

Note XII

Some Thoughts on the Method of Completing and Improving the Encyclopedia of Alsted (Dutens, V, 183).¹

“Whatever is worth knowing I divide into theorems or reasons and observations or the history of things, the history of places and times. The first thing necessary for the encyclopedia, therefore, are the principles of the true philosophy carefully demonstrated. To these should be joined the whole of Thomas Hobbes’s *De Corpore* and *De Cive*, albeit in places emended, as well as the *Elements* of Euclid.... For the true theology, there should be added our philosophical principles concerning mind;² for the true jurisprudence, our demonstrations concerning natural law;³ for the true politics, our demonstrations both on utility in general and on the best possible state. Meanwhile, for the philosophy of mind there should be employed some excerpts from Descartes,⁴ Digby and Barton;⁵ and for logic... Jungius, with excerpts from Clauberg and Arnauld,⁶ and my combinatorial art. For the true physics, in order to supplement Hobbes, there should be added Galileo and Huygens on motion, as well as a few of my things,⁷ and even some Aristotle and Digby, which consist in mere reasoning rather than experiments.”

After the deductive part of the encyclopedia, there must follow the historical, that is, the descriptive and empirical, part: “The *history of things*, or observations concerning mind, body, human being” (these titles recall those of Hobbes). The “*history of places and times*” includes geography and history properly speaking.⁸

¹ Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638) published in 1620 an *Encyclopedia* in four folio volumes, on which Leibniz inscribed this rather favorable judgment: “...the most industrious Joh. Henr. Alsted, whose encyclopedia certainly seems to me praiseworthy by the standards of its time” (May 1681; *Phil.*, VII, 67).

² Leibniz conceived his *Philosophical Principles Concerning Mind* between 1671 and 1673 (see Leibniz to Arnauld, 1671, *Phil.*, I, 73; Leibniz to Duke Johann Friedrich, 23 March 1673, *Phil.*, I, 67), which gives an approximate date for the present fragment.

³ An allusion to the *Principles of Natural Law*, whose plan Leibniz conceived around 1670. See Leibniz to Arnauld, 1671 (*Phil.*, I, 73).

⁴ *On the Happy Life* appears to be one of these extracts (see Chap. 5, §23).

⁵ See Note I.

⁶ Leibniz in fact ascribed the Port-Royal Logic to Arnauld alone (see, e.g., *Preface to Nizolius*, 1670, *Phil.*, I, 154; *Meditations*, 1684, *Phil.*, IV, 426), until Des Billettes instructed him that “the book *On the Art of Thinking* is partly by M. Arnauld and partly by M. Nicole” (letter of 23 August 1697, *Phil.*, VII, 457, note).

⁷ An allusion to his *New Physical Hypothesis* (1671).

⁸ The example of the encyclopedia of Alsted is again recalled in a letter to Lange of 1716 (see Note XIX).