

“The Horizon of Everything Human ...” (1693–1701?)<sup>1,2</sup>

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54 The horizon of everything human or a demonstration: that the number of truths or falsehoods enunciable [*enuntiabilis*] by humans as they are now is limited; and also that if the present condition of humanity persisted long enough, it would happen that the greatest part of what they would communicate in words, whether by talking or writing, would have to coincide with what others have already communicated in the past; and moreover that new humans would lead an entire life that appears thoroughly the same to the senses as lives that others have already led.

Archimedes, whose greatness was recognized by King Hiero of Sicily, aroused the admiration of the king and the court by saying not only that the number of grains of sand is not infinite, but also that it would be easy to express [*enuntiare*] a number much larger than that which all the grains of sand would reach if the space from the earth to the stars were filled with sand. He demonstrated this in a book that is still extant.<sup>3</sup> But what is the number of grains of sand compared to the number of enunciable truths and falsehoods? For there is no grain of sand that would not be able to supply many truths and falsehoods of this sort, all of which would be included in the reckoning—to say nothing of the innumerable expressions concerning other objects. And yet a number that would exceed the number of all these expressions can be easily expressed and comprehend; which I will now show.

56 Finally, so that these conclusions will be less vulnerable to difficulties, I declare that I speak only of *enunciable propositions*: for I do not deny that men have and can have a great many confused thoughts and sensations, impressions, fantasies, and dreams that cannot be enunciated. Indeed, it is certain that there are not enough words sufficient for us to express all the subtle differences among sensible qualities, such as colors, sounds, odors, tastes, and touches; and also among internal senses, desires, and pleasures and pains; which are also greatly varied both by the change of objects and by our own everyday change.

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<sup>1</sup> LH IV, vol. V, 9, Bl. 1. The Latin text of this undated fragment is transcribed in M. Fichant (ed.), *De l' Horizon de la Doctrine Humaine (1693)*; *Αποκατάστασις πάντων (La Restitution universelle) (1715)*, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991), pp.54, 56. Fichant provides a French translation (pp. 55, 57), which I have consulted in preparing the present translation.

<sup>2</sup> Leibniz's original title was “Horizon doctrinae humanae” (“The Horizon of Human Knowledge”). This matches the title of the longer “De l'Horizon de la Doctraine Humaine” from no later than 1693; see Fichant, pp. 39–53. Leibniz later added “actionisque” (“and action”) to this title, and then finally settled on title given here, “Horizon rerum humanarum ...” (see Fichant, pp. 15-16). This suggests that the fragment stems from the period 1693-1701.

<sup>3</sup> Namely, the *Psammites*, known in Latin as *Arenarius* and in English as *The Sand Reckoner*.