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THE WORLD OF CULTURE AND THE WORLD OF NATURE. CONFRONTING CHOSEN ASPECTS OF G. W. LEIBNIZ'S POLITICAL THOUGHT WITH HIS PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

In his philosophical system G. W. Leibniz distinguished two distinct worlds: the world of nature, which is God's creation, and the world of culture, constituting the work of man. The former is a perfect republic, the latter is its mere imitation. Since Leibniz establishes such a distinction in his philosophy, can we, consequently, find the same train of thought in his non-philosophical works? In this article I pose two research questions which have significance for this issue. The first: does Leibniz's political reflection contain references to the abovementioned distinction, and, therefore, the thinker's conscious allusion to the rules of his own philosophical system? The second: can Leibniz's philosophical system constitute a tool one can use to explain the difficulties involved in harmonizing the many Leibnizian concepts posed in his political journalism, the concepts which can, when seen from a general perspective, appear inconsistent and contradictory? A confrontation of the chosen aspects of G. W. Leibniz's political thought and his philosophical system constitutes the basis of this analysis.

An interest in Leibniz is, in most cases, concerned with his philosophy. His work, however, dealt also with the issues of world politics. His main occupation, the main source of his steady income, consisted in holding offices in the courts of European monarchs, and engaged him in numerous enterprises of political nature. Leibniz worked not only for the patrons of the house of Hanover, but was also devoted to the interests of German emperors, electors of Mainz, the elector of Brandenburg (later on the king of Prussia), and the Czar of Moscow. Due to the variety of Leibniz's political concepts, resulting partially from his analysis of the political situation in the countries governed by the abovementioned rulers, critical literature presents him from different angles – as a German patriot, at times as a supporter of imperial politics,

and even as an internationalist[1]. Such an approach does not favour incisive analysis of his political thought and enable further comparative research. It is difficult to separate internationalism from patriotism, and devotion to the interests of the Empire from supporting the concept of German nations' sovereignty. Therefore, establishing Leibniz's political orientation constitutes a starting point for further reflections.

Leibnizian patriotism is an identification with the cultural group which used the German language and, simultaneously, the philosopher's appeal to traditional values on which the Empire was based – an organism that not only united the lands within its borders, but also guarded European order. The philosopher thought that there is an earthly order, exemplified by the medieval hierarchy of importance of European nations, headed by the secular imperial power and the spiritual power of the Pope. Although the Empire in the 17th and at the beginning of the 18th century did not constitute a reference point for any group identification, did not form a single nation state but, mainly, a Reich of German commonwealth, Leibniz thought that his philosophical idea of "oneness in plurality" – many states united within the structure of the Empire – made feasible a federation concept of the Empire. Leibnizian defense of the sovereignty of the German states as voiced in front of the Empire's internal and external forums should be considered as an appeal to observe the established law, which was not common in diplomatic practice. When the philosopher points to the existence of the so called *territorial primacy*, sanctioned by the Peace of Westphalia in the year 1648, he allows the German states to form their international sovereignty.[2] For Leibniz, the reasons behind the collapse of the Empire's unity did not lay in its structure, as claimed by Samuel Pufendorf,[3] but in the French policy of subsidizing German princes. What is important, identifying Louis XIV as an enemy of the Empire, as a supporter of expansive French culture, aiming, according to Leibniz, at a unification of Europe in a single spirit, is

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[1] See É. Neart, *La Ponsée Politique de Leibniz*, Presses Universitaires de la France, Paris 1964; A. Robinet, *G. W. Leibniz, Le meilleur des mondes par la balance de l'Europe*, Presses Universitaires de la France, Paris 1994.

[2] See G. W. Leibniz, *Entretien de Philarete et d'Eugene sur la question du temps agitée à Nimwegue touchant le droit de Souveraineté et d'Ambassade des electeurs et Princes de l'Empire*, ed. 2, 1682, p. 289–338, in: *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, the number of the Series IV, vol. 2, 1923–; J. Sitniewska, *Prawo do suwerenności władców niemieckich według Gottfrieda Wilhelma Leibniza*, p. 39–49, in: *Szkice o państwie i polityce*, Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, vol. VI, Katowice 2004.

[3] See S. Pufendorf, *O stanie Rzeszy niemieckiej*, p. 69–83, in: *Państwo a społeczeństwo. Wizje wspólnot niemieckich od oświecenia do okresu restauracji*, wybór i opracowanie T. Namowicz, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2001.

an example of the nascent defence of political identity via a sense of cultural separation.[4] Leibniz became an advocate not only of the crumbling idea of the Empire, but also of the beginnings of the nascent commonwealth based not on the territory, historical experience, or a common state, but on the language[5]. The universal institution of an Emperor, which was, according to the philosopher, to guard European order, was not, as is shown by world history, able to uphold it. As it seems, Leibniz would not have aimed his criticism against the actions of Louis XIV and his faction if the power of France had not opposed the status of the Empire. According to Leibniz, badly located aspirations of the French king were detrimental to European order. The ruler's politics of laying claims to the Habsburg succession in Spain, the Empire's estates, as well as to Holland, influenced the creation by Leibniz of his plans aimed at drawing Louis XIV's attention away from European territories and directing his military power at the African dominions of the Ottoman Empire,[6] and at engaging in involved journalism in favour of defending the rights of the Empire. The remarks concerning Leibniz's internationalism, however – building in the future a shared political and cultural platform between Europe, Asia and Africa – were, I believe, entirely visionary in character. The proposal was based on an exchange of information, and on the development of knowledge that allowed the creation of information society, characterised by an ordered, unlimited access to any and all knowledge. Leibniz's political journalism, oftentimes full of opposing claims, constitutes a reflection on the reality seen by the thinker who attempted to unite the state's private interests with a broadly understood interest of humanity. The undoubtedly visionary character of Leibniz's thought was not contradict the creation of national identity.

In Leibniz's philosophical system we encounter an idea of the most perfect republic, the Kingdom of God, ruled by the most perfect monad which is God. "...and the government of God is the best State possible.[7]" For Leibniz, it is an orderly world, despite the multiplicity of the monads which form it. It constitutes a system which is full of harmony. The philoso-

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[4] See G. W. Leibniz, *Manifesto for the Defense of the Right of Charles III*, p. 146–163, in: P. Riley, *Leibniz. Political Writings*, ed. 2, Cambridge University Press 1998.

[5] See G. W. Leibniz, *Unvorgreiffliche Gedancken, betreffend die Ausübung und Verbesserung der Teutschen Sprache*, p. 65–84, translation: Caryn and Bernhard Wunderlich, in: Calinger R., *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, Troy New York Resselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1976.

[6] See A. Youssef, *La fascination de l'Égipte, du rêve au projet*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1998.

[7] G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, Cover Copyright, Cosimo Inc. 2009, part II § 128.XIII.

pher named this order of coordination a *preestablished harmony*. The order was also called *the best of all possible worlds*. To Leibniz, the Kingdom of God is a moral world contained within the natural world. God is its constructor, but also the monarch of the Kingdom of Souls. On Earth there is an order of this Kingdom, "But the human kind, so far as it is known to us, is only a fragment, only a small portion of the City of God of the republic of Spirits...⁸". The citizens of this kingdom of souls belong among rational beings, most perfect and, above all, capable of getting to know the system of the world of nature, because they possess not only a basic degree of cognition – a perception which is an internal state of a monad reflecting the phenomena outside it – but also its higher level – a perception constituting consciousness. The philosopher connected the origin of substance with self-awareness. It is the souls exactly which are capable of reasoning: that is, they can fathom their own perceptions and analyse them.⁹ Thus, Leibniz opposed Locke's idea of *tabula rasa*, claiming that the ability to perceive substances results in the necessity of the existence of the subject of this perception. Each spirit is an individual, constituting the precept and the source of its actions, constituting therefore an active element, expressed in the Leibnizian "appetition" of a substance towards its own development, rising in the hierarchy of monads to ever higher levels of cognition, treated as a consistent fulfillment of its possibilities, culminating in its attaining its perfect development.¹⁰ Leibniz's metaphysics advocates the idea of man's constant drive towards discovering the rules that govern the world created by God. Attaining a holistic perception of reality and fathoming the rules that govern the universe are, according to Leibniz's philosophical system, reserved for God alone.

Leibniz assumes that "les âmes en général sont des miroirs vivants ou images de l'univers de creatures, mais que l'esprits sont encore images de la Divinité meme, ou de l'Auteur même de la nature capable de connaître le système de l'universe et d'en imiter quelque chose par des échantillons architectoniques, chaque esprit étant comme une petit divinité dans son department."¹¹ Thus, Leibniz assigns to the outside world a phenomenal status which is the work of God. Beside this world there exists another, whose

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⁸ Ibidem, part II, § 146.

⁹ See H. Święczkowska, *Harmonia linguarum – język i jego funkcje w filozofii Leibniza*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 1998, p. 26.

¹⁰ See F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Leibniz*, Image Book, New York 1994, vol. 4, s. 309.

¹¹ G. W. Leibniz, *La Monadologie*, § 83, in: *Oeuvres philosophiques de Leibniz*. T. 1 / avec une introd. et des notes par Paul Janet., F. Alcan, Paris 1900.

creator is Man himself. The human being is after all a tiny god, who tries to imitate the works of the Creator. Leibniz differentiates between divine machines (natural automata) "dans leurs moindres partis jusqu'à l'infini[12]", and machines as products of human activity, devoid of the qualities possessed by natural machines. The world of nature, God's creation, is the world of phenomena well founded (*phaenomena bene fundata*). The works of Man, however, lack substantial unity, they are only aggregates of substance, constituting a contingent unity instead. That is the basic difference between the nature of the works of God, and culture, the works of Man.[13] Culture, the result of Man's creative activity, is characterised, according to Leibniz, by a defect – that is, evil-resulting from a lack of substantial unity of this world, guaranteed only by Divine deeds. Culture results from the freedom given to Man, which, however, does not mean that Man's works possesses Divine unity. That is why Man's attempts at creating some political and social order, if they are to attain an ideal, cannot match the work of God. Since no ruler is the Creator, his actions are imperfect. His choices are, similarly, imperfect. They can, of course, aim at perfection, but they will not attain it. In *Theodicy* Leibniz presented directly the qualitative difference between human and Divine government, accusing the former of an imperfection of actions: "A king should generally have nothing so much at heart as to keep his subjects free from oppression. One of his greatest interest is to bring good order into his finances. Nevertheless there are times when he is obliged to tolerate vice and disorders. He has a great war on his hands, he is in a state of exhaustion, he has no choice of generals, it is necessary to humour those he has, those posses of great authority with the soldiers: a Braccio, a Sforza, a Wallenstein. He lacks money for the most pressing needs, it is necessary to turn to great financiers, who have an established credit, and he must at the same time connive at their malversations. It is true that this unfortunate necessity arise most often from previous errors. It is not the same with God: he has need of no man, he commits no error, he always does the best. One cannot even wish that things may go better, when one understands them: and it would be a vice in the Author of things if he wished to change anything whatsoever in them, if he wished to exclude the vice that was found there. Is this Sate with perfect government, where good is willed and performed as far as it is possible, where evil even serves the greatest good, comparable with the State of a prince whose affairs are

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[12] Ibidem, § 64.
[13] See H. Święczkowska, op. cit., p. 105.

in run and who escapes as the best he can? Or with that of a prince who encourages oppression in order to punish it, and who delights to see the little men with begging bowls and the great on scaffolds?[14]" The conclusion of the above analysis is that Leibniz clearly differentiates between the Divine and human kingdom. One must remember, however, that Lebnizian metaphysics shows human actions as free, even if in advance known to God. The events that are to befall each substance are contained within itself. God, then, when He created *the best of all possible* worlds, chose this and not that train of events in an awareness of their *sufficient reason*. When we regress in order to find the original reason of all actions, we reach the boundary of *sufficient reason*, which constitutes God's free decree. However, Leibniz clearly opposed the perception of events that happen to Man as necessary. He claimed that they were necessary *ex hipothesi*, contingent in themselves. Despite the existence of *sufficient reason*, Man's action should be treated as free. In St. Augustine's *Civitas Dei*, which is an idea of an order of interpersonal relations, considered the norm by the 17th century thinkers[15] also, one can seek shared analogies between the construction of this organism and the Leibnizian Kingdom of God. In the case of Augustine's *Civitas terrena*, however, the above claim is not valid. For Leibniz there is no struggle between the state as the work of Satan, and the state as Divine creation. In earthly states, described by the philosopher, we deal with the action of human beings, the citizens of the Kingdom of God and the results of their actions in the form of, for example, political systems that they create. What both orders, Divine and human, share, is the link of human being. It is difficult, however, in political journalism, to grasp this subtle web of interdependencies, as Leibniz focuses on a description and analysis of human world alone, whose reason is known to its Creator alone.

It seems that the Leibnizian metaphysics deals only with the world of nature as resulting from God's free activity. On the other hand, the world of culture, the result of Man's free activity, although a part of Divine plan, is extremely difficult to locate within the metaphysical order. The political reality of the 17th and 18th century is, in this argumentation, an incidental entity, made up of equally incidental and fragmentary events, constituting, from an optimistic perspective, the result of actions aimed at a realization of God's perfect State. This effort at achieving perfection is, however, doomed

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[14] G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, op. cit., part. II § 125. X.

[15] See L. E. Loemker, *Struggle for Synthesis: the seventeenth century background of Leibniz synthesis of order and freedom*, Harvard University Press 1972, p. 55–58.

to failure. Man, although capable of learning the system of the universe[16] and of its partial imitation, is only a tiny god.[17]

There is another reason for pessimism. Leibniz focuses his political reflection on an analysis of extant, directly accessible world. Not only does he acknowledge the existing order but, more – he tries to justify it. But what constitutes his epistemological perspective are only contingent truths and the limitations resulting from the nature of the mind itself. The mind can, as claimed by Leibniz, access true propositions only if it activates the instruction for the internal order of ideas to be deciphered. True propositions do not belong to the above category. One must differentiate between truths of reason and factual truths. Truths of reason constitute necessary propositions, that is the propositions which are obvious or reducible to primary truths[18]. To Leibniz, primary truths were those which did not have to be justified, because they were self-evident, based on the precept of identity.[19] Truths of reason cannot be negated, thus, their negations cannot be true. Leibniz claimed that all of science is concerned with the sphere of the possible.[20] Anything that is possible is defined as consistent. God, according to Leibniz, is a possible being; therefore, He exists.[21] This proposition is jest the only one among truths of reason which contain a justification of the existence of any one being, since those truths, with this sole exception, do not substantiate the existence of any one subject – "C'est une vérité nécessaire que Dieux existe, que tous les angles droit sont égaux entr eux etc., mais c'est une vérité contingente que j'existe moi, et qu'il y a des corps dans la nature, qui font voir une angle effectivement droit.[22]" Leibnizian truths of reason are analytical, we can show that their predicate is contained within their subjects[23]. Factual truths, however, also referred to as contingent, do not constitute necessary propositions. They do not lend themselves to analysis.[24] They can, however, be considered as such on condition that they are known only to God, and not Man. They can

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[16] See G. W. Leibniz, *La Monadologie*, op. cit., § 83.

[17] See ibid.

[18] See G. W. Leibniz, *La Monadologie*, op. cit., § 33.

[19] See W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, ed. 13, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1993, vol. 2, p. 80.

[20] See F. Copleston, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 276.

[21] See B. Russell, *History of western Philosophy*, Routledge Classics 2004, p. 535.

[22] G. W. Leibniz, *Lettre à Mr. Coste.* 1707, s. 447, in: *God. Guil. Leibnitii Opera philosophica que exstant latina gallica germanica omnia*, ed. J. E. Erdmann, Berlin 1840.

[23] B. Russell, op. cit., 540.

[24] See F. Copleston, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 273–275.

be negated without logical contradiction; their opposites are conceivable. "The true existential statement that John Smith actually exists is a contingent proposition, a truth of fact. We cannot deduce it from any *a priori* self-evident truth: we know its truth *a posteriori*"[25]. Reason enough for John Smith to exist is the existence of *sufficient reason*[26]. In the case of justifying the existence of contingent truths, Leibniz's argumentation aims to indicate *sufficient reason.* "When A and B are both finite things, the existence of B may be explicable in terms of existence and activity of A. But the existence of A itself requires a sufficient reason.[27]" Therefore, God's free will has enabled the existence of any given thing.

One must note that as regards contingent truths, Leibniz refers also to the theory of subject-predicate.[28] He cites Caesar's actions as an example. Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon is contained in the notion of the subject – Caesar himself. To achieve a full knowledge of his decision, one should know the whole system in which he played a role. Since Caesar, according to the theory of monads, is an individual, he contains within himself an infinity. To conduct an analysis of infinity is not feasible to Man; consequently, a human being, capable only of getting to know the propositions which are analytic, can only reach their primary elements. S/he cannot achieve such knowledge via an analysis of that which is contingent and, therefore, existential. Therefore, pondering Caesar's existence as possible, without references to his existence, his notion contains all its predicates, with the exception of his existence. The existence itself is not contained within the notion of any one finite being, which is create by Man, devoid of substantial form. We are thus faced once again with the problem of discovering the truth about all Man's works. If Leibniz attempts to comprehend the reality which surrounds him, to give it some deeper meaning, to justify political actions or decisions, one should also remember that his scrutiny is concerned solely with contingent truths. While he can speculate about events and try to discover the sources of certain truths in his analysis, he will never experience them to their full depths.

Leibnizian metaphysics presents the human world as lacking consistency, because it was created by Man. It is therefore burdened with a certain lack, constitutes a unity which is contingent and whose reason is known only to God. As emphasised by Leibniz, this concept does not doom all Man's

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[25] Ibidem, p. 274.
[26] See G. W. Leibniz, *La Monadologie*, op. cit., § 36.
[27] F. Copleston, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 215.
[28] See ibid, p. 216.

attempts at even a partial comprehension of the above order to failure. Cognitive optimism is, in this case, seen in the Leibnizian concept of substance's "appetition", expressed in its rising towards ever higher levels of cognition. Discovering the rules that govern natural order can enable an insight into the rules that govern the order of culture, since Man is the element that unites the two worlds. Full knowledge of the human being would, undoubtedly, allow, if not a discovery of the reasons behind human actions, at least a rub against its borders. Leibniz was aware, at least on the level of metaphysical investigation, that no ruler can equal the acts of God, and no form of government will be as ideal as the one fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. No political order created by Man, then, no results of his political activity, will bring happiness to his subjects, since those qualities are only constitutive of the ideal Kingdom of God.

In the field of Leibniz's political journalism we find, however, thoughts that lead to quite different conclusions. Leibniz was certain that there existed on Earth a perfect political order. He thought that it was realised in the medieval hierarchy of importance of European states, headed by the Empire. That was an order which could not be subject to revising. The portrait of emperor Leopold I shows that ruler to be exemplary as a ruler. What of it, though, when, even if Leibniz presents him as a political ideal, the ruler so described proved unable to create and maintain political harmony in his contemporary world. Leibniz equips the world of culture with the characteristics of the world of nature. All we are dealing with here is human imitation. The philosopher tried to find in this imitation elements which would match the works of God, but he forgot his own ignorance of the reason that could explain why this chosen order deserved to be called an order. In the course of centuries, the many political orders realised by Man are confronted with each other, as shown in Leibniz's description of the actions of Louis XIV and Leopold I. Although the thinker favored the existence of an order in the world, he did not, however, consider the fact that the disharmony, as represented by the person of Louis XIV, is also an element of *the best of all possible worlds*. Without it, the world would not be so called. While it is human activity that allowed the French king's accession to the throne, it was God who called him into the order of the world's harmony. The dilemmas, revealed by Leibniz's political journalism, become less manifest, when they are interpreted through the lens of his metaphysics and epistemology. It is a pity, though, that, in this important part of his work, the author himself never appealed to the fundaments of his own philosophical system, placing the burden, instead, the commentator.

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S U M M A R Y

The main goal of this article is to answer the question whether Leibniz's philosophy, distinguishing two worlds: of culture and of nature, has its reflection on his political thought. It turns out that in Leibniz's political papers existed on Earth a perfect political order. He thought that it was realised in the medieval hierarchy of importance of European states, headed by the Empire. Leibniz equips the world of culture with the characteristics of the world of nature. The key to explain such a vision becomes philosopher's metaphysics and epistemology. What is interesting in this matter, Leibniz in his political papers does not refer to these criteria of description.