## LEIBNIZ'S PREFERENCE FOR AN INTENSIONAL LOGIC (A REPLY TO MR. PARKINSON)

## WALTER H. O'BRIANT

While Leibniz's interpreters have never disputed the fact that he preferred to interpret his logic intensionally, there has been, and continues to be, disagreement over the reasons for this preference.

The great French interpreter of Leibniz's logic, Louis Couturat, held that it was Leibniz's excessive respect for Aristotle which led him to prefer the intensional point of view.<sup>1</sup> C. I. Lewis has said that the preference was derived partly from habit and partly from rationalistic inclination.<sup>2</sup> More recently, G. H. R. Parkinson has disputed Couturat's claim, and insisted that Leibniz had a far better reason for his preference.<sup>3</sup>

Parkinson claims that, while Leibniz mentions his agreement with Aristotle, this is not the same as accepting a particular position *because* Aristotle held it; and furthermore, that if this were the only reason for Leibniz's choice, it would do him no credit.<sup>4</sup>

This is quite correct. Leibniz did hold Aristotle in high regard as a logician, and often mentioned his concurrence with Aristotle's views;<sup>5</sup> but this is no good reason to suppose that Leibniz's position is based upon Aristotle's authority.

Instead, Parkinson contends, the reason for Leibniz's preference is to be found in his statement that "concepts do not depend upon the existence of individuals."<sup>6</sup> Parkinson interprets this to mean that Leibniz's desire to deny existential import to universal propositions led him to adopt the intensional approach. While Parkinson grants that it is "the commonly held

<sup>1.</sup> La logique de Leibniz (Paris, 1901), p. 438.

<sup>2.</sup> A Survey of Symbolic Logic (Berkeley, 1918), p. 14.

<sup>3.</sup> Logic and Reality in Leibniz's Metaphysics (Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 17-22.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>5.</sup> For example, regarding the intensional interpretation, see sec. 16 of "General Investigations Concerning the Analysis of Concepts and Truths," in: Louis Couturat, *Opuscules et fragments inédits de Leibniz* (Paris, 1903), p. 366.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid., pp. 53, 387, sec. 130.