

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

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Learning Objectives

Life

- Born in 1646
- Son of a professor of philosophy at Leipzig university – read metaphysics in early youth and by age 13 became familiar with the writings of the scholastics
- studied mathematics at Jena and law at Altdorf – offered and refused a professorship at the age of 21
- Entered the service of the Archbishop of Mainz and on a diplomatic mission t Paris met successors of Descartes
- 1676 invented infinitesimal calculus (unaware of Newton's earlier but as yet unpublished discoveries)
- Librarian to the court library at Wolfenbüttel, and compiled a History of the House of Brunswick
- President of the Prussian Academy

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

“On divine perfection, and that God does everything in the most desirable way”

“And, to penetrate more deeply into this matter, it is appropriate to remark that there are several entirely different perfections in nature, that God posses all of them together, and that each of them belongs to him in the highest degree”

God

- 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 that 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 is he so wills it

God Choose 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

Free Will

- Before deciding to create the world God surveys the infinite number of possible creatures
 - Among all of the Julius Caesars there will be one who crosses the Rubicon and one who does not
 - Each possible Caesars will acts for a reason, and neither of them will be necessitated - so when he decided to give existence to the Rubicon-crossing Caesar he is making a freely-choosing Caesar

Leibniz vs. Descartes

- 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

Pangloss the Optimist

Pangloss gave instruction in metaphysico-theologico-cosmologico-nigology. He Proved admirably that there cannot possibly be an effect without a cause and that in this best of all possible worlds the baron's castle was the most beautiful of all castles and his wife the best of all possible baronesses. – It is clear he said, that things cannot be otherwise than they are, for since everything is made to serve an end, everything necessarily serves the best end. (Voltaire's Candide)

And Pangloss sometimes used to say to Candide: All events are linked together in the best of possible worlds; for after all, if you had not been driven from a fine castle by being kicked in the backside for love of Miss Cunegonde, if you hadn't been sent before the Inquisition, if you hadn't lost all your sheep from the good land of Eldorado, you wouldn't be sitting here eating candied citron and pistachios

That is all very well put, said Candide, but we must go and work our garden.

Substances/Souls

- Would later call them 'monad' in his essay *Monadology*
- Every substance (soul) is a world apart, independent of everything else except God
- The complex is made up of the simple
- What ever is simple is unextended – must be simple immaterial soul-like entities

Monads

- Cannot be causally affected by any other creatures
 - “have no windows, by which anything could come in or go out”
- Cannot grow old or decay
 - Begin only by creation and end only by annihilation
- They can and do change constantly – but only from within
 - Changes must be changes of mental states
 - The life of a monad is a series of perceptions

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

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- Each animal has an *entelechy* which is its soul
 - Within the human being the dominant monad is the rational soul