Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

Russell Marcus
Hamilton College

Spring 2011

Class 12 - Leibniz Review

Motivating Leibniz from Spinoza

- Leibniz accepts Spinoza's demand for explanatory completeness.
  - Corollary: the Principle of Sufficient Reason
- But Leibniz believes that Spinoza's view cedes too many intuitive phenomena.
- Leibniz wants to reclaim free will.
  - Spinoza relied on God's foreknowledge to establish determinism.
  - Leibniz attempts to rectify God's foreknowledge with freedom.
- And, he wants to solve the problem of interaction while maintaining multiplicity.
  - Spinoza posited parallelism to avoid interaction, but invoked a dual-aspect theory (property dualism) to explain the parallels.
  - Leibniz accepts that the body is another perspective on the mind.
  - But, he denies the singularity of substance.

Leibniz and God

Leibniz invokes God in many aspects of his work.

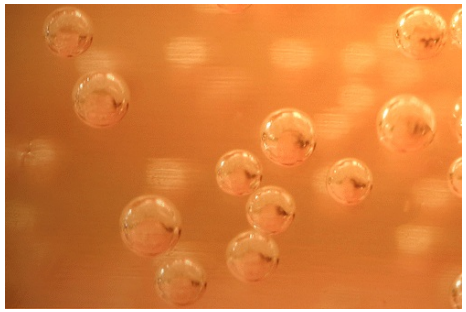
- The Super-Monad (creator)
- Guides the (teleological) changes in monadic perceptions
- Foretells the future states
- Infinite Analysis
- Protector of the Principle of Sufficient Reason
- Elector of the best world (divine benevolence)
- It would be good to have an argument.

Leibniz's Cosmological Argument

- "There must be a *sufficient reason* in *contingent truths*, or *truths of fact*, that is, in the series of things distributed throughout the universe of creatures, where the resolution into particular reasons could proceed into unlimited detail...And since all of this *detail* involves nothing but other prior and or more detailed contingents, each of which needs a similar analysis in order to give its reason...It must be the case that the sufficient or ultimate reason is outside the sequence or *series* of this multiplicity of contingencies, however infinite it may be...The ultimate reason of things must be in a necessary substance in which the diversity of changes is only eminent, as in it source. This is what we call *God*"(M336-8, AW 278b).
- From the mere existence of this world, and the principle of sufficient reason (PSR), Leibniz thus derives the standard characteristics of God.
- PSR follows from Leibniz's conception of truth as a claim in which a predicate is contained in a subject.
  - If some effect did not have a cause, if some truth had no reason, then there would be a claim whose subject did not contain its predicate.
  - Analysis is the foundation of twentieth-century analytic philosophy.

Multiplicity or Completeness?

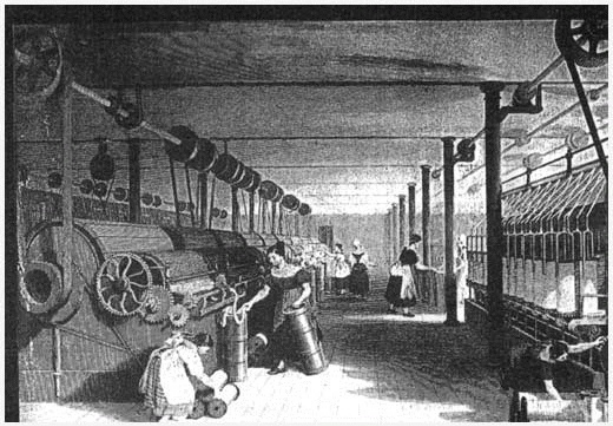
- So far, so Spinoza.
- Spinoza insists on the completeness of substance, and concludes that there is just one.
- Leibniz insists on the multiplicity of substance, concludes that individual substances must be complete in themselves.
- Since there are composites, these must be made of parts.
- Thus, there must be some basic elements.



Two Arguments Against Atomism

1. Machines can not think.
- "*Perception*, and what depends on it, *is inexplicable in terms of mechanical reasons*, that is, through shapes and motions" (M17, 276b).
- There must be some essentially active, essentially perceptive, component to the basic elements of the world (entelechies).

2. The fundamental stuff (substance) must be diverse, rather than uniform.
- Perceptions of monads will distinguish them, thus denying the atomist's uniformity.



Diversity

- There can be no two objects that do not have some internal difference: the identity of indiscernibles (II).

  "It is also necessary that each monad be different from each other. For there are never two beings in nature that are perfectly alike, two beings in which it is not possible to discover an internal difference, that is, one founded on an intrinsic denomination" (M9, AW 276a).

- II follows from contradiction (PC) and sufficient reason (PSR).

  II1. If there were two indiscernible individuals, a and b, in our world, W, then there must also be another possible world, W*, in which a and b are "switched".

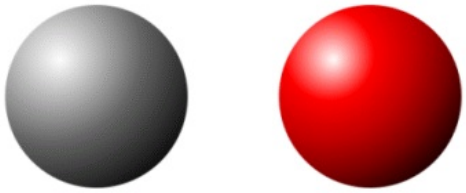
  II.2. But then God could have had no reason for choosing W over W*.

  II3. God must have a reason for acting as he does, by PSR.

  IIC. Therefore, there are not two indiscernible individuals in our world.

  Simple substances must have distinct properties.

- That is, there are monads, not atoms.



Causation

- The problem of interaction (between mind and body) is a special case of a general problem of causal interaction.
- Four kinds of causal interactions:
  - CI1. Body-body (e.g. when one curling stone transfers momentum to the next)
  - CI2. Body-mind (e.g. when one's body is harmed and the mind feels pain)
  - CI3. Mind-body (e.g. when I decide to take a walk, and my body gets up and goes)
  - CI4. Intra-mental (e.g. when I think about my children and that causes me joy)
- CI2 and CI3 are obviously problems for the dualist.
- Many of the moderns thought that there was also a problem with CI1.

The Problem of Transeunt Causation

interaction among substances
e.g. body-body causation

CI1. Body-body
CI2. Body-mind
CI3. Mind-body
CI4. Intra-mental

- CI1 is a problem for the Cartesian.
  - God both creates and preserves the universe.
  - No one moment in any way necessitates the next.
- Bodies are passive, and thus can exert no force on each other.
  - When I see one ball strike another, my eyes … seem to tell me, that the one is truly the cause of the motion it impresses on the other… . But when I consult my reason I clearly see that since bodies cannot move themselves, and since their motor force is but the will of God that conserves them successively in different places, they cannot communicate a power they do not have and could not communicate even if it were in their possession. For the mind will never conceive that one body, a purely passive substance, can in any way whatsoever transmit to another body the power transporting it. (Malebranche, *The Search for Truth and Elucidations of the Search for Truth*, p 660).
- Communication of motion among substances is thus impossible.
- Bodies can do nothing but respond to the will of an active substance.

The Occasionalist Solution

CI1. Body-body
CI2. Body-mind
CI3. Mind-body
CI4. Intra-mental

- Whenever a body is affected, there must be an agent to manage that interaction.
- Occasionalism solves the problems with CI1-CI3.
  - In the case of body-mind events, CI2, God intervenes to create a mental events whenever the body is affected.
  - God always does the moving.
- Some people read Descartes as an occasionalist.
- Leibniz sternly rejects the occasionalist's recourse to appeals to God to guide every interaction.
  - "In solving problems it is not sufficient to make use of the general cause and to invoke what is called a *Deus ex machina*. For when one does that without giving any other explanation derived from the order of secondary causes, it is, properly speaking, having recourse to a miracle" (*New System of Nature*, AW 273a).

Leibniz Against Transeunt Causation

- Leibniz agrees that individual substances can not affect each other.
  - Monads are independent.
  - “Nothing ever enters into our mind naturally from the outside; and we have a bad habit of thinking of our soul as if it received certain species as messengers and as if it has doors and windows...The mind always expresses all its future thoughts and already thinks confusedly about everything it will ever think about distinctly” (DM 26, AW 240b).
- The isolation of each monad is essential to their completeness.
  - “There is also no way of explaining how a monad can be altered or changed internally by some other creature, since one cannot transpose anything in it, nor can one conceive of any internal motion that can be excited, directed, augmented, or diminished within it, as can be done in composites, where there can be change among the parts. The monads have no windows through which something can enter and leave” (M 7, AW 275b)

Bodies

- The rainbow analogy
  - Bodies are phenomena arising from real things, as the rainbow is just a phenomenon arising from the rain drops.
  - We think of bodies as coherent wholes, but they are really just accidental unities of real substances.
- Haecceity: the thing which underlies or collects all its properties

Revenge of the Problem of Interaction

CI1. Body-body
CI2. Body-mind
CI3. Mind-body
CI4. Intra-mental

- The denial of the real existence of bodies entails that C1-C3 are all moot.
- Leibniz holds on to CI4, arguing that while there is no transeunt causation, there is internal, or immanent, causation.
- Immanent causation is guided by the will.
- Leibniz's problem of interaction is to explain why, given the laws governing the series of perceptions and representations in the monad is there a parallel series in the appearances of the monad (i.e. the body) which are governed by strict physical laws.
- He should explain why there appear to be transeunt, efficient-causal interactions when there are only immanent, final-causal sequences of perceptions.
- But, the physical world is all just rainbows anyway.

Free Will

Other Worlds are Possible

- Leibniz's work is motivated in part by a rejection of Spinoza's necessitarianism.
  - Every decision is determined, since God instantiates every possibility
- Leibniz believes that, for some actions, I could have done otherwise.
  - If there are other possible worlds, then we must have had the freedom to choose this one, rather than another.
  - The existence of this world is contingent on our free choice, rather than necessary.

But Nothing Happens without Sufficient Reason (PSR)

- PSR entails that God has foreknowledge of all of our actions.
- Any truth can be discovered by analyzing the complete concept of a substance into its component parts.
- By analysis, we will either find a given predicate inside the original concept, or find a contradiction arising from that predication.
- Either a property is true of a substance or it is not, both in the future and in the past.
- The status of any claim can be evaluated by analyzing the concept of any monad at any time.
- There seems to be no room for free choice, for denying that one can act other than one does, that the world can be other than what it is.

Leibniz's Solution

- Leibniz distinguishes between certain truths and necessary ones.
  - "Everyone grants that future contingents are certain, since God foresees them, but we do not concede that they are necessary on that account" (D13, AW 230b).
- "The one whose contrary implies a contradiction is absolutely necessary; this deduction occurs in the eternal truths, for example, the truths of geometry. The other is necessary only *ex hypothesi* and, so to speak, accidentally, but it is contingent in itself, since its contrary does not imply a contradiction. And this connection is based not purely on ideas and God's simple understanding, but on his free decrees and on the sequence of the universe" (D13, AW 231a).
- It is certain that I have two children; God can see that fact.
- But, it is not necessary that I have two children, since this fact depends on my free choice.
- "It is not impossible for what is foreseen not to happen; but it is infallibly sure that it will happen" (*Theodicy* ~407).

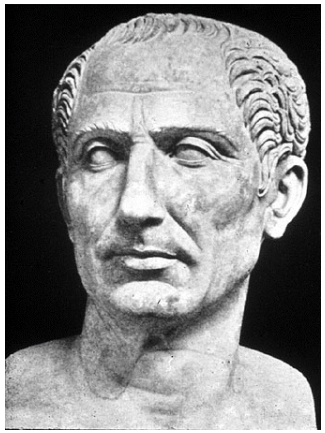
Possibility and Compossibility

- This world is the result of God's maximizing various factors which are in tension, even if the tension is not apparent.
- "Just as the same city viewed from different directions appears entirely different and, as it were, multiplied perspectively, in just the same way it happens that, because of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are, as it were, just as many different universes, which are, nevertheless, only perspectives on a single one, corresponding to the different points of view of each monad... And this is the way of obtaining as much variety as possible, but with the greatest order possible, that is, it is the way of obtaining as much perfection as possible" (M58, AW 280b).
- Descartes: the perfection of the whole is not apparent from the view of the finite individual.
  - A world without disasters would be a world with irregular laws, in which science and engineering would be impossible.
  - A world without sin would be a worse world, even if it does not appear to be worse.

Two Determinist Accounts of the Illusion of Free Will

- Leibniz is arguing that the imperfections we see are illusory.
- One way to defend the compatibility of evil or error with God's goodness is to value the freedom of the will over goodness.
  - If error is the result of free choice, then the world could only be improved if free will were eliminated.
  - Leibniz does not pursue this route.
- Leibniz defends the creation of our error-filled world by claiming that it is the best alignment of compossibles.
- Leibniz is thus presenting a logical claim, rather than a moral one.

Julius Caesar



“If someone were able to carry out the whole demonstration by virtues of which he could prove this connection between the subject, Caesar, and the predicate, his successful undertaking, he in fact be showing that Caesar’s future dictatorship is grounded in his notion or nature, that there is a reason why he crossed the Rubicon rather than stopped at it and why he won rather than lost at Pharsalus and that it was reasonable, and consequently certain, that this should happen. But this would not show that it was necessary in itself nor that the contrary implies a contradiction... For it will be found that the demonstration of this predicate of Caesar is not as absolute as those of numbers or of geometry, but that it supposes the sequence of things that God has freely chosen, a sequence based on God's first free decree always to do what is most perfect and on God's decree with respect to human nature, following out of the first decree, that man will always do (although freely) that which appears to be best. But every truth based on these kinds of decrees is contingent, even though it is certain; for these decrees do not change the possibility of things...it is not its impossibility but its imperfection which causes it to be rejected. And nothing is necessary whose contrary is possible” (D13, AW 231b).

Compossibles and Counterparts

- We can see the problem of compossibility clearly when we recall Leibniz's complete-concept view of the monad.
- If Hamilton were located, say, in the Caribbean, none of us would be members of its community.
  - There would be people somewhat like us attending and teaching at that school.
- We do not know what other properties of those people would have to be different from us in order to construct a system of compossibilities.
- We could call the people in the Caribbean-Hamilton world our counterparts, but they would not be us.
  - "These worlds are all here, that is, in ideas. I will show you some, wherein shall be found, not absolutely the same Sextus as you have seen (that is not possible, he carries with him always that which he shall be) but several Sextuses resembling him, possessing all that you know already of the true Sextus, but not all that is already in him imperceptibly, nor in consequence all that shall yet happen to him. You will find in one world a very happy and noble Sextus, in another a Sextus content with a mediocre state, a Sextus, indeed, of every kind and endless diversity of forms" (Theodicy, ~416).

Counterparts and Trans-World Identity

- Do we exist in other possible worlds?
  - Saul Kripke: We stipulate other possible worlds.
  - Names are rigid designators.
- Or, do we merely have counterparts there?
  - David Lewis: There are counterpart relations among me and all my dopplegangers in other possible worlds.
  - Exploring the nature of other possible worlds involves specifying those counterpart relations.
  - We might identify our selves with the set of our counterparts: embracing our mathematical essence!

Axioms of Counterpart Theory

C1. $(x)(y)(Ixy \supset Wy)$
- worlds are the containers of objects

C2. $(x)(y)(z)[(Ixy \bullet Ixz) \supset y=z]$
- individuals can only exist in one world

C3. $(x)(y)[Cxy \supset (\exists z)Ixz]$

C4. $(x)(y)[Cxy \supset (\exists z)Iyz]$
- all counterparts exist in worlds

C5. $(x)(y)(z)[(Ixy \bullet Izy \bullet Cxz) \supset x=z]$
- there are no distinct counterparts in any given world

C6. $(x)(y)(Ixy \supset Cxx)$
- a thing is the counterpart of itself

C7. $(\exists x)[Wx \bullet (y)(Iyx \equiv Ay)]$
- there is a world which contains all and only actual things

C8. $(\exists x)Ax$
- the actual world exists

Wx: x is a world
Ixy: x is in world y
Ax:x is actual
Cxy x is a counterpart of y

End Continental Rationalism

- Return to our senses