

Gentrain 10 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, October 31, 2013, Dr. Cindy Ausec

Works

- ***Discourse on Metaphysics 1686***
- *New System of Nature*
- ***Monadology 1714***
- *The Principles of Nature and of Grace*
- *New Essays on Human Understanding* Not published until 50 years after his death

Philosophy

- Never published his philosophy systematically
- Kept many of his ideas out of his published work
- Idea of an alphabet of human thought into which all truths could be analyzed
- Wanted to develop a single, universal, language which would mirror the structure of the world

Logic

- Distinguishes between “truths of reason” and “truths of facts”
 - Truths of reason are necessary – the opposite is impossible
 - Truths of fact based on the principle that nothing happens without a sufficient reason why it should be thus rather than otherwise - Can only be discovered by empirical investigation

Discourse on Metaphysics

- God is an Absolute Perfect Being
- God possessing supreme and infinite wisdom, acts in the most perfect manner both metaphysically and morally
- God acts are not arbitrary
 - Has to be rules and goodness and beauty otherwise God could not consider his works afterwards and find them good – testified by the Sacred Scriptures
 - Eternal truths of metaphysics and geometry and the rules of goodness, justice, and perfection are not the effects of the will of god; rather they are the consequences of his understanding

God Could Not Have Made Things Better

- To act with less perfection than one could have is to act imperfectly
- Scripture assures us of the goodness of God’s works
- Ancients knew about the inadequate knowledge we have of the general harmony of the universe and the hidden reason for God’s conduct

Love of God

- The Love of God requires our complete satisfaction and acquiesce with to what he has done without our being quietists
- We must be truly satisfied with everything that has come to us according to his will
- We must act in accordance with what we presume to be the will of God
- God never demands more than the right intention

God Does Nothing Which is not Orderly

- The extraordinary is only extraordinary with some particular order established among creatures

- Line intersecting 5 random points – sometimes straight sometime circular etc
- God made a world with the simplest in hypotheses and richest in phenomena
- Miracles conform to the general order, even though they may be contrary to the subordinate maxims - God can suspend the natural order if he so wills it

God Chose This World

- God chose freely to make the best of all possible world; otherwise he could have had no sufficient reason to create this world rather than another
- A world in which there is free-will which is sometimes sinfully misused is better than a world in which there is neither freedom nor sin
- Descartes' God was totally free: even the laws of logic were the result of his arbitrary making
- Leibniz maintained that the eternal truths depended not on God's will rather on his understanding – God had no choice
- Mocked by Voltaire – Pangloss the Optimist

Individual Substance

- Individual Substances/Souls
- Expresses the whole universe in its own way
- Would later call them 'monad' in his essay *Monadology*
- Every substance (soul) is a world apart, independent of everything else except God

Monads

- A monad mirrors the world because God has programmed it to change in synchrony with the world
- All monads have an internal state which is a representation of all other items of the universe
- Cannot be causally affected by any other creatures
- Cannot grow old or decay. Begin only by creation and end only by annihilation
- They can and do change constantly – but only from within

Individual Notion of Each Person

- Includes everything that will ever happen to him/her
- Truths are nevertheless contingent being based on free will
- Before deciding to create the world God surveys the infinite number of possible creatures
- Each animal has an *entelechy* which is its soul
- Within the human being the dominant monad is the rational soul

Types of Knowledge

- Confused knowledge – can recognize a thing from among others without being able to say what the difference is
- Distinct knowledge – can describe the differences
- Adequate – when everything that enters into a distinct definition or distinct knowledge is known distinctly, down to primitive notions
- Intuitive knowledge – the mind understands all the primitive ingredients of a notion at once and distinctly – extremely rare
- God alone is the immediate object of our Perceptions