when they become possible existents, their intrinsic nature is expressed extrinsically as a "*point de vue*" or characteristic perspective. Thus they are brought into relation to each other according to a divine logic which constitutes an order of two dimensions. For some perspectives logically tolerate each other, though they are not identical, and so form an order of compossibles, side by side so to speak. And other perspectives logically exclude each other, and so form an order of exclusion, of priority and posteriority. The original array of distinct monads is then expressed in a logical order of perspectives with the two dimensions of compossibility and exclusion.

This level is in turn the precondition for the next, where the two dimensions of logical order are expressed as the mathematical orders of space and time, extension and duration. Here, perspective is expressed as mere position; the infinitely rich complexity of each monad is not retained in this abstraction, only its bare claim to a position different from that of every other monad. Thus the heterogeneity and discreteness which existed at earlier levels disappears, leaving only the homogeneous continua of space and time.

Finally, space and time constitute a level anterior to actual concrete existents in space and time. Now it should be clear why Leibniz thought that the exact sciences of mathematics and physics can yield true knowledge. The imaginative constructions of mathematics, and the appearances of the external world which come to us through the senses cannot provide us with knowledge of the absolute simples, the monads,

which are their ground; such knowledge is reserved for God. However, the human knower can hope to have objective scientific knowledge, since mathematics and sensible appearances express a relational structure which is necessary and a priori. The doctrine of expression posits that this invariant relational structure is exhibited by all levels of reality; indeed, it is what allows these levels to appear. Thus Leibniz calls the subject matter of mathematics and physics *phenomena bene fundata*; divine logic guarantees an intelligible connection between phenomena and things as they really are" (Grosholz, "Leibniz' Formalist Realism," p. 38).

- 383. J.B. van Helmont, *Oriatrike*, p. 536.
- 384. Pagel, *Joan Baptista van Helmont*, pp. 72–3.
- 385. Vickers, "Analogy and Identity," p. 117.
- 386. Pagel, *Joan Baptista van Helmont*, p. 36.
- 387. *Ibid.*, pp. 85ff.
- 388. *Des vortrefflichen Engelländers Thomae Brown, der Artzney Dr. Pseudodoxia Epidemica... durch Christian Peganius, in Teutsch Rautner genannt...* Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1680. Peganius and Rautner were von Rosenroth's pseudonyms.
- 389. Coudert, "Theories of a Natural Language."
- 390. AK VI, 1: 283.
- 391. Scholem suggests Bacharach is referring to the making of the *golem* ("Golem," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*).
- 392. KD II, 2: 458–9: "Quod si igitur homo justus est atque pius, studetque in lege, & precatur cum attentione; ex illis vocibus, quae prodeunt ab ore ejus, creantur Angeli & Spiritus Sancti, qui semper durant atque persistunt."
- 393. "... keine andere Sprache auf der Welt mit ihr so genau übereinkomme als diese..." (*Kurtzer Entwurf*, preface, 13).
- 394. "Und demnach auch nur etliche und bey weitem nicht alle inwendige beschaffenheiten mit eigentlichen zeichen können zu verstehen geben. Hernach muste Adam gespüret haben/daß sein verstand in dem wercke des verstehens in dasjenige ding verwandelt und gleichsam verselbstet würde/damit er umgienge; und daß demnach alle äußerliche dinge in ihm könne zu einer innerlichen beschaffenheit werden... Weil nun aus aller Thiere/die er vor sich sahe/eigentlicher Natur jedesmal so zu sagen ein theil seines inwendigen wesens ward/und seine worte solches inwendige so genau konten abbilden; so muß folgen/daß auch seine Sprache/welche Hebreisch war/die eigentliche Natur gleich wie aller Thiere/also aller andern dinge aufs allergenaueste konten abbilden. Wo findet man nun eine einige Sprache/von welcher man dergleichen mit so herzlicher gewissheit beweisen könnte?" (*Ibid.*, pp. 14–15).
- 395. *Thoughts on Genesis* [English], pp. 13–15; Latin edition, pp. 4–5.
- 396. *Ibid.*, p. 134; Latin edition, p. 79.
- 397. *Ibid.*, p. 91; Latin edition, p. 49.
- 398. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5; Latin edition, p. 16.
- 399. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, pp. 64–72.
- 400. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, ch. 8.
- 401. *Ibid.*, ch. 7; see also her essays on Lull in *Lull & Bruno*.
- 402. "On a General Principle, Useful for the Explanation of Laws of Nature" (1687), quoted in Wiener, *Selections*, p. 69.
- 403. "Reply to the Thoughts on the system of Preestablished Haromong contained in the Second Edition of Mr. Bayle's Critical Dictionary, Article Rorarius" (1702), L II: 939.
- 404. L II: 903.
- 405. Writing to Thomas Burnett (17/27 July 1696) Leibniz says: "... J'ay fait rapport de la vostre [lettre] à Madame l'Electrice en presence de Mr. van Helmont, qui nous dit qu'il connoissoit Mr. Lock, et temoignoit d'en faire beaucoup de cas, comme de raison. Ce que je vous ay envoyé de mes Reflexions sur l'important livre de M. Lock est entierement

à vostre disposition, et vous le pouvés communiquer à qui bon vous semble; et s'il tombe entre ses mains, ou celles de ses amis, tant mieux; car cela luy donnera occasion de nous instruire et d'éclaircir la matiere" (G III: 180).

406. Aarsleff, "Schulenburg's *Leibniz als Sprachforscher*, with some Observations on Leibniz and the Study of Language, p. 127.
407. Boyle made this suggestion in his *Free Inquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* (1686).
408. L II: 813.
409. *Ibid.*: 815.
410. Vickers, *Occult & Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, introduction, pp. 32ff.
411. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae..."
412. Ficino, *Opera Omnia* (Basle, 1576), p. 1768.
413. C. H. Josten, "A Translation of John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica...*"
414. "Und wenn wir die Schrifften des Alten Testaments ansehen/was finden wir darinnen anders eine Goldgrube aller guten Künste und Wissenschaften/und einen Schatzkasten/darinnen alle Kleinodien der Philosophi, alle Reichthümer des Rechtens/und was das vornehmste/alle Schätze der Göttlichen und allein seligmachenden Weisheit verborgen liegen? Ich will nicht gedencken/daß daraus das einige Liecht aller Zeitrechnung hervorstralet/daß darinnen jederman ein vollkommener Spiegel aller Tugenden und Laster vor Augen stehet/und die warhaftigen Regeln wohl zu regieren und klüglich hauszuhalten/aus keinem Buche besser und gründlicher zu lernen sind/also aus diesem. Weil weniger kan ich ausfuhrn/was diese wunderbaren Bücher unter dem einfältigen historischen Buchstaben vor herzliche Geheimnisse beydes der Natur und der Sitten verstecket halten/der geheimen Weissagungen zu geschweigen" (*Kurtzer Entwurff*, preface, p. 12).
415. Couturat, *La Logique de Leibniz*; Ishiquiro, *Leibniz's Philosophy of Logic and Language*.
416. "Cabbala duplex, realis et literalis, haec est Gematria (haec transponit literas et syllabas facitque ex dictione aliam dictiōnem aut alterius dictiōnis complutum). Notariaca quae ex singulis literis praesertim initialibus novas dictiones condit. Themura quae est quaedam stenographia et totius alphabeti commutatio" (Foucher de Careil, ed., *Réfutations*, p. 6).
417. Weiner, *Selections*, p. xxi.
418. *Ibid.*
419. "... einem ganz tauben/schwachsehenden und zitrenden Musicanten" (*Kurtzer Entwurffe*, p. 7).
420. Rossi, *Clavis*, p. 219.
421. See *What Real Progress has Metaphysics made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, tr. T. Humphrey. New York: Abaris, 1983.
422. 12/22 July 1695, quoted in Robinet, *Malebranche et Leibniz*, p. 319.
423. Wilson, *Leibniz's Metaphysics*, p. 115.
424. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition; The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*; Webster, *The Great Instauration*; Idel, *The Kabbalah*, p. 170 & *passim*; Coudert, "Henry More, the Kabbalah, and the Quakers."
425. *The Conway Letters*, p. 329.
426. Leibniz to Bourguet (March 1714), G III: 568: "... il est bon d'étudier les découvertes d'autrui d'une manière qui nous découvre la source des inventions, et qui nous les rende propres en quelque façon à nous mêmes. Et je voudrois que les Auteurs nous donassent l'Histoire de leur découvertes, et les progrès par lesquels ils y sont arrivés. Quand ils ne le font point, il faut tacher de les deviner, pour mieux profiter de leur ouvrages."

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Abbreviations

- JHI* *Journal of the History of Ideas*
JHP *Journal of the History of Philosophy*
JWCI *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes*
MWS *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*
SL *Studia Leibnitiana*
SLS *Studia Leibnitiana Supplementa*
SLSH *Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft*

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