

Article

Real Union in Leibniz's Political Thought: The Role and Value of the Mystical Body in Civil Bodies

Fiorenza Manzo

Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 80132 Napoli, Italy; f.manzo92@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper explores the idea, occasionally discernible in Leibniz's writings, that civil bodies can achieve a real or substantial union through the 'mystical body' of the Church. The starting question is: can the 'person' of the state attain real internal union even if it is not a *natural* person? This theme is examined in light of Leibniz's interest in the ontology of complex aggregates (including civil 'bodies' or 'persons'), the miracle of the Eucharist, the mystery of transubstantiation, and the unity of the Church. Since his very early *Demonstrationes Catholicae*, he had strived to demonstrate that the body of the Church, despite being—so to speak—'scattered', can be regarded as a *Respublica* with a strong internal degree of unity, primarily due to the communion that the faithful share through the Eucharist. This article thus analyses both early and mature texts in which Leibniz discusses the bond established among the faithful by the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, arguing that he experimented with the idea that the spiritual union possible within the Church's 'mystical body' and its aggregative capacity could transform European Christian states not only politically but also substantially.

Keywords: Mystical Body; Church; Eucharist; Real Union; Civil Bodies



Citation: Manzo, Fiorenza. 2024. Real Union in Leibniz's Political Thought: The Role and Value of the Mystical Body in Civil Bodies. *Religions* 15: 1270. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101270>

Academic Editor: Lloyd Strickland

Received: 13 August 2024

Revised: 12 October 2024

Accepted: 15 October 2024

Published: 17 October 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The issues of the unity of the Church and civil bodies run throughout Leibniz's production, and it is not rare that they intersect. Depending on the purpose of the text, different arguments and strategies can be isolated.

When the subject of the writing is the reunion of all Christian denominations, the potential unity of the peculiar 'body' of the universal Church is explained by comparing it to the degree of unity possessed by the body of a state (*Civitas*)¹. Conversely, when the subject is the underlying unity of a civil body, it is possible to further isolate two different lines of argument:

1. One that might be called 'operational-functional', arguing that a civil body is capable of a lasting political unity when its parts can function as one. This applies especially to those 'irregular' political bodies (*Respublicae irregulares*) which are not one—that is, 'simple'—by 'physical' constitution, but are rather complex aggregates²;
2. Another that might be called 'spiritual' or 'substantial', which allows for the possibility that the parts constituting a civil body can be united "more than mechanically"³ when they are also part of what is called the 'mystical' body of the Church.

The latter line of argument is only sketched or hinted at and never fully spelled out in Leibniz's writings; nonetheless, it is intriguing and may indirectly shed new light on the reasons behind Leibniz's commitment to the project of reconciling the schism within the universal Church of Christ. That is the line of argument this paper aims at unravelling.

Hereafter, I will try to explain how and why Leibniz's writings provide elements in support of the idea that the 'mystical' body of the Church can positively affect the internal bond of secular states and even alter their ontological status, turning them into 'substances'.

The pivotal argument is that the parts of this unique 'body'—this 'mystical' (and, thus, 'mysterious') body—are internally and externally bound together by a substantial

adhesion to it, as they participate in the real substance of Christ through the sacrament of the Eucharist. Building on this, it will be crucial to understand whether and how the real union of individuals from different states in the mystical body is capable of substantially uniting the bodies of the secular states they belong to, both as individual entities with distinct identities and as part of a greater whole (an international alliance of states).

What is primarily at stake here, then, is not the metaphor of the ‘soul’ of the state in relation to its legal constitution and legislative codes, but rather the possibility that a Christian state could be endowed—*mutatis mutandis*—with a *real* and distinct soul, a singular spiritual nature that is not the result of the arithmetical sum of the souls of its members, but that subsists by virtue of their real union in the person of Christ. As Leibniz wrote to Arnauld in 1687: “although it is possible that a soul has a body made up of parts animated by separate souls, the soul or form of the whole is not on that account made up of the souls or forms of the parts” (LA, 125; A II.2, 190). The soul or form of the whole is something else entirely—which is consistent with the holistic view that Leibniz will always uphold—and this is what makes ‘real union’ among different substances generally possible. Nevertheless, it must be clarified how such a union can be produced in civil bodies and which ontological model this option reflects among the various possibilities conceived by Leibniz. Moreover, as I will show, there are places where he even seems to suggest that the real union of the Christians in one and the same ‘mystical’ body allows us to consider European Christian states as being in a relation of similarity with *living* or *animated* bodies, that is, with natural persons, which are naturally capable of perpetuating their structure⁴.

It must then be clear that under consideration is not the Church state as an autonomous civil body endowed with a political structure, but rather the *Ecclesia* as *Universitas fidelium*—i.e., the Church as the universal community of the faithful—in its spiritual aggregating capacity, and the benefits that a secular state can derive, through their members, from substantial adhesion to it.

The most interesting aspects of the matter are two:

1. How partaking in the body of Christ through the Eucharist can pave the way for an ontological redefinition of civil bodies, attaching greater significance to the use of the term *persona* to refer to them;
2. How this aggregating capacity of the *Ecclesia* is not considered adverse or rival (and thus dangerous) to the unity of individual states, but rather capable of indirectly strengthening it

However, before turning to a detailed discussion of these two aspects, some preliminary remarks are required.

First, it should be noted that, in the development of his monadology, Leibniz was deeply troubled by the problem of compound bodies and their ‘substantiality’. This becomes readily apparent from the second half of the 1680s, in his correspondence with Arnauld, in which we find passages such as the following:

I accord substantial forms to all bodily substances that are more than mechanically united. But in the fifth place, if I am asked for my views in particular on the sun, the globe of the earth, the moon, trees and similar bodies, and even on animals, I cannot declare with absolute certainty if they are animate, or at least if they are substances or even if they are simply machines or aggregates of many substances. (LA 95; A II.2, 121–122)

When this difficulty was compounded by the need to explain the possibility of transubstantiation, in his later correspondence with the Jesuit theologian Bartholomew Des Bosses (1706–1716), Leibniz presented the hypothesis of the ‘substantial bond’ (*vinculum substantiale*). This is certainly the major theme lying in the background of this paper, and it is sufficiently broad to constitute an independent and separate object of investigation. For the present discussion, I shall limit the references to a few useful mentions. The dominant view among scholars is that the substantial bond was a solution Leibniz wanted to ‘experiment’ with but did not ultimately regard as a real feature of his metaphysical ‘system’⁵.

Nonetheless, Brandon Look committed himself to recognising the *vinculum*'s value and meaning. He endorsed Blondel's idea that Leibniz resorted to the substantial bond to test a "higher realism", opening himself to the possibility that bodies were real substances and not merely "well-founded phenomena". Look also convincingly argued—against both Robinet and Frémont (Cf. [Robinet 1986](#), esp. p. 88; [Frémont 1981](#))—that the *vinculum* is neither a substance "composed of many monads" (that is, a "composite substance" itself) nor a set of relations that binds its compound and makes it a substance. Instead, it is an independent "substance-like thing" superadded to an *ens per aggregationem* (i.e., a compound), capable of changing the latter's nature and providing it with real union. Look's explanation also takes into account the fact that the *vinculum* theory arose in the context of the need to explain transubstantiation, whose main requirement is that there be a 'change' of substances. There is no doubt, then, that the matter of transubstantiation presented Leibniz with an extremely rich opportunity for reflection. This is crucial to bear in mind, as the importance of some early texts on transubstantiation to the topic at hand will soon clearly appear.

For now, I believe it is appropriate to conclude this first section with three relevant quotations that lay the groundwork for what follows: the first two from Leibniz's letter to Des Bosses of 15 February 1712, and the last one from Leibniz's letter to Des Bosses of 20 September of the same year.

[T]his [corporeal] substance consists in that unifying reality, which adds *something absolute* (and therefore substantial), albeit impermanent (*etsi fluxum*), to the things to be unified. (LDB 226–27; GP II, 435)

But over and above these real relations [i.e., duration, position, interaction], a more perfect relation can be conceived through which a single new substance arises from many substances. And this will not be a simple result, that is, it will not consist in true or real relations alone; but, moreover, it will add some new substantiality, or substantial bond, and this will be an effect not only of the divine intellect but also of the divine will. (LDB 233; GP II, 438)

When it is said "This is [my] body" ("Hoc est corpus [meum]"), then, with composite substances admitted, we do not designate monads by either "this" or "body" (. . .), but the substantiated thing arising or composed through substantial bonds. (LDB 273; GP II, 459)

With regard to this last quotation, Look rightly pointed out that, when it is said *Hoc est corpus meum*,

the reference is not to the monads that are the requisites for 'hoc' or 'corpus' but rather to the 'substantiation' that arose or was composed by the *vinculum substantiale*. ([Look 2000](#), p. 207)

In the next section, I shall show the remarkable accordance between these mature thoughts on the substantial bond and some of Leibniz's very early reflections on transubstantiation.

2. The 'Substantiative' Power of Christ's Presence

At a basic level, it must be noted that the 'body' of the State can be regarded as a kind of hybrid being, possessing a peculiar epistemic identity and ontological status. Indeed, it essentially differs from 'artificial' machines in that it is composed of natural-animated beings and is capable of autonomous will and action⁶.

In this context, then, a preliminary and indispensable question is: do Leibniz's texts legitimise the possibility of identifying an essential continuity between natural persons and civil persons? As a matter of fact, this possibility is found openly and almost continuously invoked in Leibniz's writings from 1669 to 1696. This chronological scope provides a distinct measure of the recurrence of this concern in Leibniz's mind. To give just a few examples, in his famous political text from 1669, written on the occasion of the election of a new king in Poland, we read: "the *Respublica* is a civil person in which natural ones are

in perpetual flux" (A IV.1, 37)⁷. A few years later, in a 1676 text where Leibniz provides a suite of juridical definitions, we find that "a State (*Respublica*) or a society" are bright examples of what an "aggregate of persons" is, wherein the "relationship between persons" is to be understood as the "form of the republic" (*Specimen of Definitions of Law*, A VI.3, p. 627). A passage decisive to the current analysis is found in a text from 1685, a pivotal year for the development of Leibniz's thought, in which he combined an intense reflection on 'organisms' (from what would later be called a 'biological' perspective) with a defence of the 'reasonableness' of the Catholic faith. The text is titled *On Schism, Catholic Faith, and the Catholic Church*, and in it we find:

the essence and perfection of natural bodies (*corpora naturalia*) consists in the union of the parts; once [the latter is] dissolved, not only the external form and beauty, but also the strength (*vis*) and life (*vita*), perish. The same is the case with societies of men (*hominum societates*), which are comparatively called bodies (*corpora*); since both the nature and the excellence of these depend on the union of the members of which they are composed. (A IV.6, 717)

Finally, in a largely overlooked German legal text from 1696⁸, we read:

The State (*Der Staat*) is not merely an assembly of people in a country, nor merely a connection or confederation subordinated to some purpose, but at the same time, a model person created by the composition of individuals, or a *subject of rights and obligations*. (A IV.6, 201)

It is extremely important to consider that, between the last two quoted texts, something decisive happened in Leibniz's life: a year's journey through Italy, which introduced him to some of the most prominent naturalists and mathematicians of the time, such as Marcello Malpighi, Michelangelo Fardella, and Guido Grandi, with whom he would remain in contact. To Guido Grandi, in 1713, he would write something that perfectly summarises the fundamental principle underlying his approach to the encyclopaedia of the universe: "nature has prescribed to things an inevitable law of continuity" (GM IV, 219)⁹.

What could be, then, one way to reveal the continuity between these two 'persons'? A possible pathway could certainly be to identify something capable of transforming any aggregate of individuals or natural-living parts into a real 'substance' when *added*: a substantial or spiritual bond that serves as the foundation of authentic unity. The question, then, is what can provide this 'bond'?

As early as 1663–1666, while carefully annotating Bisterfeld's *Philosophiae Primae Seminarium*, Leibniz wrote 'NB' by the following passage where Bisterfeld explained his view of relations:

It is commonly said that relations are most weak entities (*debilissimae entitates*); which is to be taken with caution. More correctly it should be said that they are most frequent and most efficacious entities (...): [T]he whole of Logic is nothing other than a mirror of relations. This variety takes on the wonderful connection of relations which the Greeks call circumincession, and which we are accustomed to call *immeatio*, which is nothing other than the varied concurrence, combination and complication of relations. This governs both throughout the entire encyclopaedia and especially in the deeper anatomy of things. (...) But what is truly wonderful, is that both the variety and the connection of relations from beginning to end are founded in the venerable mystery of the most Holy Trinity. (A VI.1, 159)¹⁰

Leibniz's early annotation of this passage had already attracted the attention of Maria Rosa Antognazza, who valued it precisely because she believed it to be revealing of the depth of the root of the correspondence between Bisterfeld's concept of 'immeatio' and Leibniz's concept of 'harmony'¹¹. It should then be regarded as particularly instructive to find it established here that the mystery of the Holy Trinity provides the foundation for "the connection of relations" (*immeatio*), which essentially unifies the created universe.

According to Bisterfeld, the Trinity of the divine person (mysteriously) *substantiates* the connection among all things.

The lasting impression this text must have had on the young Leibniz is reflected in the fact that one of his earliest texts (published approximately two years after his doctoral dissertation) is a text on transubstantiation. In his 1668 *On Transubstantiation*, he undertook to demonstrate the possibility of transubstantiation and, specifically, to show that Christ can be simultaneously present in several places and bring them into communion:

26. Mind can think many things together.
27. Therefore mind can by its action be in many places at once.
28. Therefore the mind of Christ can impart operation, action, or subsistence both to the glorious body of Christ and to the species of consecrated bread and wine, at the same time, and in varying cases in various places on the earth.
29. Hence the mind of Christ can be present everywhere in the species of consecrated bread and wine.
30. The mind of Christ, concurring in his glorious body which suffered for us, is his Substance [...].
31. Therefore the substance of the glorious body of Christ can be present everywhere in the species of bread and wine. (L 117; A VI.1, 510)

Moreover, in some additional notes on the subject from that same year, Leibniz wrote:

The ideas of God and the substances of things are the same in fact (*in re*), different in relation; they are, moreover, as action and passion. However, since the substances of things are the act of God on species, we must think of how it can come about that his act upon one species is numerically the same as his act upon another. But the substance of the body of Christ is its union with Christ, for the substance of everything is its union with mind. Now it is asked how it is possible that the mind of Christ acts in another body than that upon which it ordinarily acts. I reply that God can bring it about that one mind shall be in two bodies when he thinks that the same mind (...) acts immediately and simultaneously upon two bodies. For whatever God can think, that he can also do—at least if he wishes and holds it for the best. (L 119, translation modified; A VI.1, p. 513)

Finally, after clarifying the onto-theological aspects of the question, in the first section of the third part of the *Catholic Demonstrations* (1668–71), Leibniz committed to reconcile these aspects with the order of natural causes:

And since, by the same order and inflexible command of nature, more quantities require more places, the body of Christ can be in any number of places, and, by very natural consequence, perform the functions of any number of loaves at the same time in the same way as any number of loaves would do. Hence, quite evidently, the only thing to be added is the will of God and the voice of Christ pronouncing: this is my body; therefore, all things which—regarding this mystery—are seen to be so foreign to the guidance of nature, are themselves derived and established in act by the very necessity of nature. From this it clearly follows that the glorious body of Christ is not altered, nor does it undergo anything unworthy of his glory, since his body remains whole and intact in heaven; neither were any of its dispositions changed, or any other impossible things made connatural to it. [...] [S]o that (...) [the divine dispositions] admirably unite and bind the invisible head [of Christ] to his visible mystical body by a mixed union partaking of both [his] natures. (A VI.1, 506–7)

What is most striking here is the remarkable similarity between this phrasing and the one Leibniz later adopted in his letter to Des Bosses which was quoted at the end of the previous section (20 September 1712). This passage clearly shows the great relational power—an extraordinary connecting capacity—of the real presence of Christ in the Eu-

charist, whose potential was intuited by Leibniz beyond all theological controversies about the species and specific qualities of bread and wine in this process¹².

Moreover, it seems to retrospectively illuminate other aspects of the motives behind Leibniz's persistent efforts to unify Churches and Christian denominations. Indeed, in that passage, one finds the very first occurrence of the term "mystical body", which, despite all later changes in his ontology, will frequently recur in his mature writings.

In a text from 1685, entitled *Reunion of the Churches*¹³, one reads:

The Church is like a sacred State (*Respublica sacra*)¹⁴. For it to appear in what the nature of the Catholic Church consists, and for the ever-present darkness [arising] from errors to be dispersed by the light brought upon it, it is necessary to recognise that the Church must be conceived by the mind not as a disjointed multitude (*dissoluta multitudo*), but as a sacred State, or as a kind of moral body, or a mystical body, if you will, which is held together by a Hierarchy as by a common spirit: because it has been given a spiritual jurisdiction, which obviously does not belong to a multitude but, as it were, to a person or body. (A IV.3, 287–88)

Clearly, here, Leibniz is not merely referring to the political structure of the state of the Church. Indeed, shortly afterward in the same text, he also adds that "unity" is "the sign of true religion", and that—relying on St Paul's authority—one can define the entire *Ecclesia* simply as "the body of Christ" (A IV.3, 288–89).

Here is the key point: the Church is ontologically a "mystical body", that is, a 'mysterious' body of a spiritual nature, capable of perpetuating itself through the presence of the substance of Christ in the shared Eucharist. The theme of the two 'mysterious' bodies—the body of the Church and the transubstantiated body of Christ – thus intersects with the (political) theme of the spiritual union of several substances into one. Although scattered, this Church is not to be viewed as a "*dissoluta multitudo*", but rather as a "*Respublica sacra*", and as a 'person' with a single spirit.

Moreover, we must assume that, in observing that the Church is vested with "spiritual jurisdiction", Leibniz did not intend to reintroduce the age-old question of the obedience due to spiritual power whenever it conflicts with civil power, that is, to revive a medieval-tinged dispute. As a Protestant, a diplomat, and a firm believer in the harmony that regulates every level of reality, he did not have any reason to address the problem in that way. Thus, when—as early as in his *New Method of Learning and Teaching Jurisprudence*—he emphasised the transnational character of the Church, he could not have meant it as a threat to the integrity of individual secular states. The only reasonable interpretation—one that Leibniz openly supports in several places—is the opposite: the fact that the Church is "like a State in the State, or rather [a State] spread throughout all the States" (A VI.1, 306) should be regarded as a unique opportunity for secular states to gain authentic unity on the internal front, and to form enduring alliances on the external one. In this regard, Hartmut Rudolph also argued that, in raising the issue of the mystical body of the Church, Leibniz is not re-proposing the Augustinian scheme of the two "*civitates*". Rudolph's thesis is that, on the contrary, this duality in Leibniz's thought is completely removed in support of a full continuity between the two (Cf. [Rudolph 2011](#), p. 34).

This is perfectly consistent with what is suggested here: that this spiritual action of the Church enhances the capacity for action of civil entities, thereby conferring 'real union' to those states whose members are mysteriously united in the substance of Christ by providing them with the spiritual/substantial component they lack. It is obvious that this option is only available in Christian states. Indeed, following the train of Leibniz's thought in his key 1685 writing *On Schism, Catholic Faith, and the Catholic Church*, one reads:

It is well known that the sacrament of the true body of Christ has always been of fundamental importance to make people recognise the unity of the mystical body of the Catholic Church. (A IV.6, 719)

The conclusion he drew from this is found in another text from the same year, *Apology for Catholic Truth*:

Nothing is more contrary to charity than schism, which dissolves the unity of the body of Christ, extinguishes brotherly love, and attacks the fundamental laws of divine government. (...) And it can rightly be said that neither plague, nor famine, nor war [...], nor other public evils, have harmed (*nocere*) Europe as much. (A IV.6, 722)¹⁵

In light of everything discussed so far, this passage seems to validate the idea that the terms ‘dissolution’, ‘attack’, and ‘harm’ should be understood more literally than metaphorically. Why is it said that “neither plague, nor famine, nor war have harmed Europe as much”? Because they all attacked its ‘body’. The schism, however, severed its spiritual unity. More radically, given the topic at hand, one could say that, by dissolving “the unity of the body of Christ” and, consequently, “the unity of the mystical body of the Catholic Church”, schism deprived European Christian states of their substantiality. Significantly, however, Leibniz is firmly convinced that a fundamental unity has been maintained “with those Churches that have continually celebrated communion since the time of the Apostles” (A IV.6, 719).

One easily understands, then, the global importance of this theme and Leibniz’s reasons for returning to it several times, striving to clarify the matter as far as possible. In a text from 1699, entitled *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken* (roughly meaning ‘humble reflection’)—the dating of which also highlights the persistence of his interest in the matter of transubstantiation—it is asked: “how is ‘this is my body, eat it’ to be understood?”. The answer is: not in a “cyclopean, or anthropophagic way”, but in a “hyperphysical” and “ineffable” way. Those “who denied the *vera corporis Christi praesentiam* [the real presence of Christ] were driven to do so by human reason, by philosophy, but primarily by a misunderstanding of the nature of body” (A IV.7, 578). For example, the definition of body provided by “peripatetic philosophy” (=“that which has matter and form”) says nothing that indicates the existence of an *affectio corporis*, a capacity for affection in the body. Moreover,

[a]ccording to many other opinions, particularly recent ones, body would be “that which has longitude, latitude and depth”, which is not false in itself. If, however, the *Essentia corporis* were to consist of this only, it would be certain that no other *praesentia et participatio* other than local and delimited—and bound to these three dimensions—would be possible. (A IV.7, 578)

From this, it then seems plausible to admit the possibility that, through an *affectio corporis* that allows separate individuals—however distant—who are also members of the same state to participate in the substance of Christ (i.e., his mind or spirit), the ‘body’ of this state can achieve real union and be *substantiated*. This could certainly be regarded as a key point underlying the issue of internal religious unity within civil bodies. Let me now briefly revert to the above-mentioned 1685 text, *Apology for Catholic Truth*, as it contains one final passage that still requires attention:

Moreover, since the Church is a mystical body, which is to be heard by all, to which the sins of men are to be declared, which has the power to retain and forgive them, and has the keys to bind and loose[,] it is not a disjointed multitude, but is comparable to a certain State (*Civitas*), whereof it is, in some sense, a person or will, and has a spiritual jurisdiction whose efficacy and execution God himself has promised to guarantee in heavens; and this power of the Ecclesiastic State (*Ecclesiastica Respublica*) is contained in two sacraments, one of the order and the other of the keys. (A IV.6, 736)

As a whole, this quotation is very enlightening. However, there is one particular sentence worth highlighting and commenting on: the Church “is comparable to a certain State, whereof it is, in some sense, a person or will”. This means that, in Christian states, the “mystical body” expresses and defines the “person or will” of the *Civitas* in which it is ‘hosted’.

3. The Distinctive Features of European/Christian States

If the mystical body of the Church, as it seems, could provide true ‘form’ or ‘entelechy’, or “person or will”, to Christian states, the latter needs to be organised and legally regulated accordingly.

Indeed, for this peculiar substance (the mystical body) to exercise and manifest its *capacitas agendi*, it requires a formal structure that enables it to determine and execute its own will. In the *Preface* to his 1693 *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus*, Leibniz clarified that this structure is largely constituted by

the divine positive law contained in the sacred Scriptures. To these can be added the sacred canons accepted in the whole Church and, later, in the West, the pontifical legislation, to which kings and peoples submit themselves. And in general before the schism of the last century, it seems to have been accepted for a long time (and not without reason) that a kind of common republic (*Respublica*) of Christian nations must be thought of, the heads of which were the Pope in sacred matters, and the Emperor in temporal matters, who preserved as much of the power of the ancient Roman emperors as was necessary for the common good of Christendom, saving (without prejudicing) the rights of kings and the liberty of princes. (R 174–75; A IV.5, 64–65)

Here, then, it is possible to start drawing a first set of conclusions: in assigning the emperor the role of ‘Defender of Christendom’, Leibniz is implicitly contending that the empire, which is by no coincidence called “Sacred”, is the civil body best suited to be informed by the mystical body and to grant the mystical body the maximum *capacitas agendi* (i.e., capacity for action). The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation was, indeed, at that time, the civil entity that had been most profoundly marked and shaped by ecclesiastical jurisdiction and, in particular, by papal legislation. It was, therefore, connected to the Church state by tradition and habit.

Moreover, in a 1694 letter addressed to Christoph de Rojas y Spinola, Leibniz pointed out that: “the matter [of the Church’s body] is all the faithful under the aegis of Christ” (A I.10, 159). This statement is particularly relevant to the current discussion. If the spiritual unity deriving from the defence and preservation of the mystical body, as well as from quantitatively including the highest number of its members (and, thus, the greatest amount of “matter”), were to be realised in the empire, the latter would incorporate nearly the same bond that binds Christians together in the mystical body¹⁶.

Moreover, this reflection on the mystical body—started in 1668 and more consistently developed from the 1680s onwards—compels us to more carefully examine what Leibniz wrote in a text from 1672. In this text, he presents, among other things, his view of what essentially differentiates Christian kingdoms from barbarian kingdoms, although it is certainly true that many other factors were at play in that context:

Wisdom is both the beginning and [that which lies] at the bottom of the analysis of all goods; there is no State happier and more akin to divine government than a monarchy under a wise King (. . .). Wherefore, since it shall be so easy for the Most Christian King, being wise, to hold and retain the greatest power that can reasonably be desired over such a powerful nation, I repeat what I have said: no prince in the world is more of a monarch than the Most Christian King. (. . .) The Janissaries needed only one night to remove [their] lord, not by tumult and assassination, but by a forced council, as if it were a rightful sentence. They did the same, under the eyes of St Louis—prisoner of the Prefect of Egypt—against the Sultan, daring to impose themselves more on their own prince than on a captured enemy: from this it appears how different is the veneration of Christian princes even among Barbarians. (. . .) [W]hen negotiations need to be conducted with Christians or between Christians, the area of half a foot will be disputed over the years. (. . .) [The] great barbarian empires (. . .) can be overthrown in an instant: for they are sand without lime, (. . .) because they are held together [. . .] without

any internal bond of the minds/souls (*nullis animorum intus vinculis*). (A IV.1, 259–60)

Three things need to be observed here, with respect to the subject matter of this paper:

1. The passage begins with a reference to mathematical analysis. By perfecting this method, Leibniz later became convinced that the true elements of reality possess a spiritual nature. At the time of this writing, however, his knowledge led him to believe that “at the bottom of all goods”—that is, at the root of the well-functioning of every structure or aggregate of parts (including political ones) in the universe ordered by God—there is a wisdom that mimics the divine. This means that when a Christian King, placed at the head of a Christian state, is wise, he can transform his state into a happy ‘person’ and thus constitutionally eliminate the risk of dissolution from internal causes;
2. In perfect alignment with the previous point and with the general hypothesis of this research, the quoted excerpt allows us to infer—by contrast with what is stated about barbarian kingdoms—that Christian kingdoms can be said to be “held together by an internal bond of the minds”—which acts as a “lime”;
3. In the final part, Leibniz presents a historical argument that the Janissaries removed their lord “with a forced council” as if it were “a rightful sentence”. In this regard, it is important to recall his observation about the positive divine law under which Christian peoples were believed to have lived until the previous century. Indeed, a “rightful sentence” or a rightful judgment seems to be a prerogative of Christians and Christianity.

It seems, then, that only Christian states are endowed with moral capacity, both due to their internal bond and their adoption of specific legal codes. Another interesting aspect to clarify is the relationship between the divine law Leibniz referred to and the law commonly known as ‘natural law’, which was largely encompassed in Roman law. To try and answer this question, it is useful to closely examine a passage from a letter to Chapelain dating back to 1670:

Since one cannot conveniently establish entirely new laws, with no relation to Roman law, without the greatest disturbance (*perturbatione*) of affairs; (...) and since it is certain that, if the new laws are established wisely, they will not deviate so much from Roman laws to the point of requiring a general renewal and complete replacement; and since, moreover, if Roman law is well-ordered, it will be possible to assist all the State of Europe (*Europa Respublicae*) and to preserve the bond (*vinculum*) between nations (*gentium*) in a stable manner (*non leve*), (...) it is clear that, to return to the fundamentals, we must begin by reorganising Roman laws and by connecting them with natural law (...). (A II.1, 85)

The law known as ‘Roman’ or ‘natural’ clearly shows its coherence with positive divine law—which is eternal and universal—by conveying a fundamental principle: the principle of solidarity among European states, or the Christian ‘Republics’, thereby preserving their *vinculum*.

However, in answering some questions, this passage raises even more daunting and challenging ones. First, we must ask: how should we understand the idea of a ‘common bond’ uniting European states? Should we conclude that different states, by fostering communion among their members and adopting a common law—which allows them to act coherently and ‘as one body’—can fully be regarded as one person? In short, is Leibniz suggesting that it is possible, or even desirable, to overcome all differences, boundaries, and historically established political forms based on a common Christian faith, so that Europe might become a single political (and even substantial) entity?

The arguments he employed in his final years against Saint Pierre’s project for ensuring perpetual peace in Europe, appealing to tradition and balance, clearly suggest that Leibniz would have deemed such an idea equally utopian and far removed from the order of historical and natural development (cf. Dutens V, 65–66; Robinet, 24–25).

Furthermore, this idea of a united Europe would also be difficult to reconcile, on a physical level, with the image of a universe governed by conservative forces, where each body tends to persist in its state and always regain its original form through elastic force (*vis elastica*). Likewise, on an ontological and epistemological level, it would imply such a profound change in the identity of each political entity that it would undermine their moral self-recognition over time. This condition would be as undesirable as that of someone who were suddenly made king of China without any memory of who they had previously been, as in the famous example from the *Discourse on Metaphysics* (cf. A VI.4, 1584; L 325–26; J 81).

What, then, is the way to reconcile individual and collective identity? Incidentally, this is also a dramatically urgent issue in today's Europe. Moreover, what might have been the purpose and what are the political implications of a reflection on the 'mystical body' of the *Ecclesia*? What role did he envision for it?

Assuming that the reality of the mystical body needed to manifest itself, to produce effects and make them tangible, it is certain that Leibniz regarded the empire as its best vehicle. Therefore—even though any state whose members are in communion through the real presence of Christ's Body (*vera Corporis Christi praesentiam*) can attain a degree of unity more akin to that of a natural person—the empire, partly because of its extensive reach, could be a 'person' capable of leading all of Christendom (the other Christian states), much as it had in the past.

In this light, Leibniz's whole political project could be viewed as aimed at establishing a "college of nations", where each nation acts and interacts with the others while maintaining a degree of internal unity that qualifies it as an autonomous moral, as well as juridical and civil, person. Just as natural persons can form societies and collective entities, adopting a common law while preserving their diversity and individuality, so too can states.

This collective entity could foster a union, rather than a mere confederation, based on a concept of union that marks a fundamental opposition to Hobbes' conventionalist approach to the structure of the civil body¹⁷. Leibniz identifies a profound epistemological error in Hobbes: his refusal to engage in genuine reflection on the foundations of reality. Hobbes' limited perspective led him to prioritise the physical over the mental, focusing on bodies while neglecting the minds and their good dispositions. Consequently, he proposes a practical solution to the crisis of foundation, asserting that there are only a few key principles and religious dogmas that the sovereign must not publicly reject. Beyond these, subjects are required to conform outwardly to the state-prescribed rituals and formulas, which the state claims will ensure their security.

However rigorous Hobbes' arguments may be, this approach to civil cohesion is regarded by Leibniz as profoundly dangerous, and he even accused Hobbes of fomenting anarchy (cf. *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, 1677, chap. XI, A IV.2, 58; R 118). By prioritising the preservation of external conventions over authentic internal bond, he demands a superficial adhesion that ultimately dismisses the individuals' quest to understand the foundations of their coexistence. In his letter to Kettwig from November 1695, Leibniz poetically underscores this point by invoking the well-known *Epigram LXXX* from Martial: "Hic rogo non furor est ne moriari mori?"—"Is it not madness to die in order to avoid dying?" (A II.3, 108)¹⁸.

It is interesting to note that the political setting he envisioned for the empire ever since 1677 aligns closely to his mature ontology. Indeed, he came to establish that each of the smallest infinitesimal constituents of a compound is itself a substance which can be joined with others while maintaining its ontological autonomy, regardless of the model of union applied (whether it be the dominant monad or the substantial bond). Furthermore, as Ohad Nachtomy convincingly argued, Leibniz's 'organic' model "stresses activity and pluralism: it accepts simultaneous coexistence of individuals at different levels" (Nachtomy et al. 2002, p. 205). This ontology and mereology certainly complement a political model that regards its members not as 'subjugated' and diminished in their dignity but rather as interconnected by a 'bond' of 'loyalty' to the 'head' (cf. *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, chap.

XIX, A IV.2, 92). The princes of the empire, for example, retain an ineliminable degree of autonomy and distinction from the emperor in their territory (cf. A IV.2, 57, 90–92).

It seems, then, safe to conclude that, in Leibniz's view, Europe could be unified based on the model of the empire, effectively replicating on a larger scale an ontological mechanism in which essentially autonomous parts are held together by a sufficiently solid bond.

Although this bond can be conveniently established on a legal, historical, and economic level¹⁹, Leibniz emphasises that the strongest bond is undoubtedly a spiritual one governed by an eternal (and thus 'divine') law. This point is particularly noteworthy in the *Preface* to his *Mantissae Codicis Juris Gentium Diplomatici* (first half of 1700), one of his most renowned legal texts, where he wrote:

nothing belongs more to the common law of the peoples of Europe than that which extends from the Church to the State (*Respublica*); with it, the strongest bond (*vinculo*) of Europe, and even of the entire universe, is that the Christian Princes or peoples are bound together and, as it were, compose a certain body. (A IV.8, 66)

Leibniz is clearly alluding to something beyond a mere sense of belonging, and I do not believe the recurrence of the word "vinculum" in this context is coincidental. On the contrary, this usage supports the idea that political issues were in the background of Leibniz's later reflections on the substantial bond. When one succeeds in adding a spiritual/substantial element to compound bodies, the unity they are capable of achieving on a 'mechanical' level is promoted to the ontological and moral spheres, establishing the possibility of a qualitative—not just quantitative—view of *vis* and capacity for action.

Having long been confronted with the threat represented by Louis XIV and the prospect of an anti-French European alliance, for example, Leibniz considered that overcoming a purely mechanical understanding of forces was essential to ensuring the alliance's durability: "souls are more steadfast (*constare*) than fortifications" (Leibniz to Gisbert Cuper, 29 November 1712, A I VE 1712, 82). Here, Leibniz used the composite verb "constare", which literally means "to stand together", where "stare" conveys a sense of "duration". This sense is absent in "sistere", which is part of "consistere", a verb typically associated with physical bodies²⁰. Nonetheless, the terms of this "constare" of the souls are always framed in relation to physical–mechanical and phoronomic principles, which are the rational principles observed in the physical universe.

A notable example of this can be found in his 1712 *Remarks on the three Volumes Entitled Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*:

Wisdom orders that this benevolence should have degrees, just as the air, though it extends all around our globe to a great height, has greater weight and density near us than it has in the higher atmospheric regions. In the same way, one can say that the charity which bears upon those who touch us most nearly should have the greater intensity and force. (L 633; G III, 428–29)

One must also bear in mind that Leibniz's mature view of the physical world, shaped by his dynamics, represents a milestone in his philosophical development, as he regarded it as reflective of his monadological ontology and theory of actions. In a universe composed of substances, it became crucial to determine whether and how civil bodies could be regarded as more than mere phenomena or artificial machines, and to account for their capacity to 'act'. This fits in with the need to extend the validity of his physical reflection on the notions of *actio* and *potentia*, where the latter is defined as the measure of each individual entity's capacity to produce effects²¹. Consistently, in his 1696 German legal text (already quoted)²², Leibniz endorsed the view of Jakob Lampadius (1593–1649), according to which *summa potestas* can be understood as *potentia activa* (A IV.6, 203), where the Latin term "potestas" (referring to the juridical authority to make decisions) is conflated with the term "potentia" (which belongs to the physical domain and could be translated as "potency" or "power") and paired with the adjective "activa", meaning 'related to action' or 'pertaining to activity'.

Regarding *actio*, he observed that “the schools” (i.e., the masters of Scholastic philosophy) had already “rightly pointed out” that “*Actiones esse Suppositorum*, meaning that every agent [i.e., every acting being] is a single substance” (Leibniz to Johann Christoph Sturm, 5 July 1697, A II.3, 342–43). Thus, it seems reasonable to interpret Leibniz’s effort to merge the mystical body with the civil body as rooted in the idea that action is intrinsically linked to substantiality. If civil bodies were not substances, they would be powerless, that is, incapable of acting.

Leibniz’s thought confirms and reinforces the connections between physics and ontology²³, as well as between ontology and politics²⁴. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that his physical, ontological, and political reflections significantly influenced one another.

4. Last Difficulties and Conclusions

My specific purpose here was to make a good case for the possibility that Christian states could be conceived, on an ontological level, as single ‘persons’ once religious unity among their members has been achieved.

With regard to this purpose, the difficulties are mitigated when one considers that Leibniz, throughout his reflection, experimented widely with various models of ontological explanation.

In the first part of the paper, I argued that the ‘substantial’ status of civil persons seems to fit with the ontological model that Leibniz developed at a later stage in his thought: the model of the ‘substantial bond’. The interesting point here is that, unlike the theory of the substantial bond, references to the real union of civil bodies already appear in Leibniz’s early writings on transubstantiation, suggesting that the latter prepared the ground for the former. This connection likely stems, as I have mentioned, from Leibniz’s early preoccupation with the ‘substantiality’ of bodies. This concern may have generated something like a parallel thread in his thought, becoming fully apparent in his late correspondence with Des Bosses. The very fact that, as a Protestant, Leibniz engaged with the question of how to reconcile his monadological doctrine with the transubstantiation of Christ’s Body in the Eucharist is a sufficient indication of his need for something like “a higher realism”, as Blondel put it.

However, not every difficulty is resolved. The reflection on the mystical body indisputably revisits the theme of the sacredness of the state and the majesty of the ruler, which remains prominent in Leibniz’s view. Nonetheless, this view is balanced by a reflection on dynamic structures and forces operating in the physical world, presenting a parallel, more ‘secular’ or ‘functional’, approach to the state, and incorporating ‘organic’, ‘dynamic’, and ‘phoronomic’ elements.

How can the two be reconciled? In Leibniz’s thought, they coexist (almost) without contradiction. Every aspect of the universe can be explained in ‘biological’ and dynamic terms, yet this does not imply that a certain sacredness derived from God’s role as the author of nature is eliminated or even eliminable. Moreover, Leibniz consistently maintained that the study of physical phenomena and the analysis of the psychic and ontological structures possess their own distinct characteristics and should not be conflated; however, on a fundamental level, they reflect one another harmoniously. Everything that can be explained on the ontological and metaphysical level must also, through other means and arguments, be explainable on the physical level.

Furthermore, although the theory of the “mystical body” finds correspondences in the model of the substantial bond, it does not cover the whole range of possible correspondences between the ontological and political spheres in Leibniz’s thought. It is essential to note that the model of relation subsisting between the Entelechy of the dominant monad and those of the dominated ones is clearly drawn from the civil sphere: each compound substance gets to keep its identity, substantiality, and individuality—even though its components are in a perpetual flux (as is the case with civil bodies)—because of the enduring structural relation (dominant-subordinate) to which the organic unity of the body is ontologically anchored. And, when one reflects carefully on the dominant–subordinate distinction in the terms proposed by Leibniz—that is, in the terms of a distinction that mirrors a certain

internal order—one realises that this ontological model also bears a strong, perhaps even deeper, affinity with his political view. For instance, in the structure of the empire, the relationship between the princes and the emperor involves a distinction of role/function and *vis*: a crucial difference in the ways in which they are exercised. The ‘dominant–dominated’ relationship is the ontological model that best fit with what, in the first section, I referred to as an ‘operational–functional’ line of argument (which does not dismiss qualitative differences). This model is also perfectly consistent with Leibniz’s preference for the notion of ‘territorial hegemony’ (that is, *superioritas territorialis*, a concept typical of the German legal tradition) over the French concept of *souveraineté*²⁵.

The problem is, of course, that the possibility of ‘corporeal’ substances bound by a substantial bond is radically alternative to the model of the dominant–dominated monad (which reduces bodies to “phenomena bene fundata”).

André Robinet synthesised these two models as follows: the first is one where bodies are not substances but phenomena, albeit “well-grounded and regulated” (A II.4, 134), in which substantiality is a prerogative of the minds; the other is one where animated bodies are also, to some extent, substances, in that, under certain conditions, they can be considered *unum per se* (i.e., as entities possessing their own unity, cf. Robinet 1986, p. 32). Although Leibniz ultimately leaned towards the former, one cannot overlook the fact that the 10-year long correspondence with Des Bosses, where the *vinculum substantiale* first appeared, was preceded by a sustained reflection on transubstantiation and that, from the 1680s onwards, this reflection was intertwined with legal and political discussions about the bond that unites civil bodies.

What is particularly noteworthy here is how these two ontological models also mark two very different political views, between which Leibniz may have been wavering: one more traditionalist/sacral, and the other somewhat more progressive/secular.

Finally, it is important to clarify one last point about the relationship or the order of priority that exists between the corporeal and spiritual structures of substances united through the substantial bond.

In this respect, there is little doubt that the two need to be simultaneous, in accordance with classic Aristotelianism. This implies that a particular disposition of bodily parts in the substance is both a precondition and a consequence of it being a specific type of substance, endowed with a specific level of complexity. It seems reasonable, then, to apply the same developmental schema to civil persons: just as the disposition and character of their bodily parts enable them to achieve a certain type of spiritual union, the existence of a shared (Christian) spirituality simultaneously predisposes the parts in a particular way. This shapes their constitutions according to divine law and determines each state’s capacity to perpetuate itself.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

¹ Cf., for example, Leibniz’s 1685 writing *On Schism, Catholic Faith, and the Catholic Church*: “The Church (. . .) is to be compared not to a disjointed multitude, but to a certain State, of which it is, in a way, a person or will” (A IV.6, 736).

² The Empire, for example, is a ‘union’ of *civitates*: something more than a mere ‘confederation’ and something less than a ‘regular’ or ‘simple’ State (*Civitas*), such as England or France (see *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, 1677, chap. XI; A IV.2, 57–58; English translation of this chapter is found in R 117–18. See also a late German text on imperial legislation written against a jurist who used to criticise the imperial constitution, whose pseudonym was Cesare Turriani, whom we know to be Leopold Albert von Schoppe, *Defense of the Great States of the Empire. . . Against the Severe Accusations of a So-Called Caesar Turriani*, 1696, A IV.6, 205–206). The broad

Latin term Leibniz most frequently employs to refer to irregular civil bodies is *Respublicae*, which is better translated as ‘political communities’, for it also applies to civil bodies which are not ‘Republics’ in the strict sense (it is in fact the only translation that can account for expressions like ‘la Republique de l’Empire’, cf. *Conversation of Philarète and Ariste*, October 1677, revised and corrected edition 1682, A IV.2, 291). The Empire, Poland, and the Republic of United Provinces are bright examples of the fact that complex civil aggregates are capable—despite all difficulties—of functioning as one, thereby preserving political unity and a common identity. The main consequence of their complex physical constitution, which accounts for their ‘irregularity’, is that the decision-making process is more elaborate than in ‘simple’ States, and more frequently confronted with obstacles, but nonetheless possible and effective. Leibniz clearly saw that, in the Empire, “if the Councils do not reach agreement or if the Emperor and the classes do not reach agreement there is no possible legitimate decision” (*In Severinum de Mozambano*, 1668–1672, A IV.1, 501), but he firmly believed that the difficulty could be overcome—at least to some extent—via an internal reform that would ease, smoothen and standardise procedures, and the very purpose of his 1677 *Caesarinus* was in fact to address this issue. It is also worth noting that, all things considered, Leibniz regarded the internal structure of complex civil bodies as generally preferable to that of ‘simple’ or ‘regular’ ones, because he was convinced that the presence of a greater number of authorities could better safeguard the rights of individuals: in fact, in the presence of a single (and thus ‘absolute’) authority, “the complaints of the subjects against the sovereign would have no one who could accept them” (*Observations on the Abbé de St Pierre’s Project for Perpetual Peace*, 1715, FC 4, 333; a slightly different English translation is found in R, 181). This should not come as a surprise, as it is perfectly consistent with the logical-metaphysical principle of the goodness of variety as an essential condition for harmony, which can be found in Leibniz’s writings ever since 1671 (cf. Leibniz to Magnus Wedderkopf, May 1671, A II.12, 187, and Leibniz to Arnauld, November 1671, A II.12, 280). For an in-depth account of Leibniz’s view of *Respublicae irregulares*, see (Piro 2011; Basso 2011). For the purpose of this paper, it is particularly noteworthy what Piro suggested about the structure of the Empire: “it may be asked whether in fact the themes touched on in the *Caesarinus* [the matters of the internal union of the Empire and its ability to function and last] did not contribute towards teaching Leibniz that between the mere aggregate (...) and perfect unity, intermediate realities may exist” (Piro 2011, pp. 50–51).

This expression is found, in the context of a reflection on ‘bodily substances’, in Leibniz’s letter to Arnauld of 28 November/8 December 1686: “I accord substantial forms to all bodily substances that are more than mechanically united” (LA 95; A II.2, 121).

The difference between “natural and artificial machines” is clearly outlined in Leibniz’s letter to Johann Christoph Sturm of 5 July 1697, A II.3, 341.

Cf. (Look 2000, in which are also discussed the views expressed in (Blondel 1930; Robinet 1986; Adams 1994; Rutherford 1995)).

The theme of the civil person’s ability to express a will and act is addressed in a variety of texts of very different nature and from various periods, scattered throughout Leibniz’s work: see, for example, his 1668–69 *Plan of the Catholic Demonstrations* (A VI.1, 499–450), the *Preface* to the 1693 *Codex Juris Gentium Diplomaticus* (A IV.5, 75) and the key German text from 1696 already mentioned at note 2 (which will be further analysed), entitled *Defense of the Great States of the Empire... Against the Severe Accusations of a So-Called Caesar Turriani* (A IV.6, 201, 203).

Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

See above, notes 2 and 6.

For accuracy, it should be mentioned that Gerhardt transcribed “inviolabilem” (inviolable) instead of “inevitabilem” (inevitable); however, the term “inevitabilem” is found in the *Vorausedition* recently made available by the Akademie (A I VE 1713, 109) and is confirmed by the collection *Allgemeine Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft und Literatur* (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1854), p. 225.

The English translation of this excerpt was provided by Maria Rosa Antognazza, (cf. Antognazza 1999, p. 50; 2001, p. 2).

Ibid.

On the importance that Maria Rosa Antognazza assigned to the *Demonstrationes Catholicae*, (cf. Antognazza 2007, pp. 3–15; 2009, pp. 90–100).

This title was assigned by the Akademie editors. However, in his contribution to this special issue, Lloyd Strickland argued that it is unsuitable to describe the content of the text, as the latter does not address the issue of Church reunion but rather “tries to clear obstacles to some individual Protestants joining the Catholic Church” (Strickland 2024, p. 19). According to Strickland, a more suitable title would be: ‘The One Catholic Church’. Moreover, he also provided textual evidence that allows us to date the text to 1685 instead of 1683 (pp. 5–6).

On Leibniz’s use of the term *Respublica*, cf. (Basso 2011).

For a different purpose, in his contribution to this special issue, Lloyd Strickland also pointed out that similar remarks are made “near verbatim” in a letter written at the end of May 1685 to Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (A I 4, 508) as well as in many other texts from that same year, such as *The One Catholic Church* (A IV 3, 286), *On Schism, Faith, and the Catholic Church* (A IV 6, 716–717), *Discussion about an Apology of Catholic Truth* (A VI 4, 2343); see (Strickland 2024, p. 6).

On the nature of “substantial bond”, (cf. Look 2000).

On the difference between “confederation” and “union”, see note 2. The difference is clearly drawn in his 1677 *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, chap. XI, A IV.2, 57–58; R 117–18.

On Leibniz’s criticism of Hobbes’s political approach, see (Basso 2017; Manzo 2020).

- ¹⁹ For example, he speaks of a “Caution bourgeoise” (Dutens V, 64–66), i.e., a ‘money deposit’ that all members should pay, so as to keep a common treasury that could enable the establishment of a central administration above the parties. On the embryonic idea of a ‘European central bank’ in Leibniz, cf. (Lærke 2021). In this regard, it is worth noting that in his important letter to Arnauld from 1687, Leibniz defined the “citizens’ right” as the right (still to be established) of aggregates of physical parts to be defined as “substances” (Leibniz to Arnauld, 30 April 1687, LA 128; A II.2, 192–93). The French expression “droit de bourgeoisie” refers to a set of statutes that, between the late Middle Ages and the early modern age, defined the privileges of a restricted group of individuals, observable primarily in those contexts in which the bourgeois class was most represented, such as in the Helvetic Confederation and in Flanders.
- ²⁰ The term ‘consistentia’ is recurrently assigned to bodies; its usage is documented continuously from *The Confession of Nature against Atheists* (cf. A VI.1, 491–92) to the *New Essays on Human Understanding* (cf. A VI.6, 124) and beyond. The verb ‘constare’, on the other hand, is typically assigned to souls, cf. *On the Radical Origination of Things*, 1697, G VII, 306.
- ²¹ Cf. *Phoronomus or the Power and Laws of Nature*, 1689, DFS, 718–19.
- ²² See above, notes 2, 6 and 8.
- ²³ Cf., for example, (Robinet 1984; Gale 1989; Garber 2006; Arthur 2018).
- ²⁴ Cf. (Herbrich 1959; Schneiders 2005; Luckscheiter 2013; Basso 2015).
- ²⁵ For Leibniz’s discussion of the notion of *superioritas territorialis*, see his *Caesarinus Fürstenerius*, chap. X, A IV.2, 54, 57; R 114–17.

References

Primary Sources

- (A) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1923. *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*. Edited by Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Series I–VIII. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. Cited by series, volume, page number.
- (DFS) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 2007. *Dialoghi filosofici e scientifici*. Edited and translated by Francesco Piro, with translations by Gianfranco Mormino and Enrico Pasini, original Latin and French texts included. Milano: Bompiani. Cited by page number.
- (Dutens) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1768. *Opera omnia, nunc primum collecta, in classes distributa, praefationibus et indicibus exornata*. 6 vols. Edited by Louis Dutens. Geneva: De Tournes. Cited by volume and page number.
- (FC) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1861–75. *Oeuvres de Leibniz*. Edited by Alexandre Foucher de Careil. 7 vols. Paris: Firmin Didot frères. Cited by volume and page number.
- (G) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1960–61. *Die Philosophischen Schriften*. 7 vols. Edited by Carl Immanuel Gerhardt. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung. Reprint, Hildesheim: Olms. Cited by volume and page number.
- (J) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 2023. *Leibniz’s Discourse on Metaphysics: A New Translation and Commentary*. Edited, commented and translated by Christopher Johns. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Cited by page number.
- (L) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1969. *Philosophical Papers and Letters*. Edited and translated by Leroy E. Loemker. 2nd ed. Dordrecht and Boston: Reidel. Cited by page number.
- (LA) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm—Arnauld, Antoine. 1967. *The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence*. Edited and translated by Haydn T. Mason. Manchester: Manchester University Press. Cited by page number.
- (Robinet) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm—de Saint-Pierre, Castel. 1995. *Correspondance Leibniz-Castel de Saint-Pierre*. Edited and translated by André Robinet. Paris: Centre de philosophie du droit. Cited by page number.
- (LDB) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm—Des Bosses, Bartholomew. 2007. *The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence*. Edited and translated by Brandon Look and Donald Rutherford. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Cited by page number.
- (R) Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1988. *The Political Writings of Leibniz*. Edited and translated with an introduction by Patrick Riley. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Cited by page number.

Secondary Sources

- Adams, Robert Merryhew. 1994. *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Antognazza, Maria Rosa. 1999. *Immeatio and emperichoresis*. The Theological Roots of Harmony in Bisterfeld and Leibniz. In *The Young Leibniz and His Philosophy, 1646–1676*. Edited by Stewart Brown. Dordrecht: Kluwer, pp. 41–64.
- Antognazza, Maria Rosa. 2001. *Debilissimae Entitates?* Bisterfeld and Leibniz’s Ontology of Relations. *The Leibniz Review* 11: 1–22. [CrossRef]
- Antognazza, Maria Rosa. 2007. *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Antognazza, Maria Rosa. 2009. *Leibniz. An Intellectual Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Arthur, Richard T.W. 2018. *Monads, Composition and Force. Ariadnean Thread through Leibniz’s Labyrinth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Basso, Luca. 2011. The Republic in Leibniz: Between Philosophy and Politics. *Studia Leibnitiana* 43: 103–21. [CrossRef]
- Basso, Luca. 2015. Leibniz und die Gerechtigkeit: Eine platonische Perspektive? In *Das Recht Kann Nicht Ungerecht Sein. ... Beiträge zu Leibniz’ Philosophie der Gerechtigkeit*. (=Festival der Philosophie 4). Stuttgart: Steiner, pp. 55–67.
- Basso, Luca. 2017. Leibniz, critique de Hobbes. La politique moderne entre liberté et souveraineté. In *Leibniz Lector Critique de Hobbes*. Edited by Éric Marquer and Paul Rateau. Paris and Montréal: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, pp. 295–306.

- Blondel, Maurice. 1930. *Une énigme historique: Le “Vinculum substantiale”, d’après Leibniz et l’ébauche d’un réalisme supérieur*. Paris: Beauchesne.
- Frémont, Christiane. 1981. *L’être et la relation. Avec trente-sept lettres de Leibniz au R.P. Des Bosses*. Paris: Vrin.
- Gale, George. 1989. Physics, metaphysics and natures: Leibniz’ later Aristotelianism. In *Leibnizian Inquiries: A Group of Essays*. Edited by Nicholas Rescher. Lanham: University Press of America, pp. 95–102.
- Garber, Daniel. 2006. Physics and foundations. In *The Cambridge History of Science*. (= Early modern science 3). Edited by Katharine Park. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 270–352.
- Herbrich, Elisabeth. 1959. Die Leibnizische Unionspolitik im Lichte seiner Metaphysik. *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Psychologie* 3: 113–136.
- Lærke, Mogens. 2021. Leibniz in Europe. In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Europe*. Edited by Darian Meacham and Nicolas de Warren. London and New York: Routledge.
- Look, Brandon. 2000. Leibniz and the Substance of the *Vinculum Substantiale*. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38: 203–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Luckscheiter, Stefan. 2013. *Seele und Fürst bei Leibniz: Die ethischen und politischen Implikationen von Leibniz’ Metaphysik der Substanz und des Körpers; mit einem Anhang einiger bislang unveröffentlichter kleiner Texte von Leibniz*. Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag.
- Manzo, Fiorenza. 2020. How Sincere Was Leibniz’s Criticism of Hobbes’s Political Thought? *The Leibniz Review* 30: 29–60. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Nachtomy, Ohad, Ayelet Shavit, and Justin Smith. 2002. Leibnizian Organisms, Nested Individuals, and Units of Selection. *Theory in Biosciences* 121: 205–40. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Piro, Francesco. 2011. Rationality of the Irregular. Political Communities and Constitutional Devices in Leibniz. *Studia Leibnitiana* 43: 36–53. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Robinet, André. 1984. Dynamique et fondements métaphysiques. In *Leibniz’ Dynamica: Symposion der Leibniz-Gesellschaft in der Evangelischen Akademie Loccum, 2. bis 4. Juli 1982*. Edited by Albert Heinekamp. Stuttgart: Steiner, pp. 1–25.
- Robinet, André. 1986. *Architectonique disjonctive, automates systémiques et idéalité transcendante dans l’oeuvre de G.W. Leibniz: Nombreux textes inédits*. Paris: Vrin.
- Rudolph, Hartmut. 2011. ‘Res publica Christiana’ and ‘corpus mysticum’. Some Remarks on their Meaning in the Political Thought of Leibniz. *Studia Leibnitiana* 4: 24–35.
- Rutherford, Donald. 1995. *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schneiders, Werner. 2005. Respublica optima: Zur metaphysischen und moralischen Fundierung der Politik bei Leibniz. In *Philosophie der Aufklärung—Aufklärung der Philosophie: Gesammelte Studien; zu seinem 70. Geburtstag*. Edited by Werner Schneiders. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, pp. 121–44.
- Strickland, Lloyd. 2024. The Enigma of Leibniz’s “Catholic” Writings of 1685. *Religions* 15: 1152. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.