

LEIBNIZ: MONADS- THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF BODIES

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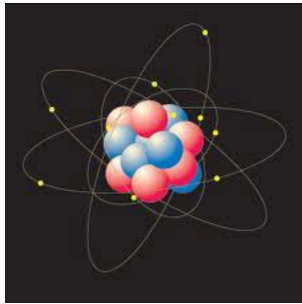
BACKGROUND: LEIBNIZ IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR OTHER PHILOSOPHERS

- ◉ Descartes claimed that bodies are essentially extended, unthinking, divisible, Leibniz rejects these claims.
 - Leibniz rejects these claims. Instead he argues that bodies are not infinitely divisible and are made of atom-like components called monads.
 - Leibniz differs from Descartes in that he asserts that the components of bodies are not inert and divisible, but instead active and mind-like. Once again, he calls these components monads.
- ◉ Leibniz rejects the materialism of Hobbes.
 - Leibniz rejects the “atheism” of Hobbes and Spinoza.
 - God is the “ultimate” monad.
- ◉ Leibniz rejects the view of both Hobbes and Spinoza that everything is necessary.
 - His work supports the more standard view that the world in which we live includes human freedom.



LEIBNIZ AND THE MAKE-UP OF SUBSTANCES

- ◉ Leibniz is attempting to answer a fundamental metaphysical question: What makes up the world around us?
- ◉ Leibniz asserts the multiplicity of substances that is found in the philosophy of both Descartes and Hobbes, therefore rejecting the unity of Spinoza.
 - But he agrees with Spinoza on the view that substances have internal agency.
 - In order for a substance to be a substance, it must have within it a source of action.
- ◉ In his *Discourse*, Leibniz describes monads as being like souls. In the *Monadology*, he argues that monads must exist because of the obvious plurality of substances.
 - If there are no simple substances (monads) then there can't be any composites. Since there are composites, monads must exist.
- ◉ We think of bodies as coherent wholes, but they are really just the accidental unification of simple substances.



MONADS

- ◉ I said before that monads are like atoms. However, they differ from atoms in a significant way.
- ◉ According to atomists of the time, all atoms are alike. Leibniz denies this claim for two reasons.
 - 1.) He asserts that each monad is an active entity.
 - Capable of perception.
 - 2.) He denies that any two substances can be identical, based on the principle of sufficient reason.
- ◉ Monads do not have parts, but they do have multiple properties.
- ◉ Can only begin and end all at once.
 - Cannot perish naturally.
- ◉ Are mutually independent-cannot be changed from without.

ANOTHER WAY TO THINK OF MONADS

- “And if simple substances did not differ at all in their qualities, there would be no way of perceiving any change in things, since what there is in a composite can only come from its simple ingredients; and if the monads had no qualities, they would be indiscernible from one another, since they also do not differ in quantity.” (AW 276)
 - Imagine that monads are the ingredients in a bag of trail mix; each ingredient has its own set of properties that add something to the mix as a whole without changing the properties of any of the other ingredients. If monads did not differ from each other, then all you would have would be a bag of raisins, which is not nearly as delicious.



MONADS AND THE MIND/BODY

- ◉ Leibniz claims that mechanical bodies are not capable of thought, and so to explain the perception our minds are capable of, he says, one must look to the monads.
 - “If we imagine that there is a machine whose structure makes it think, sense, and have perceptions, we could conceive it enlarged, keeping the same proportions, so that we could enter into it, as one enters into a mill. Assuming that, when inspecting its interior, we will only find parts that push one another, and we will never find anything to explain a perception. And so, we should seek a perception in the simple substance and not in the composite or in the machine.” (AW 276)
 - Since monads are active and capable of perception, they cannot all be alike as atomists claim.
- ◉ However, in Leibniz’s view, monads are not capable of memory. Simple substances capable of memory are called souls.
 - “Bare monads” are like souls in a permanent stupor or dream state.
 - All monads do have internal causes, though.



MONADS AND THE UNIVERSE

- ◉ “each simple substance is a perpetual, living mirror of the universe.” (AW 280)
 - A monad’s perception is made up of its internal ability to express the entire history of the universe.
 - Because of this, Leibniz asserts that there is no empty space in the universe, and also no chaos.
 - Changes in monads are perceptions willed by God in harmony with all other perceptions.



GOD: THE ULTIMATE MONAD?

- “Thus God alone is the primitive unity or the first simple substance; all created or derivative monads are products, and are generated, so to speak, by continual fulgurations of the divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited.” (AW 279)
 - God is the perfect monad-perfection being the magnitude of positive reality in a thing. This reality is infinite in God, who is without bounds.
 - This also explains Leibniz’s claim that monads are perpetually changing, even though they cannot have effects on each other.

QUESTIONS

- ◉ What does it mean that each monad is a representation of the entire universe?
 - If this is true, then does Leibniz's claim really differ much from Spinoza's monism?