



## The Philosophy of Leibniz

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In the contemporaries Spinoza and Locke, the two schools of modern philosophy, the Continental, starting from Descartes, and the English, which followed Bacon, had reached the extreme of divergence and opposition, Spinoza was a rationalistic pantheist, Locke, an empirical individualist. With Leibniz a twofold approximation begins. As a rationalist he sides with Spinoza against Locke, as an individualist with Locke against Spinoza. But he not only separated rationalism from pantheism, but also qualified it by the recognition (which his historical tendencies had of themselves suggested to him) of a relative justification for empiricism, since he distinguished the factual truths of experience from the necessary truths of reason, gave to the former a noëtical principle of their own, the principle of sufficient reason, and made sensation an indispensable step to thought.

To the tendencies thus manifested toward a just estimation and peaceful reconciliation of opposing standpoints, Leibniz remained true in all the fields to which he devoted his activity. Thus, in the sphere of religion, he took an active part in the negotiations looking toward the reunion of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, as well as in those concerning the union of the Lutheran and the Reformed. Himself a stimulating man, he yet needed stimulation from without. He was an astonishingly wide reader, and declared that he had never found a book that did not contain something of value. With a ready adaptability to the ideas of others he combined a remarkable power of transformative appropriation; he read into books more than stood written in them. The versatility of his genius was unlimited: jurist, historian, diplomat, mathematician, physical scientist, and philosopher, and in addition almost a theologian and a philologist—he is not only at home in all these departments, because versed in them, but everywhere contributes to their advancement by original ideas and plans. In such a combination of productive genius and wealth of knowledge Aristotle and Leibniz are unapproached.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was born in 1646 at Leipsic, where his father (Friederich Leibniz, died 1652) was professor of moral philosophy; in his fifteenth year he entered the university of his native city, with law as his principal subject. Besides law, he devoted himself with quite as much of ardor to philosophy under Jacob Thomasius (died 1684, the father of Christian Thomasius), and to mathematics under E. Weigel in Jena. In 1663 (with a dissertation entitled *De Principio Individui*) he became Bachelor, in 1664 Master of Philosophy, and in 1666, at Altdorf, Doctor of Laws, and then declined the professorship extraordinary offered him in the latter place. Having made the acquaintance of the former minister of the Elector of Mayence, Freiherr von Boineburg, in Nuremberg, he went, after a short stay at Frankfort-on-the-Main, to the court of the Elector at Mayence, at whose request he devoted himself to the reform of legal procedure, besides writing, while there, on the most diverse subjects. In 1672 he went to Paris, where he remained during four years with the exception of a short stay in London. The special purpose of the journey to Paris—to persuade Louis XIV to undertake a campaign in Egypt, in order to divert him from his designs upon Germany—was not successful; but Leibniz was

captivated by the society of the Parisian scholars, among them the mathematician, Huygens. From the end of 1676 until his death in 1716 Leibnitz lived in Hanover, whither he had been called by Johann Friedrich, as court councillor and librarian. The successor of this prince, Ernst August, who, with his wife Sophie, and his daughter Sophie Charlotte, showed great kindness to the philosopher, wished him to write a history of the princely house of Brunswick; and a journey which he made in order to study for this purpose was extended as far as Vienna and Rome. Upon his return he took charge of the Wolfenbüttel library in addition to his other engagements.

The marriage of the Princess Sophie Charlotte with Frederick of Brandenburg, the first king of Prussia, brought Leibnitz into close relations with Berlin. At his suggestion the Academy (Society) of Sciences was founded there in 1700, and he himself became its first president. In Charlottenburg he worked on his principal work, the *New Essays concerning the Human Understanding*, which was aimed at Locke, but the publication of which was deferred on account of the death of the latter in the interim (1704), and did not take place until 1765, in Raspe's collective edition. The death of the Prussian queen in 1705 interrupted for several years the *Theodicy*, which had been undertaken at her request, and which did not appear until 1710. In Vienna, where he resided in 1713-14, Leibnitz composed a short statement of his system for Prince Eugen; this, according to Gerhardt, was not the sketch in ninety paragraphs, familiar under the title *Monadology*, which was first published in the original by J.E. Erdmann in his excellent *Complete Edition of the Philosophical Works of Leibnitz*, 1840, but the *Principles of Nature and of Grace*, which appeared two years after the author's death in *L'Europe Savante*. While Ernst August, as well as the German emperor and Peter the Great, distinguished the philosopher, who was not indifferent to such honors, by the bestowal of titles and preferments, his relations with the Hanoverian court, which until then had been so cordial, grew cold after the Elector Georg Ludwig ascended the English throne as George I. The letters which Leibnitz interchanged with his daughter-in-law, gave rise to the correspondence, continued to his death, with Clarke, who defended the theology of Newton against him. The contest for priority between Leibnitz and Newton concerning the invention of the differential calculus was later settled by the decision that Newton invented his method of fluxions first, but that Leibnitz published his differential calculus earlier and in a more perfect form. The variety of pursuits in which Leibnitz was engaged was unfavorable to the development and influence of his philosophy, in that it hindered him from working out his original ideas in systematic form, and left him leisure only for the composition of shorter essays. Besides the two larger works mentioned above, the *New Essays* and the *Theodicy*, we have of philosophical works by Leibnitz only a series of private letters, and articles for the scientific journals (the *Journal des Savants* in Paris, and the *Acta Eruditorum* in Leipsic, etc.), among which may be mentioned as specially important the *New System of Nature, and of the Interaction of Substances as well as of the Union which exists between the Soul and the Body*, 1695, which was followed during the next year by three explanations of it, and the paper *De Ipsa Natura*, 1698. Previous to Erdmann (1840) the following had deserved credit for their editions of Leibnitz: Feller, Kortholt, Gruber, Raspe, Dutens, Feder, Guhrauer (the German works), and since Erdmann, Pertz, Foucher de Careil, Onno Klopp, and especially J.C. Gerhardt. The last named published the mathematical works in seven volumes in 1849-63, and recently, Berlin, 1875-90, the philosophical treatises, also in seven volumes. In our account of the philosophy of Leibnitz we begin with the fundamental metaphysical concepts, pass next to his theory of living beings and of man (theory of knowledge and ethics), and close with his inquiries into the philosophy of religion.

## 1. Metaphysics: the Monads, Representation, the Pre-established Harmony; the Laws of Thought and of the World

Leibnitz develops his new concept of substance, the monad, in conjunction with, yet in opposition to, the Cartesian and the atomistic conceptions. The Cartesians are right when they make the concept of substance the cardinal point in metaphysics and explain it by the concept of independence. But they are wrong in their further definition of this second concept. If we take independence in the sense of unlimitedness and aseity, we can speak, as the example of Spinoza shows, of only one, the divine substance. If the Spinozistic result is to be avoided, we must substitute independent action for independent existence, self-activity for self-existence. Substance is not that which exists through itself (otherwise there would be no finite substances), but that which acts through itself, or that which contains in itself the ground of its changing states. Substance is to be defined by active force, by which we mean something different from and better than the bare possibility or capacity of the Scholastics. The *potentia sive facultas*, in order to issue into action, requires positive stimulation from without, while the *vis activa* (like an elastic body) sets itself in motion whenever no external hindrance opposes. Substance is a being capable of action (*la substance est un être capable d'action*). With the equation of activity and existence (*quod non agit, non existit*) the substantiality which Spinoza had taken away from individual things is restored to them: they are active, consequently, in spite of their limitedness, substantial beings (*quod agit, est substantia singularis*). Because of its inner activity every existing thing is a determinate individual, and different from every other being. Substance is an individual being endowed with force.

The atomists are right when they postulate for the explanation of phenomenal bodies simple, indivisible, eternal units, for every composite consists of simple parts. But they are wrong when they regard these invisible, minute corpuscles, which are intended to subserve this purpose as indivisible: everything that is material, however small it be, is divisible to infinity, nay, is in fact endlessly divided. If we are to find indivisible units, we must pass over into the realm of the immaterial and come to the conclusion that bodies are composed of immaterial constituents. Physical points, the atoms, are physical, but not points; mathematical points are indivisible, but not real; metaphysical or substantial points, the incorporeal, soul-like units, alone combine in themselves indivisibility and reality—the monads are the true atoms. Together with indivisibility they possess immortality; as it is impossible for them to arise and perish through the combination and separation of parts, they cannot come into being or pass out of it in any natural way whatever, but only by creation or annihilation. Their non-spatial or punctual character implies the impossibility of all external influence, the monad develops its states from its own inner nature, has need of no other thing, is sufficient unto itself, and therefore deserves the Aristotelian name, entelechy.

Thus two lines of thought combine in the concept of the monad. Gratefully recognizing the suggestions from both sides, Leibnitz called Cartesianism the antechamber of the true philosophy, and atomism the preparation for the theory of monads. From the first it followed that the substances were self-acting forces; from the second, that they were immaterial units. Through the combination of both determinations we gain information concerning the kind of force or activity which constitutes the being of the monad: the monads are representative forces. There is nothing truly real in the world save the monads and their representations [ideas, perceptions].

In discussing the representation in which the being and activity of the monads consist, we must not think directly of the conscious activity of the human soul. Representation has in Leibnitz a wider meaning than that usually associated with the word. The distinction, which has become of the first importance for psychology, between mere representation and conscious

representation, or between perception and apperception, may be best explained by the example of the sound of the waves. The roar which we perceive in the vicinity of the sea-beach is composed of the numerous sounds of the single waves. Each single sound is of itself too small to be heard; nevertheless it must make an impression on us, if only a small one, since otherwise their total—as a sum of mere nothings—could not be heard. The sensation which the motion of the single wave causes is a weak, confused, unconscious, infinitesimal perception (*petite, insensible perception*), which must be combined with many similar minute sensations in order to become strong and distinct, or to rise above the threshold of consciousness. The sound of the single wave is felt, but not distinguished, is perceived, but not apperceived. These obscure states of unconscious representation, which are present in the mind of man along with states of clear consciousness, make up, in the lowest grade of existence, the whole life of the monad. There are beings which never rise above the condition of deep sleep or stupor.

In conformity with this more inclusive meaning, perception is defined as the representation of the external in the internal, of multiplicity in unity (*representatio multitudinis in unitate*). The representing being, without prejudice to its simplicity, bears in itself a multitude of relations to external things. What now is the manifold, which is expressed, perceived, or represented, in the unit, the monad? It is the whole world. Every monad represents all others in itself, is a concentrated all, the universe in miniature. Each individual contains an infinity in itself (*substantia infinitas actiones simul exercet*) and a supreme intelligence, for which every obscure idea would at once become distinct, would be able to read in a single monad the whole universe and its history—all that is, has been, or will be; for the past has left its traces behind it, and the future will bring nothing not founded in the present: the monad is freighted with the past and bears the future in its bosom. Every monad is thus a mirror of the universe, but a living mirror (*miror vivans de l'univers*), which generates the images of things by its own activity or develops them from inner germs, without experiencing influences from without. The monad has no windows through which anything could pass in or out, but in its action is dependent only on God and on itself.

All monads represent the same universe, but each one represents it differently, that is, from its particular point of view—represents that which is near at hand distinctly, and that which is distant confusedly. Since they all reflect the same content or object, their difference consists only in the energy or degree of clearness in their representations. So far then, as their action consists in representation, distinct representation evidently coincides with complete, unhindered activity, confused representation with arrested activity, or passivity. The clearer the representations of a monad the more active it is. To have clear and distinct perceptions only is the prerogative of God; to the Omnipresent everything is alike near. He alone is pure activity; all finite beings are passive as well, that is, so far as their perceptions are not clear and distinct. Retaining the Aristotelian-Scholastic terminology, Leibnitz calls the active principle form, the passive matter, and makes the monad, since it is not, like God, *purus actus* and pure form, consist of form (entelechy, soul) and matter. This matter, as a constituent of the monad, does not mean corporeality, but only the ground for the arrest of its activity. The *materia prima* (the principle of passivity in the monad) is the ground, the *materia secunda* (the phenomenon of corporeal mass) the result of the indistinctness of the representations. For a group of monads appears as a body when it is indistinctly perceived. Whoever deprives the monad of activity falls into the error of Spinoza; whoever takes away its passivity or matter falls into the opposite error, for he deifies individual beings.

No monad represents the common universe and its individual parts just as well as the others, but either better or worse. There are as many different degrees of clearness and distinctness as there are monads.

Nevertheless certain classes may be distinguished. By distinguishing between clear and obscure perceptions, and in the former class between distinct and confused ones—a perception is clear when it is sufficiently distinguished from others, distinct when its component parts are thus distinguished—Leibnitz reaches three principal grades. Lowest stand the simple or naked monads, which never rise above obscure and unconscious perception and, so to speak, pass their lives in a swoon or sleep. If perception rises into conscious feeling, accompanied by memory, then the monad deserves the name of soul. And if the soul rises to self-consciousness and to reason or the knowledge of universal truth, it is called spirit. Each higher stage comprehends the lower, since even in spirits many perceptions remain obscure and confused. Hence it was an error when the Cartesians made thought or conscious activity—by which, it is true, the spirit is differentiated from the lower beings—to such a degree the essence of spirit that they believed it necessary to deny to it all unconscious perceptions.

From perception arises appetite, not as independent activity, but as a modification of perception; it is nothing but the tendency to pass from one perception to another (*l'appetit est la tendance d'une perception à une autre*); impulse is perception in process of becoming. Where the perceptions are conscious and rational appetite rises into will. All monads are self-active or act spontaneously, but only the thinking ones are free. Freedom is the spontaneity of spirits. Freedom does not consist in undetermined choice, but in action without external compulsion according to the laws of one's own being. The monad develops its representations out of itself, from the germs which form its nature. The correspondence of the different pictures of the world, however, is grounded in a divine arrangement, through which the natures of the monads have from the beginning been so adapted to one another that the changes in their states, although they take place in each according to immanent laws and without external influence, follow an exactly parallel course, and the result is the same as though there were a constant mutual interaction. This general idea of a *pre-established harmony* finds special application in the problem of the interaction between body and soul. Body and soul are like two clocks so excellently constructed that, without needing to be regulated by each other, they show exactly the same time. Over the numberless lesser miracles with which occasionalism burdened the Deity, the one great miracle of the pre-established harmony has an undeniable advantage. As one great miracle it is more worthy of the divine wisdom than the many lesser ones, nay, it is really no miracle at all, since the harmony does not interfere with natural laws, but yields them. This idea may even be freed from its theological investiture and reduced to the purely metaphysical expression, that the natures of the monads, by which the succession of their representations is determined in conformity with law, consist in nothing else than the sum of relations in which this individual thing stands to all other parts of the world, wherein each member takes account of all others and at the same time is considered by them, and thus exerts influence as well as suffers it. In this way the external idea of an artificial adaptation is avoided. The essence of each thing is simply the position which it occupies in the organic whole of the universe; each member is related to every other and shares actively and passively in the life of all the rest. The history of the universe is a single great process in numberless reflections.

The metaphysics of Leibnitz begins with the concept of representation and ends with the harmony of the universe. The representations were multiplicity (the endless plurality of the represented) in unity (the unity of the representing monad); the harmony is unity (order, congruity of the world-image) in multiplicity (the infinitely manifold degrees of clearness in the representations). All monads represent the same universe; each one mirrors it differently. The unity, as well as the difference, could not be greater than it is; every possible degree of distinctness of representation is present in each single monad, and yet there is a single harmonic accord in which the unnumbered tones unite. Now order amid diversity, unity in variety make

up the concept of beauty and perfection. If, then, this world shows, as it does, the greatest unity in the greatest multiplicity, so that there is nothing wanting and nothing superfluous, it is the most perfect, the best of all possible worlds. Even the lowest grades contribute to the perfection of the whole; their disappearance would mean a hiatus; and if the unclear and confused representations appear imperfect when considered in themselves, yet they are not so in reference to the whole; for just on this fact, that the monad is arrested in its representation or is passive, *i.e.*, conforms itself to the others and subordinates itself to them, rest the order and connection of the world. Thus the idea of harmony forms the bridge between the Monadology and optimism.

As in regard to the harmony of the universe we found it possible to distinguish between a half-mythical, narrative form of presentation and a purely abstract conception, so we may make a similar distinction in the doctrine of creation. This actual world has been chosen by God as the best among many other conceivable worlds. Through the will of God the monads of which the world consists attained their reality; as possibilities or ideas they were present in the mind of God (as it were, prior to their actualization), present, too, with all the distinctive properties and perfections that they now exhibit in a state of realization, so that their merely possible or conceivable being had the same content as their actual being, and their essence is not altered or increased by their existence. Now, since the impulse toward actualization dwells in every possible essence, and is the more justifiable the more perfect the essence, a competition goes on before God, in which, first, those monad-possibilities unite which are mutually compatible or compossible, and, then, among the different conceivable combinations of monads or worlds that one is ordained for entrance into existence which shows the greatest possible sum of perfection. It was, therefore, not the perfection of the single monad, but the perfection of the system of which it forms a necessary part, that was decisive as to its admission into existence. The best world was known through God's wisdom, chosen through his goodness, and realized through his power. The choice was by no means arbitrary, but wholly determined by the law of fitness or of the best (*principe du meilleur*); God's will must realize that which his understanding recognizes as most perfect. It is at once evident that in the competition of the possible worlds the victory of the best was assured by the *lex melioris*, apart from the divine decision.

This law is the special expression of a more general one, the principle of sufficient reason, which Leibnitz added, as of equal authority, to the Aristotelian laws of thought. Things or events are real (and assertions true) when there is a sufficient reason for their existence, and for their determinate existence. The *principium rationis sufficientis* governs our empirical knowledge of contingent truths or truths of fact, while, on the other hand, the pure rational knowledge of necessary or eternal (mathematical and metaphysical) truths rests on the *principium contradictionis*. The principle of contradiction asserts, that is, whatever contains a contradiction is false or impossible; whatever contains no contradiction is possible; that whose opposite contains a contradiction is necessary. Or positively formulated as the principle of identity, everything and every representative content is identical with itself. Upon this antithesis between the rational laws of contradiction and sufficient reason—which, however, is such only for us men, while the divine spirit, which cognizes all things *a priori*, is able to reduce even the truths of fact to the eternal truths—Leibnitz bases his distinction between two kinds of necessity. That is metaphysically necessary whose opposite involves a contradiction; that is morally necessary or contingent which, on account of its fitness, is preferred by God to its (equally conceivable) opposite. To the latter class belongs, further, the physically necessary: the necessity of the laws of nature is only a conditional necessity (conditioned by the choice of the best); they are contingent truths or truths of fact. The principle of sufficient reason holds for efficient as well as for final causes, and between the two realms there is, according to Leibnitz,

the most complete correspondence. In the material world every particular must be explained in a purely mechanical way, but the totality of the laws of nature, the universal mechanism itself, cannot in turn be mechanically explained, but only on the basis of finality, so that the mechanical point of view is comprehended in, and subordinated to, the teleological. Thus it becomes clear how Leibnitz in the *ratio sufficiens* has final causes chiefly in mind.

To the broad and comprehensive tendency which is characteristic of Leibnitz's thinking, philosophy owes a further series of general laws, which all stand in the closest relation to one another and to his monadological and harmonistic principles, viz., the law of continuity, the law of analogy, the law of the universal dissimilarity of things or of the identity of indiscernibles, and, finally, the law of the conservation of force.

The most fundamental of these laws is the *lex continui*. On the one hand, it forbids every leap, on the other, all repetition in the series of beings and the series of events. Member must follow member without a break and without superfluous duplication; in the scale of creatures, as in the course of events, absolute continuity is the rule. Just as in the monad one state continually develops from another, the present one giving birth to the future, as it has itself grown out of the past, just as nothing persists, as nothing makes its entrance suddenly or without the way being prepared for it, and as all extremes are bound together by connecting links and gradual transitions,—so the monad itself stands in a continuous gradation of beings, each of which is related to and different from each. Since the beings and events form a single uninterrupted series, there are no distinctions of kind in the world, but only distinctions in degree. Rest and motion are not opposites, for rest may be considered as infinitely minute motion; the ellipse and the parabola are not qualitatively different, for the laws which hold for the one may be applied to the other. Likeness is vanishing unlikeness, passivity arrested activity, evil a lesser good, confused ideas simply less distinct ones, animals men with infinitely little reason, plants animals with vanishing consciousness, fluidity a lower degree of solidity, etc. In the whole world similarity and correspondence rule, and it is everywhere the same as here—between apparent opposites there is a distinction in degree merely, and hence, analogy. In the macrocosm of the universe things go on as in the microcosm of the monad; every later state of the world is prefigured in the earlier, etc. If, on the one side, the law of analogy follows as a consequence from the law of continuity, on the other, we have the *principium (identitatis) indiscernibilium*. As nature abhors gaps, so also it avoids the superfluous. Every grade in the series must be represented, but none more than once. There are no two things, no two events which are entirely alike. If they were exactly alike they would not be two, but one. The distinction between them is never merely numerical, nor merely local and temporal, but always an intrinsic difference: each thing is distinguished from every other by its peculiar nature. This law holds both for the truly real (the monads) and for the phenomenal world—you will never find two leaves exactly alike. By the law of the conservation of force, Leibnitz corrects the Cartesian doctrine of the conservation of motion, and approaches the point of view of the present day. According to Descartes it is the sum of actual motions, which remains constant; according to Leibnitz, the sum of the active forces; while, according to the modern theory, it is the sum of the active and the latent or potential forces—a distinction, moreover, of which Leibnitz himself made use.

We now turn from the formal framework of general laws, to the actual, to that which, obeying these laws, constitutes the living content of the world.

## 2. The Organic World

A living being is a machine composed of an infinite number of organs. The natural machines formed by God differ from the artificial machines made by the hand of man, in that, down to

their smallest parts, they consist of machines. Organisms are complexes of monads, of which one, the soul, is supreme, while the rest, which serve it, form its body. The dominant monad is distinguished from those which surround it as its body by the greater distinctness of its ideas. The supremacy of the soul-monad consists in this one superior quality, that it is more active and more perfect, and clearly reflects that which the body-monads represent but obscurely. A direct interaction between soul and body does not take place; there is only a complete correspondence, instituted by God. He foresaw that the soul at such and such a moment would have the sensation of warmth, or would wish an arm-motion executed, and has so ordered the development of the body-monads that, at the same instant, they appear to cause this sensation and to obey this impulse to move. Now, since God in this foreknowledge and accommodation naturally paid more regard to the perfect beings, to the more active and more distinctly perceiving monads than to the less perfect ones, and subordinated the latter, as means and conditions, to the former as ends, the soul, prior to creation, actually exercised an ideal influence—through the mind of God—upon its body. Its activity is the reason why in less perfect monads a definite change, a passion takes place, since the action was attainable only in this way, “compossible” with this alone. The monads which constitute the body are the first and direct object of the soul; it perceives them more distinctly than it perceives, through them, the rest of the external world. In view of the close connection of the elements of the organism thus postulated, Leibnitz, in the discussions with Father Des Bosses concerning the compatibility of the Monadology with the doctrine of the Church, especially with the real presence of the body of Christ in the Supper, consented, in favor of the dogma, to depart from the assumption that the simple alone could be substantial and to admit the possibility of composite substances, and of a “substantial bond” connecting the parts of living beings. It appears least in contradiction with the other principles of the philosopher to assign the rôle of this *vinculum substantiate* to the soul or central monad itself.

Everything in nature is organized; there are no soulless bodies, no dead matter. The smallest particle of dust is peopled with a multitude of living beings and the tiniest drop of water swarms with organisms: every portion of matter may be compared to a pond filled with fish or a garden full of plants. This denial of the inorganic does not release our philosopher from the duty of explaining its apparent existence. If we thoughtfully consider bodies, we perceive that there is nothing lifeless and non-representative. But the phenomenon of extended mass arises for our confused sensuous perception, which perceives the monads composing a body together and regards them as a continuous unity. Body exists only as a confused idea in the feeling subject; since, nevertheless, a reality without the mind, namely, an immaterial monad-aggregate, corresponds to it, the phenomenon of body is a well-founded one (*phenomenon bene fundatum*). As matter is merely something present in sensation or confused representation, so space and time are also nothing real, neither substances nor properties, but only ideal things—the former the order of coexistences, the latter the order of successions.

If there are no soulless bodies, there are also no bodiless souls; the soul is always joined with an aggregate of subordinate monads, though not always with the same ones. Single monads are constantly passing into its body, or into its service, while others are passing out; it is involved in a continuous process of bodily transformation. Usually the change goes on slowly and with a constant replacement of the parts thrown off. If it takes place quickly men call it birth or death. Actual death there is as little as there is an actual genesis; not the soul only, but every living thing is imperishable. Death is decrease and involution, birth increase and evolution. The dying creature loses only a portion of its bodily machine and so returns to the slumberous or germinal condition of “involution”, in which it existed before birth, and from which it was aroused through conception to development. Pre-existence as well as post-existence must be



conceded both to animals and to men. Leuwenhoek's discovery of the spermatozoa furnished a welcome confirmation for this doctrine, that all individuals have existed since the beginning of the world, at least as preformed germs. The immortality of man, conformably to his superior dignity, differs from the continued existence of all monads, in that after his death he retains memory and the consciousness of his moral personality.

### 3. Man: Cognition and Volition

In reason man possesses reflection or self-consciousness as well as the knowledge of God, of the universal, and of the eternal truths or *a priori* knowledge, while the animal is limited in its perception to experience, and in its reasoning to the connection of perceptions in accordance with memory. Man differs from higher beings in that the majority of his ideas are confused. Under confused ideas Leibnitz includes both sense-perceptions—anyone who has distinct ideas alone, as God, has no sense-perceptions—and the feelings which mediate between the former and the perfectly distinct ideas of rational thought. The delight of music depends, in his opinion, on an unconscious numbering and measuring of the harmonic and rhythmic relations of tones, aesthetic enjoyment of the beautiful in general, and even sensuous pleasure, on the confused perception of a perfection, order, or harmony.

The application of the *lex continui* to the inner life has a very wide range. The principal results are: (1) the mind always thinks; (2) every present idea postulates a previous one from which it has arisen; (3) sensation and thought differ only in degree; (4) in the order of time, the ideas of sense precede those of reason. We are never wholly without ideas, only we are often not conscious of them. If thought ceased in deep sleep, we could have no ideas on awakening, since every representation proceeds from a preceding one, even though it be unconscious.

In the thoughtful *New Essays concerning the Human Understanding* Leibnitz develops his theory of knowledge in the form of a polemical commentary to Locke's chief work. According to Descartes some ideas (the pure concepts) are innate, according to Locke none, according to Leibnitz all. Or: according to Descartes some ideas (sensuous perceptions) come from without, according to Locke all do so, according to Leibnitz none. Leibnitz agrees with Descartes against Locke in the position that the mind originally possesses ideas; he agrees with Locke against Descartes, that thought is later than sensation and the knowledge of universals later than that of particulars. The originality which Leibnitz attributes to intellectual ideas is different from that which Descartes had ascribed and Locke denied to them. They are original in that they do not come into the soul and are not impressed upon it from without; they are not original in that they can develop only from previously given sense-ideas; again, they are original in that they can be developed from confused ideas only because they are contained in them *implicite* or as pre-dispositions. Thus Leibnitz is able to agree with both his predecessors up to a certain point: with the one, that the pure concepts have their origin within the mind; with the other, that they are not the earliest knowledge, but are conditioned by sensations. This synthesis, however, was possible only because Leibnitz looked on sensation differently from both the others. If sensation is to be the mother of thought, and the latter at the same time to preserve its character as original, *i.e.*, as something not obtained from without, sensation must, first, include an unconscious thinking in itself, and, secondly, must itself receive a title to originality and spontaneity. As the Catholic dogma added the immaculate conception of the mother to that of the Son, so Leibnitz transfers the (virginal) origin of rational concepts, independent of external influence, to sensations. The monad has no windows. It bears germinally in itself all that it is to experience, and nothing is impressed on it from without. The intellect should not be compared to a blank tablet, but to a block of marble in whose veins the outlines of the statue are prefigured.

Ideas can only arise from ideas, never from external impressions or movements of corporeal parts. Thus *all* ideas are innate in the sense that they grow from inner germs; we possess them from the beginning, not developed (*explicite*), but potentially, that is, we have the capacity to produce them. The old Scholastic principle that “there is nothing in the understanding which was not previously in sense” is entirely correct, only one must add, except the understanding itself, that is, the faculty of developing our knowledge out of ourselves. Thought lies already dormant in perception. With the mechanical position (sensuous representation precedes and conditions rational thought) is joined the teleological position (sensuous representations exist, in order to render the origin of thoughts possible), and with this purposive determination, sensation attains a higher dignity: it is more than has been seen in it before, for it includes in itself the future concept of the understanding in an unconscious form, nay, it is itself an imperfect thought, a thought in process of becoming. Sensation and thought are not different in kind, and if the former is called a passive state, still passivity is nothing other than diminished activity. Both are spontaneous; thought is merely spontaneous in a higher degree.

By making sensation and feeling the preliminary step to thought, Leibnitz became the founder of that intellectualism which, in the system of Hegel, extended itself far beyond the psychological into the cosmical field, and endeavored to conceive not only all psychical phenomena but all reality whatsoever as a development of the Idea toward itself. This conception, which may be characterized as intellectualistic in its content, presents itself on its formal side as a quantitative way of looking at the world, which sacrifices all qualitative antitheses in order to arrange the totality of being and becoming in a single series with no distinctions but those of degree. If Leibnitz here appears as the representative of a view of the world which found in Kant a powerful and victorious opponent, yet, on the other hand, he prepared the way by his conception of innate ideas for the Critique of Reason. By his theory of knowledge he forms the transition link between Descartes and Kant, since he interprets necessary truths not as dwelling in the mind complete and explicit from the start, but as produced or raised into consciousness only on the occasion of sensuous experience. It must be admitted, moreover, that this in reality was only a restoration of Descartes’s original position, *i.e.*, a deliverance of it from the misinterpretations and perversions which it had suffered at the hands of adherents and opponents alike, but which Descartes, it is true, had failed to render impossible from the start by conclusive explanations. The author of the theory of innate ideas certainly did not mean what Locke foists upon him, that the child in the cradle already possesses the ideas of God, of thought, and of extension in full clearness. But whether Leibnitz improved or only restored Descartes, it was in any case an important advance when experience and thought were brought into more definite relation, and the productive force in rational concepts was secured to the latter and the occasion of their production to the former.

The unconscious or minute ideas, which in noëtics had served to break the force of Locke’s objections against the innateness of the principles of reason, are in ethics brought into the field against indeterminism. They are involved whenever we believe ourselves to act without cause, from pure choice, or contrary to the motives present. In this last case, a motive which is very strong in itself is overcome by the united power of many in themselves weaken. The will is always determined, and that by an idea (of ends), which generally is of a very complex nature, and in which the stronger side decides the issue. An absolute equilibrium of motives is impossible: the world cannot be divided into two entirely similar parts (this in opposition to “Buridan’s ass”). A spirit capable of looking us through and through would be able to calculate all our volitions and actions beforehand.

In spite of this admitted inevitableness of our resolutions and actions, the predicate of freedom really belongs to them, and this on two grounds. First, they are only physically or morally, not

metaphysically, necessary; as a matter of fact, it is true, they cannot happen otherwise, but their opposite involves no logical contradiction and remains conceivable. To express this thought the formula, often repeated since, that our motives only impel, incite, or stimulate the will, but do not compel it (*inclinant, non necessitant*), was chosen, but not very happily. Secondly, the determination of the will is an inner necessitation, grounded in the being's own nature, not an external compulsion. The agent determines himself in accordance with his own nature, and for this each bears the responsibility himself, for God, when he brought the monads out of possibility into actuality, left their natures as they had existed before the creation in the form of eternal ideas in His understanding. Though Leibnitz thus draws a distinction between his deterministic doctrine and the "fatalism" of Spinoza, he recognizes a second concept of freedom, which completely corresponds to Spinoza's. A decision is the more free the more distinct the ideas which determine it, and a man the more free the more he withdraws his will from the influence of the passions, *i.e.*, confused ideas, and subordinates it to that of reason. God alone is absolutely free, because he has no ideas which are not distinct. The bridge between the two conceptions of freedom is established by the principle that reason constitutes the peculiar nature of man in a higher degree than the sum of his ideas; for it is reason which distinguishes him from the lower beings. According to the first meaning of freedom man is free, according to the second, which coincides with activity, perfection, and morality, he should become free.

Morality is the result of the natural development of the individual. Every being strives after perfection or increased activity, *i.e.*, after more distinct ideas. Parallel to this theoretical advance runs a practical advance in a twofold form: the increasing distinctness of ideas, or enlightenment, or wisdom, raises the impulse to transitory, sensuous pleasure into an impulse to permanent delight in our spiritual perfection, or toward happiness, while, further, it opens up an insight into the connection of all beings and the harmony of the world, in virtue of which the virtuous man will seek to promote the perfection and happiness of others as well as his own, *i.e.*, will *love* them, for to love is to find pleasure in the happiness of others. To promote the good of all, again, is the same as to contribute one's share to the world-harmony and to co-operate in the fulfillment of God's purposes. Probity and piety are the same. They form the highest of the three grades of natural right, which Leibnitz distinguishes as *jus strictum* (mere right, with the principle: Injure no one), *aequitas* (equity or charity, with the maxim: To each his due), and *probitas sive pietas* (honorableness joined with religion, according to the command: Lead an upright and morally pure life). They may also be designated as commutative, distributive, and universal justice. Belief in God and immortality is a condition of the last.

#### 4. Theology and Theodicy

God is the ground and the end of the world. All beings strive toward him, as all came out from him. In man the general striving toward the most perfect Being rises into conscious love to God, which is conditioned by the knowledge of God and produces virtuous action as its effect. Enlightenment and virtue are the essential constituents of religion; all else, as cultus and dogma, have only a derivative value. Religious ceremonies are an imperfect expression of the practical element in piety, as the doctrines of faith are a weak imitation of the theoretical. It is a direct contradiction of the intention of the Divine Teacher when occult formulas and ceremonies, which have no connection with virtue, are made the chief thing. The points in which the creeds agree are more important than those by which they are differentiated. Natural religion has found its most perfect expression in Christianity, although paganism and Judaism had also grasped portions of the truth. Salvation is not denied to the heathen, for moral purity is sufficient to make one a partaker of the grace of God. The religion of the Jews elevated

monotheism, which, it is true, made its appearance among the heathen in isolated philosophers, but was never the popular religion, into a law; but it lacked the belief in immortality. Christianity made the religion of the sage the religion of the people.

Whatever of positive doctrine revelation has added to natural religion transcends the reason, it is true, but does not contradict it. It contains no principles contrary to reason (whose opposite can be proved), but, no doubt, principles above reason, *i.e.*, such as the reason could not have found without help from without, and which it cannot fully comprehend, though it is able approximately to understand them and to defend them against objections. Hence Leibnitz defended the Trinity, which he interpreted as God's power, understanding, and will, the eternity of the torments of hell (which brought him the commendation of Lessing), and other dogmas. Miracles also belong among the things the how and why of which we are not in a position to comprehend, but only the that and what. Since the laws of nature are only physically or conditionally necessary, *i.e.* have been enacted only because of their fitness for the purposes of God, they may be suspended in special cases when a higher end requires it.

While the positive doctrines of faith cannot be proved—as, on the other hand, they cannot be refuted—the principles of natural religion admit of strict demonstration. The usual arguments for the existence of God are useful, but need amendment. The ontological argument of Descartes, that from the concept of a most perfect Being his existence follows, is correct so soon as the idea of God is shown to be possible or free from contradiction. The cosmological proof runs: Contingent beings point to a necessary, self-existent Being, the eternal truths especially presuppose an eternal intelligence in which they exist. If we ask why anything whatever, or why just this world exists, this ultimate ground of things cannot be found within the world. Every contingent thing or event has its cause in another. However far we follow out the series of conditions, we never reach an ultimate, unconditioned cause. Consequently the sufficient reason for the series must be situated without the world, and, as is evident from the harmony of things, can only be an infinitely wise and good Being. Here the teleological proof comes in: From the finality of the world we reason to the existence of a Being, as the author of the world, who works in view of ends and who wills and carries out that which is best,—to the supreme intelligence, goodness, and power of the Creator. A special inferential value accrues to this position from the system of pre-established harmony—it is manifest that the complete correspondence of the manifold substances in the world, which are not connected with one another by any direct interaction, can proceed only from a common cause endowed with infinite intelligence and power.

The possibility of proving the existence of one omnipotent and all-beneficent God, and the impossibility of refuting the positive dogmas, save the harmony of faith and reason, which Bayle had denied. The conclusion of the *New Essays* and the opening of the *Theodicy* are devoted to this theme. The second part gives, also against Bayle, the justification of God in view of the evil in the world. *Si Deus est, unde malum?* Optimism has to reckon with the facts of experience, and to show that this world, in spite of its undeniable imperfections, is still the best world. God could certainly have brought into actuality a world in which there would have been less imperfection than in ours, but it would at the same time have contained fewer perfections. No world whatever can exist entirely free from evil, entirely without limitation—whoever forbids God to create imperfect beings forbids him to create a world at all. Certain evils—in general terms, the evil of finitude—are entirely inseparable from the concept of created beings; imperfection attaches to every created thing as such. Other evils God has permitted because it was only through them that certain higher goods, which ought not to be renounced, could be brought to pass. Think of the lofty feelings, noble resolves, and great deeds which war occasions, think of national enthusiasm, readiness for sacrifice, and defiance of death—all these

would be given over, if war should be taken out of the world on account of the suffering which it also brings in its train.

If we turn from the general principles to their application in detail, we find a separate proof for the inevitableness or salutary nature of each of the three kinds of evil—the metaphysical evil of created existence, the physical evil of suffering (and punishment), and the moral evil of sin. Metaphysical evil is absolutely unavoidable, if a world is to exist at all; created beings without imperfection, finiteness, limitation, are entirely inconceivable—something besides gods must exist. The physical evil of misery finds its justification in that it makes for good. First of all, the amount of suffering is not so great as it appears to discontented spirits to be. Life is usually quite tolerable, and vouchsafes more joy and pleasure than grief and hardship; in balancing the good and the evil we must especially remember to reckon on the positive side the goods of activity, of health, and all that which affords us, perchance, no perceptible pleasure, but the removal of which would be felt as an evil (*Theodicy*, ii. § 251). Most evils serve to secure us a much greater good, or to ward off a still greater evil. Would a brave general, if given the choice of leaving the battle unwounded, but also without the victory, or of winning the victory at the cost of a wound, hesitate an instant to choose the latter? Other troubles, again, must be regarded as punishment for sins and as means of reformation; the man who is resigned to God's will may be certain that the sufferings which come to him will turn out for his good.

Especially if we consider the world as a whole, it is evident that the sum of evil vanishes before the sum of good. It is wrong to look upon the happiness of man as the end of the world. Certainly God had the happiness of rational beings in mind, but not this exclusively, for they form only a part of the world, even if it be the highest part. God's purpose has reference rather to the perfection of the whole system of the universe. Now the harmony of the universe requires that all possible grades of reality be represented, that there should be indistinct ideas, sense, and corporeality, not merely a realm of spirits, and with these, conditions of imperfection, feelings of pain, and theoretical and moral errors are inevitably given. The connection and the order of the world demands a material element in the monad, but happiness without alloy can never be the lot of a spirit joined to a body. Thirdly, in regard to moral evil also we receive the assurance that the sum of the bad is much less than that of the good. Then, moral evil is connected with metaphysical evil: created beings cannot be absolutely perfect, hence, also, not morally perfect or sinless. But, in return for this, there is no being that is absolutely imperfect, none only and entirely evil. With this is joined the well-known principle of the earlier thinkers, that evil is nothing actual, but merely deprivation, absence of good, lack of clear reason and force of will. That which is real in the evil action, the power to act, is perfect and good, and, as force, comes from God—the negative or evil element in it comes from the agent himself; just as in the case of two ships of the same size, but unequally laden, which drift with the current, the speed comes from the stream and the retardation from the load of the vessels themselves. God is not responsible for sin, for he has only permitted it, not willed it directly, and man was already evil before he was created. The fact that God foresaw that man would sin does not constrain the latter to commit the evil deed, but this follows from his own (eternal) being, which God left unaltered when he granted him existence. The guilt and the responsibility fall wholly on the sinner himself. The permission of evil is explained by the predominantly good results which follow from it (not, as in physical evil, for the sufferer himself, but for others)—from the crime of Sextus Tarquinius sprang a great kingdom with great men (of. the beautiful myth in connection with a dialogue of Laurentius Valla, *Theodicy*, iii. 413-416). Finally, reference is made again to the contribution which evil makes to the perfection of the whole. Evil has the same function in the world as the discords in a piece of music, or the shadows in a painting—the beauty is heightened by the contrast. The good needs a foil in order to come out distinctly

and to be felt in all its excellence.

In the Leibnizian theodicy the least satisfactory part is the justification of moral evil. We miss the view defended in such grand outlines by Hegel, and so ingeniously by Fechner, that the good is not the flower of a quiet, unmolested development, but the fruit of energetic labor; that it has need of its opposite; that it not merely must approve itself in the battle against evil without and within the acting subject, but that it is only through this conflict that it is attainable at all. Virtue implies force of will as well as purity, and force develops only by resistance. Although he does not appreciate the full depth of the significance of pain, Leibnitz's view of suffering deserves more approval than his questionable application to the ethical sphere of the quantitative view of the world, with its interpretation of evil as merely undeveloped good. But, in any case, the compassionate contempt of the pessimism of the day for the "shallow" Leibnitz is most unjustifiable.

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Falckenberg, Richard. *History of Modern Philosophy: From Nicholas of Cusa to the Present Time*. Trans. A.C. Armstrong. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1893.

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