

Foreword

We believe we should give some indication here of the physical layout of our book. The state of dispersion and disorder in which Leibniz's immense and many-faceted work is presently found dismembered and parceled out among so many fragmentary editions makes it difficult if not impossible for a single worker to assemble and have at hand all the texts necessary for an in-depth study of any one part of the system.¹ We have therefore thought it useful to students, and even to some of their teachers, to be lavish with citations and references, so as to make our book into a collection of texts which should to a degree be able to make up for the lack of some particular edition.² In addition, the citations allow instructive or curious comparisons between analogous or contemporaneous texts that are often separated within a single edition or into several. With regard to the references, we have multiplied them, in the hope of remedying on at least some points the regrettable lack of an index for the Gerhardt editions. They will be able to serve as a guide for those who would like to verify our interpretation, to develop and complete parts of it, or to study certain related questions that we have had to leave aside.³ In the Appendices, we have dealt with some of these questions, which, although connected to our main subject, do not enter directly into our plan. We have left to the Notes at the end of the volume those documents that are cited in a number of places in the book or which by reason of their length could not be put in the running notes. Finally, since all of our citations of the philosophical works are from the Gerhardt edition, it seemed useful to us, in an effort to allow the reader to find these passages easily and reliably in the Erdmann edition, to prepare a table of correspondences between these two editions—something which, so far as we know, exists nowhere else.⁴ In short, having experienced for ourselves how inconvenient and laborious the present editions of Leibniz make this study, we have endeavored to spare readers long and tedious searches, which are often fruitless and always chancy, and to let them profit as much as possible from the results of our own research. We should be amply compensated for our labor if our work could facilitate for others the study of Leibniz's philosophy, attract the attention of investigators to his vast and little-known body of work, and give birth to new studies that will help to increase his fame and renew his thought.

¹ We ourselves have only succeeded in this undertaking thanks to the combined resources of the Sorbonne, the École Normale, and the Victor Cousin Library, resources brought together only in Paris.

² See the Bibliographic Abbreviations at the beginning of this volume. As a rule, we have given preference to the most recent editions; consequently, we have cited the editions of Dutens, Erdmann, etc., only for those texts that are missing from later editions. In any event, we have given parallel citations to the three editions of Gerhardt (*Math.*, *Phil.*, and *Brief.*) whenever possible.

³ See, for example, the remarks on Leibniz's philological researches (p. 65, n. 1); on logical machines (p. 116, n. 2); on dialogues composed by Leibniz (p. 130, n. 3); on Descartes's algebra (p. 141, n. 2); on the ontological argument (p. 195, n. 3); on the principle of continuity (p. 233, n. 4); on the arithmetical machine (p. 295, n. 4); etc. For notes relating to any particular author, consult the index.

⁴ Except for the *New Essays*, the *Theodicy*, and the *Monadology*. We have chosen to refer to the internal divisions of these works, since there are quite a few recognized editions, for example that of Janet (2 vols.; 2nd ed., Paris, Alcan, 1900).