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Introduction

'HIS TEMPERAMENT APPEARS to be neither purely sanguine, nor choleric, nor nurturing, nor merely melancholic. . . . Ever since he was a boy he led a sedentary lifestyle and did little exercise. Since his youth he began to read a lot and think about a lot of things, so that he was self-taught in most of his knowledge; he also burns with desire to penetrate everything deeper than usual and to invent something new. He does not begin work without fear, but he continues it courageously. . . . Nature gave him an excellent power of invention and judgement and it will not be difficult for him to think up many things, to read (with understanding), to write, to speak extemporaneously, and to develop intellectual concepts, if necessary, through persistent reflection to investigate to the very bottom of what leads me to conclude that he has a dry and spiritual brain.'[1] The Leibniz who described himself in these terms, at the age of around 50, was an established courtier, renowned throughout Europe as a philosopher and mathematician. But his path to this fame was not straightforward.

While Leibniz scholarship has been increasing for the past thirty years, it has focused primarily on his philosophical thought, and relatively few attempts have been made to try to relate Leibniz to his time and social and intellectual milieus.[2] Recent scholarship has contributed to the mythologization of Leibniz as a 'great natural genius' who could apply himself with 'equal vivacity' to any field, as Bernard de Fontenelle put it in his *Eloge* of 1717. According to this type of narrative, the full breadth of Leibniz's work

1. Leibniz, 'Imago Leibnitii', in Müller and Kronert, *Leben und Werk* (1969), 1–2.

2. Excellent examples of recent Leibniz scholarship include Antognazza, *Leibniz* (2009); Brown, *The Young Leibniz* (1999); Look, *Continuum Companion to Leibniz* (2010); and Nadler, *The Best of All Possible Worlds* (2008).

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and heterogeneous activities can be read in light of an underlying 'unity'.[3] Other approaches have consisted in contrasting his public and private personae, or in interpreting him as esoteric, opportunistic, even Machiavellian.[4] These accounts, while often valid on their own terms, espouse reductive approaches to Leibniz that confine him to a vacuum of ideas without situating him in his social, cultural, or political contexts.

Leibniz is traditionally depicted as a radical rationalist and philosopher who was detached from worldly concerns and impervious to the lot of his fellow men. Although scholarly practice, notably in the history of science, has sought in the past fifty years to break away from such ahistorical interpretations, Leibniz has curiously remained largely immune from this trend. Yet we need to rediscover him within the context of the intellectual effervescence of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century European cultural debates, not least because many of the texts on which Leibniz's present reputation are based were not published until long after his death. In fact, in his lifetime and in particular during his so-called Paris sojourn (1672–76), Leibniz was better known as a diplomat, a lawyer, a theologian, and above all a mathematician than as a philosopher.[5]

This book endeavours to rediscover Leibniz as a participant in the learned and courtly communities he frequented in the years 1672–79—that is, the years of his Paris sojourn and those immediately following, when he found employment back in Germany at the court of Duke Johann Friedrich of Hanover. Leibniz arrived in Paris in early March 1672 on a diplomatic mission on behalf of his patron, Johann Christian von Boineburg, aiming with his infamous 'Egyptian plan' to divert Louis XIV from his plans for military expansion in Europe, as will be examined in the first part. Although ultimately unsuccessful, this mission allowed Leibniz to remain in Paris and take full advantage of its intellectual and scientific life at a time when—with the recent creation of several *académies* and the publication of such seminal works as Malebranche's *De la Recherche de la Vérité* and Boileau's *Art Poétique*—the city was the most sophisticated and advanced centre of European culture. I endeavour to clarify how his visit to Paris constituted an important moment in his development, and to what extent it provided him with a new impulse upon his return to Germany. More broadly, this book sets out to examine how those six years affected him and his work, how they were formative years for him,

3. Antognazza, *Leibniz* (2009), 5.

4. Russell, *Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900); Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic* (2006); Snyder, *Dissimulation* (2009).

5. Garber, 'Leibniz's Reputation' (2009b), 281.

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and how he navigated the various worlds he encountered and with what success. I have chosen the years 1672 and 1679 because they demarcate, respectively, Leibniz's departure for Paris from Mainz and the death of Duke Johann Friedrich, one of his more supportive patrons.

'Internalist' readings tend to isolate the evolution of science and portray its pursuit in terms of a disinterested quest for truth, divorced from mundane or petty concerns.[6] Such assessments tend to divorce the production of ideas from their historical contexts and to occlude the forces that have helped shape them. In particular, they obscure the complex dynamics at play in the practice of 'normal science' in Leibniz's time.[7] Far from being a solitary activity, science and more broadly the pursuit of knowledge were fundamentally 'dialogical', their progress lying in a constant stream of exchanges, collaboration, and cooperation between like-minded individuals labouring towards the common ideal of 'citizenship of the mind'.[8] In this manner, the constitution of knowledge was inextricably linked to power structures and established norms, both within and outside the Republic of Letters. Much of Leibniz scholarship has steered clear of delving into the social, cultural, and political circumstances that affected the constitution of knowledge. In early modern societies, one's credibility depended largely on one's social status. Although scholars and patrons alike cultivated the image of pure scientific freedom and the unencumbered pursuit of knowledge, the ability to secure patronage and, increasingly from the 1670s onward, attachment to a research institution played a decisive role in scholars' ability to establish themselves on the intellectual map.[9] Even the most disinterested scholar needed to be a courtier to some extent and to adhere carefully to the norms and prescribed conduct of his intellectual community. Thus, far from being 'pure', the pursuit of science and scholarship were heavily conditioned by the social structures in which they were conducted.[10]

Leibniz was an ambiguous figure whose roles and personae, reflecting his various milieus, particular tasks, and personal aspirations, were far from static. His work cannot be read in isolation from those factors. Exploring how he sought to position himself and navigate the different

6. See Shapin, 'The Mind Is Its Own Place' (1991).
7. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).
8. Laerke, *Les Lumières de Leibniz* (2015), 50; see also Ramati, 'Harmony at a Distance' (1996), 451; Blay and Halleux, *La science classique* (1998), 26; Fumaroli, *La République des Lettres* (2015), 73.
9. Stegeman, *Patronage and Services* (2005), examines the patronage of savants.
10. See Shapin, *Never Pure* (2010).

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intellectual, scientific, and courtly worlds, this book will reveal him to be a man of multiple identities. In particular, I hope to clarify how, in his early career, Leibniz articulated a niche for himself at the intersection of the sociopolitical and scientific realms. This analysis—based on a more extensive examination than has been attempted previously of his and his peers' correspondence (in French, German, and Latin) during the relevant years—cultivates a sensitivity to the many contextually related dimensions that characterized his personality. My examination will be confined primarily to volumes I, 1; I, 2; II, 1; III, 1, and III, 2, of the ongoing standard *Akademie-Ausgabe* (1923–).

In this work I shall be attending in particular to the following questions. How did Leibniz establish himself as a young scholar? How did his peers perceive him? Which social and professional identities did he endorse at the time? To what extent was he a 'projector' and perceived as such? How much flexibility—social, political, and epistemological—was he afforded within the Republic of Letters and the absolutist political realms he frequented? To what extent did his positions as scholar, courtier, and adviser overlap, and to what extent did they diverge? How did these multiple roles and identities coexist? What kind of rationality did he propound, and did it bring him in conflict with competing intellectual or scholarly models? What was his own view of the Republic of Letters? How did he understand Colbert's enterprise? To what extent did his intellectual aims overlap with his professional duties? And what ultimately drove his various projects?

Considering the many ambiguities and layers at play, this monograph does not pretend to offer a comprehensive exposition of Leibniz's thought or life in the years 1672–79, let alone of the Republic of Letters or of the different milieus in which his thought evolved. It does not purport to be exhaustive but seeks rather to shed light on aspects of Leibniz's life, activities, and modi operandi that have received little or less attention. For this reason, I have excluded or touched only briefly on certain well-trodden topics, including Leibniz's mathematical peregrinations and his formulation of the calculus, his trip to London in 1673, the details of the elaboration of his calculating machine, his encounter with Spinoza, his dispute with Newton, as well as his project towards theological reconciliation, all of which have been covered extensively by remarkable scholars.[11]

11. This includes Mogens Laerke on Leibniz's relationship with Spinoza, Joseph E. Hofmann on Leibniz's mathematical work in Paris, Philip Beeley on his trip to London, Matthew L. Jones on his building of the calculating machine, and Maria Rosa Antognazza on his lifelong work on theological reconciliation.

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Any substantial reiteration on my part would be largely superfluous. For reasons of space, I have also passed over elements that feature minimally or not at all in the correspondence, such as the University of Paris, the various Parisian political factions operating at the time, and Leibniz's fledging relationship with Bossuet. Crucially, too, the immensity of the *Nachlass*—which for this period alone spans thousands of pages—the time elapsed, and the frequent gaps in information owing to the number of missing letters, notably in Leibniz's Parisian period, rule out producing categorical statements and definitive conclusions. Accordingly, I have sought to strike a balance between factual certainty and conjecture, and propose to offer specific observations and tentative conclusions which will, I hope, lay the foundations for future research.

Because the relationship between Leibniz and the Republic of Letters was a reciprocal one, I seek by examining Leibniz also to increase our understanding of the nature and workings of that community. The 'Republic of Letters' refers to a transnational community of scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who shared the same passion and belief in the exchange and promotion of knowledge through the deployment of rational methods. Transcending local, national, and even confessional difference, this 'universal auditorium' was governed by the principles of reciprocity and obligation and by the ideals of sociability, equality, *politesse*, and *honnêteté*.[12] Each member, at least in theory, had the sense of belonging to a virtual, albeit very real, larger and unified society, especially in times of political turmoil. Such, in any event, is the conventional view of the Republic of Letters, a view that reifies it by interpreting it as a stable institution unified by a set of shared principles and values. But my research has affinities with more recent scholarship that resists the seductive appeal of this beautiful and static ideal. In fact, the Republic of Letters in the second half of the seventeenth century was a highly unstable institution—multifarious, conflicted, diversified, and hierarchical—and it is important to rediscover its complexity and fluidity to understand better both the institution itself and Leibniz.[13]

This reassessment is all the more important considering Leibniz's increasingly central importance in the Republic of Letters. Even before

12. Blay and Halleux, *La science classique*, 25. See Borowski, 'Republic of Letters' (2021).

13. Goldgar, *Impolite Learning* (1995), 116. See also Wacquet, *Le Modèle francais* (1989); Wacquet and Bots, *La République des Lettres* (1997); and, on Bayle's attempt to model conduct in the Republic through his *Dictionnaire*, van der Lugt, *Bayle, Jurieu* (2016).

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arriving in Paris, Leibniz had established a network of correspondents throughout Europe, many of whom he remained in contact with for the rest of his life. In fact, according to Voltaire, writing decades later in his *Age of Louis XIV*, it was none other than Leibniz, 'perhaps a man of the most universal learning in Europe', who had set in motion the universal network of communication that underpinned this intellectual revolution: 'There was never a more universal correspondence cultivated between philosophers' than in Leibniz's time.[14] An 'homme de réseaux', Leibniz was known to his peers predominantly through his journal articles and letter-writing.[15] His first publication, in the *Journal des Sçavans* of 25 March 1675, was on the topic of portable watches. Perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, Leibniz was a prolific correspondent, and it was above all in letters that he presented himself to his interlocutors.[16] In his letters, which range widely in length and geographical destination and were often circulated beyond their addressees, he presented his views and engaged in discussion on an impressive array of topics spanning the fields of theology, jurisprudence, physics, mathematics, and philosophy. Leibniz's correspondence has rightly been described as an 'integral part of his work',[17] and he continued building his extensive network of correspondents throughout his life.

Through this network he kept abreast of the learned world's *nova literaria* (including new publications, projects, and controversies) and other 'curious' topics, such as inventions and scientific discoveries, as well as information about European politics. This not only satisfied his personal need for information, but in being such an active and willing correspondent, sharing information and assisting his fellow savants, Leibniz so to speak 'performed' his membership of the Republic of Letters.[18]

Crucially, in such an economy of information, letters contained—indeed, constituted—'goods' in themselves, which Leibniz hoped to exchange where they were likely to be valued, and rewarded, the most.[19] By setting up, as we shall see, an effective information network and exploiting the huge value of access to information, Leibniz hoped to build his credit and acquire 'social capital' beyond that of his actual position.[20]

14. Voltaire, *Siècle de Louis XIV* (1874), 476.
15. Bertrand, 'Leibnitz et ses réseaux' (1999), 80.
16. Gädeke, 'Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz' (2005), 263–64, 297; Gädeke, 'Leibniz lässt sich informieren' (2009), 85.
17. Utermöhlen, 'Der Briefwechsel' (1977), 90.
18. Gädeke, 'Gelehrtenkorrespondenz' (2020), 805.
19. Droste, *Im Dienst der Krone* (2006).
20. Gädeke, 'Leibniz lässt sich informieren', 86; Gädeke, 'Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz', 282.

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Consequently, he tended to handle information selectively and strategically, with a view to transcending his often limited official duties and leveraging his growing role within the Republic of Letters into a secure position at court or at the Académie des Sciences.[21] With such an institutional base, combining scholarship with power, Leibniz discerned, he would be better positioned—and have more resources available—to implement his schemes than if he remained merely a savant.[22]

Leibniz is often portrayed as an arch-rationalist: while this is true, it is not the whole story. He inhabited a world in which the intellectual and scientific marketplaces were increasingly saturated with 'curiosities', 'marvellous observations', and novel experiments, all of which challenged the limits of orthodox rationality.[23] Some inventions that were 'foolish, unreasonable and impossible' (*närrisch, irraisonable und ohnmöglich*) succeeded, while others that were well conceived ultimately failed and tested the bounds of possibility.[24] In addition to being a scholar and a courtier, Leibniz, perhaps crucially, operated as an aspiring capitalist and a projector.

The term 'project' (*projet*) first appeared in the Richelet (1680), Furetière (1690), and Académie française (1694) dictionaries with the definition 'design' (*dessein*) or 'plan', and more generally the projection or transfer of a tangible plan to the material world.[25]

Projectors were generally inventors or entrepreneurs who set out to gain the trust and backing of a powerful patron, such as a ruler or aristocratic investor, for what they claimed would be a prestigious and financially profitable venture capable of yielding practical benefits.[26] By instrumentalizing knowledge and technical expertise, early modern states

21. Gädeke, 'Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz', 292–93. Gädeke distinguishes between problem-, strategy-, and communication-oriented letters, but Leibniz's letters often have all three orientations.

22. Gädeke, 'Gelehrtenkorrespondenz', 805.

23. Keller, *Knowledge and the Public Interest* (2015).

24. See Johann J. Becher, *Närrische Weißheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1682), sig. A2, quoted in Breger, 'Becher, Leibniz' (2016), 37.

25. Smith, *The Business of Alchemy* (1994), 479; Zedler, *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexikon* (1737), vol. 29. On projecting, see Keller and McCormick, 'Towards a History of Projects' (2016); and Ash, 'Expertise and the Early Modern State' (2014).

26. For more on projectors, see Borowski, 'Projectors' (2021); Graber, 'Du faiseur de projet au projet régulier' (2011); Keller, *Knowledge and the Public Interest*; Krajewski, *Projektemacher* (2004); Lazardzig, '"Masque der Possibilität"' (2006); Smith, *The Business of Alchemy*; Stanitzek, 'Projector' (2015); Troitzsch, 'Erfinder, Forscher und Projektemacher' (2004).

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hoped to increase their power and become more prosperous.[27] Projectors in turn provided such expertise and positioned themselves as indispensable intermediaries, whose status at court would thus be legitimized.[28]

Projects varied widely in nature and involved almost all types of ventures, including engineering, mining, constructing factories, ameliorating the condition of the poor and infirm, banking, treasure hunting, building projects, and fabricating perpetual motion machines as well as various schemes for turning base metals into precious ones. Some projects, which were rife in the 1670s and 1680s, were of a more political or scholarly nature with a view to reform.[29] This type of activity became so pervasive towards the end of the seventeenth century that Daniel Defoe famously nicknamed his era the 'Projecting Age'.

Most projectors were inclined to present themselves as public advisers and counsellors—rather than as 'projectors' per se—in the context of nascent state absolutism and were parasitic on that office and its rhetoric, overtly placing their ideas or schemes in the service of a state or ruler.[30] Their projects were often highly speculative in nature, and many ended up unsuccessful and money-losing ventures, casting suspicion on the projector as more self-interested than devoted to the public good.[31]

It is worth noting that the idea of such a character, a proposer of projects, in all its ambivalence, antedated the term.[32] In the seventeenth century the idea of the 'projector' could be neutrally descriptive or negatively evaluative, depending on the context. It seems to have acquired an increasingly negative connotation and been deployed as a polemical category as it crystallised over time, becoming synonymous with self-promotion and deceit, and the object of criticism and satire in many quarters.[33] Leibniz's use of

27. Keller, *Knowledge and the Public Interest*, 275.

28. See Wakefield, *The Disordered Police State* (2009); and Ash, 'Expertise and the Early Modern State', 13, 21: 'The early modern state, then, was simultaneously a generator, a consumer, and a product of expertise'; 'Operative knowledge thus became the byword of the new natural philosophy.'

29. Borowski, 'Projectors'.

30. See Condren, *Argument and Authority* (2006). In *The Occasion of Scotland's Decay in Trade* (1705), the tremendously successful projector William Paterson did not shy away from launching an attack on projectors and and presenting himself as serving the welfare of his country. My thanks to Ryan Walter for bringing this source to my attention.

31. Graber, 'Du faiseur de projet au projet régulier', 10.

32. Krajewski, *Projektemacher* (2004); Keller and McCormick, 'Towards a History of Projects' (2016).

33. See, for example, Charles-François Lebrun's unforgiving characterization of the '*faiseurs de projets*' in 1790: 'The trader, the manufacturer, the cultivator are not governed . . . by the imaginary calculations of projectors. Projectors' deplorable calculations

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the verb (generally the French *projeter*) is consistently neutral during the period under examination, even if his approach to the idea of the projector is much more nuanced.

The projectors' fundamental ambiguity—and the concept's ambiguity, with a valence shifting between ingeniousness and charlatanism—can be ascribed to the grey, ill-defined zone in which they operated, between neatly codified landscapes, disciplines, and emergent roles and personas such as that of the counsellor or philosopher.[34] This need for certainty and mastery did not necessarily match the messiness and unpredictability of reality. The figure of the projector developed at a particular historical juncture, against a background of technological inventions, discoveries, and nascent commercialism.[35]

In this sense, the projector embodies the epoch's contradictions and epistemological ambiguity, attesting to the precariousness of the scientific inventiveness and technological progress that the epoch embraced but often underestimated.[36]

As Pamela Smith has argued, this *homo novus* was a 'liminal individual' whose life embodied the 'fluid cultural moment when "science" had not yet achieved its preeminent modern position as the sole legitimator of truth, but instead had to compete with a number of other intellectual pursuits'.[37]

Projection emerged as the hallmark of an economy of knowledge and action characterised by emulative activity, emerging mercantilism, newly founded natural philosophy, and a crisis of authority. Leibniz's existence as a projector, his grand schemes, and his 'wise foolishness' were made possible by a particular type of fluid epistemology which itself helped 'erect a multivalent vision of reality and knowledge'.[38]

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are not intended for them but are like nets stretched out to the ignorant multitude that feeds on words and nourishes itself with hopes and chimeras, and which, influenced by the stream of opinions, always remains the plaything of illusions and the victim of credulity.' Lebrun, 'Opinions . . . sur le projet' (1790), 23.

34. Condren, Gaukroger, and Hunter, *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe* (2006), examines the rise of the figure of the philosopher through forms of self-cultivation and intellectual deportment within particular institutional settings in the early modern period.

35. Borowski, 'Projectors'; Stanitzek, 'Projector'.

36. Graber, 'Du faiseur de projet au projet régulier', 12: 'The problem of the project maker—enthusiasm for innovation and new possibilities of profit, coupled with a deep uncertainty about the morality, the viability, and the interest of these companies which could be merely chimeras or scams—is above all at the heart of the modern development of science and technology.'

37. Smith, *The Business of Alchemy*, 4–5, 10.

38. Smith, 270.

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Leibniz was keen to instrumentalize this state of pervasive doubt and uncertainty in order to explore the 'realm of possibilities', to reform knowledge, and to advance his own projects, from his 'Egyptian plan' to the production of phosphorus to his scheme outlined in his essay 'Funny Thought'.

A more experimental and empirical approach to epistemology and reality seemed to prevail over any logical a priorism or static concept of 'truth', and consequently distinctions between rational and irrational thinking, between fact and fiction, could be far from clear-cut: whether a scheme would later be judged illusory was contingent upon whether it could be successfully reduced to practice. 'Speculating' in the attempt to reveal reality in its latent possibilities was one thing; reducing to practice, even though deemed a simple matter of execution, was quite another. The passage from theory to practice—often depending heavily on external and unpredictable conditions—regularly proved impossible. Since the bounds of possibility could not be determined in advance, only experience would establish whether the seemingly impossible was actually achievable.[39]

Part of my task, then, consists in exploring how Leibniz presented himself within the scholarly and courtly circles he came to frequent in Paris and Hanover, and, more generally, how he fashioned various socio-professional identities for himself according to his interlocutor. This exploration will expose the tensions and discrepancies between Leibniz's self-presentation (including possible contradictions among his different socioprofessional identities) and his perception by others. What will come more clearly into view as a result will be Leibniz as he sought to advance his scientific, philosophical, and theological agendas, to influence intellectual and political debates in his early years—and as he was known to his contemporaries in those years, rather than as he came to be known by later generations (especially after the posthumous publication of some of his most important philosophical and theological writings).

By highlighting the fragmented and precarious nature of his existence in the years 1672–79, full of false steps and setbacks and disappointments, this book seeks to challenge the common presentation of Leibniz as a towering genius. For such an understanding of him bears little resemblance to the complex ways in which he presented himself and his work to his contemporaries or how he was perceived during his lifetime—the latter

39. See Keller, *Knowledge and the Public Interest*, 281: 'Leibniz utilized the concept of communally desired objects to advance his particular investigations toward presumed impossibilities.'

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being in fact very difficult to gauge. Leibniz did not operate in a vacuum but had to learn to navigate as well as he could a complex historical context and a tense political climate characterized simultaneously by intense plasticity and rigidity on many levels. His various projects were regularly interrupted or deferred, sometimes resumed, often abandoned altogether. His thought and career emerged through, not in isolation from, his social existence: the former could not have emerged as they did without the latter. The present work therefore endeavours to rediscover Leibniz in the complexity, nuances, and contradictions of that social existence in some of his most formative years. Drawing on material that is generally sidelined for being considered superfluous or irrelevant, I have sought to reconstitute, little by little and to the extent possible, the relatively small world in which Leibniz evolved and his place in it. The letters acted as pieces of a puzzle through which I endeavoured to address the following enigma: Why wasn't arguably one of the most brilliant minds of his time revered in his younger years? Why wasn't he better known? And above all, who was he?

Following a broadly chronological as well as thematic structure, this book is divided into two sections. The first section (1672–76) examines Leibniz's rapport with his patron Johann Christian Boineburg and his Egyptian plan. It offers an overview of his political and scientific activities in Paris and the various figures he interacted with there (including the French theologian Antoine Arnauld, the orientalist Louis Ferrand, and the Dutch savant Christiaan Huygens), as well as of Leibniz's involvement in the intellectual and scientific debates of his time (such as Cartesianism, the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, and the vision of the Republic of Letters that he sought to promote). The second section (1677–79) examines how, having failed to infiltrate Colbert's state Republic of Letters—either by funnelling books (such as the much coveted *Abulfeda*) to its highly placed members, or by promising new projects to Pierre de Carcavy, the minister's right-hand man—Leibniz found his way to the court of Johann Friedrich in Hanover, from which he set out, despite his relatively lowly official position, to carve out a sphere of influence for himself, not least as the duke's omnicompetent and indispensable commercial and technological adviser, intent on securing beneficial and profitable schemes—such as the production of phosphorus—for his employer. This effort was not without some interesting tensions, including with his fellow projectors Johann Daniel Crafft and Joachim Johann Becher, since Leibniz was himself a projector eager to promote his own schemes. As this book sets out to show, even while Leibniz was busy creating one of most successful epistolary and information

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networks of the time, he still hoped to insinuate himself into the Parisian Académie des Sciences.

During his frantic activities and networking in his early years, Leibniz encountered little success. He was in a way a misfit, a quasi-public savant obsessed with secrecy, whose mode of interaction could irk as he attempted to develop a new status within the Republic of Letters that exceeded its existing codes. He was a man of contradictions, torn between the ideal of the selfless savant and having to operate in the real world, a political being accountable to his employer, a savant with unclear allegiances seeking to belong to a world and yet, at the same time, incapable of fitting in and, so to speak, staying in place. At a time when the world of scholarship did not exist as a counterweight to absolutist power but, on the contrary, largely depended on it, Leibniz struggled with the politics of scholarship. Above all, the person we have come to perceive as a towering genius was a deeply human—*all too human*—individual.

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