

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy



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Hamilton College
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Class #10
Leibniz on Monads, Truth, Minds, and Bodies

Business

- 'Qualify'
- First panel presentation practice session on Monday, 7pm
 - Sara, Casey, Jackson, Mei Lin
- All panel preparation sessions take place in the seminar room of the Philosophy Building
- Leibniz through next week
 - Sean will stand in for me on Thursday
- Then Locke and two panel presentations
- Then the midterm
- Then spring break!

Leibniz on Descartes's Error

- Descartes had argued that it would violate the laws of physics for souls to add motion into the universe that was not already accounted for by the laws.
- But, Descartes also thought that it would not violate the laws for a soul to change the direction of motion of a body.
- Descartes believed correctly that quantity of motion (momentum) was conserved in a physical interaction.
 - Maybe; he believed that motion (at least) was conserved.
 - In that, he anticipated Newton's laws of motion.
- Descartes clearly misinterpreted momentum as a scalar quantity, ignoring its vector (or directional) qualities, and leaving open the option for a soul to interact with bodies without violating physical laws.
- Leibniz believes that Descartes would have adopted his view of pre-established harmony, if he had seen the error in his physics.
 - "Descartes recognized that souls cannot impart a force to bodies because there is always the same quantity of force in matter. However, he thought that the soul could change the direction of bodies. But that is because the law of nature, which also affirms the conservation of the same total direction in matter, was not known at the time. If he had known it, he would have hit upon my system of pre-established harmony..." (M80, AW 282b).

Leibniz Overview

Leibniz, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza

- All four philosophers provide responses to Descartes, who attempted to accommodate the new science and the orthodox, theological world view.
- Hobbes and Spinoza were eager to dismiss the religious orthodoxy.
- Leibniz rejects:
 - Hobbes's materialism
 - atheism (or at least naturalism) of both Hobbes and Spinoza
 - the view, found in both Hobbes and Spinoza, that everything is necessary

On Bodies

- Leibniz also rejects Descartes's account of bodies
- Descartes had argued that bodies are essentially extended, unthinking, divisible, individual substances.
 - Leibniz rejects infinite divisibility.
- He argues that the claim that bodies are unthinking leads to the impossibility of thought.
 - He believes that the ultimate constituents of the material world have within them a source of action.
 - For Leibniz, the fundamental components of the world are not inert divisible matter, but active, mind-like substances.
- “Each portion of matter can be conceived as a garden full of plants, and as a pond full of fish. But each branch of a plant, each limb of an animal, each drop of its humors, is still another such garden or pond” (M67, AW 281b).

Rehabilitating Final Causes

- According to Aristotle, there are four different kinds of causes:
 - C1. Efficient cause: the source of a change (basically our contemporary notion)
 - C2. Final cause: the goal, or telos, of an object or event
 - C3. Material cause: the constituent matter of the object
 - C4. Formal cause: what it is to be an object
- Galilean physics denigrated C2-C4, focusing on C1 alone.
- Leibniz, seeking a return to an admittedly anthropocentric view of God's role in the universe, looked to rehabilitate the notion of a final cause.
- Bodies act according to laws of efficient causation, but souls act, like God, according to laws of final causes.
- “It would be best to join together both considerations, for if it is permitted to use a humble comparison, I recognize and praise the skill of a worker not only by showing his designs in making the parts of his machine, but also by explaining the instruments he used in making each part, especially when these instruments are simple and cleverly contrived. *And God is skillful enough artisan* to produce a machine which is a thousand times more ingenious than that of our body, while using only some very simple fluids...” (D22, AW 237b-238a)

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.
And not Spinoza's "God, in other words Nature"

- 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 for all of this.

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 its 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.



Our Approach to Leibniz's Work

The *Monadology* and the *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

1. Monads;
2. The Complete-World View of Substance;
3. The Mind/Body Distinction;
4. Theodicy; and
5. Freedom and Harmony.

Then, the controversy with Newton over space and time.

On to Monads

Substance

- What we've seen on substance so far:
 - For Descartes, there are two kinds of substance, each with its own essential trait: mind (consciousness) and body (extension).
 - For Hobbes, there are only bodies.
 - For Spinoza, there is only one instance of a substance: God, or Nature.
- Leibniz accepts multiplicity.
- He adopts Spinoza's views on:
 - the ubiquity of mind; and
 - and that substance has to have an internal agency.
- Substance is an active unity, always perceiving, and which can will.

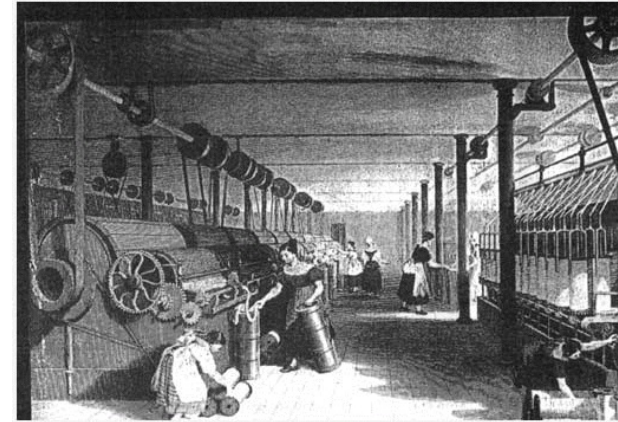
There Must Be Simple Substances

- *Discourse*: substantial forms, a soul or a haecceity, the thing which underlies or collects all its properties.
- *Monadology*: argument for simple substances on the basis of the obvious plurality of things.
 - ▶ Since there are composites, these must be made of parts.
 - ▶ A Cartesian piece of extended matter can be divided into further pieces of matter.
 - ▶ But, if there are no simple parts, there can be no composites.
 - ▶ Thus, there must be some basic elements, which he calls monads.
- The rainbow analogy
 - ▶ We think of bodies as coherent wholes, but they are really just accidental unities of real substances.

Monads and Atoms

- Is Leibniz Democritus, or Gassendi?
- No! The difference between atoms and monads is striking.
 - ▶ For the atomists, the simple objects are essentially undifferentiable; they are all alike.
 - ▶ Leibniz denies the similarity of atoms.
- Two arguments against atomism
 - ▶ Each monad is an active, rather than passive, unity.
 - ▶ There can be no identical objects, on the basis of his principle of sufficient reason.

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).
- Leibniz considers walking inside the mechanical parts of a thinking substance, like a brain.
 - All we would see would be moving parts.
 - We would see no memory, no thought.
- The Chinese Nation: we can, theoretically, create an artifact that looks and functions just like us with an artificial processing system made out of the people in China.
 - Leibniz imagines just this sort of case, and concludes that such contraptions could not support thought.
- “When inspecting its interior, we will only find parts that push one another, and we will never find anything to explain a perception” (M17, AW 276b).

Monads are Entelechies

- There must be some essentially active, essentially perceptive, component to the basic elements of the world.
- Perceptions of monads will distinguish them, thus denying the atomist's uniformity.



Leibniz's Second Argument Against Atomism

Substantial 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).
- It follows, Leibniz argues, from his two great principles, contradiction and sufficient reason.
 - ▶ “Our reasonings are based on *two great principles, that of contradiction*, in virtue of which we judge that which involves a contradiction to be false, and that which is opposed or contradictory to the false to be true...And *that of sufficient reason*, by virtue of which we consider that we can find no true or existent fact, no true assertion, without there being a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise, although most of the time these reasons cannot be known to us...” (M31-2, AW 278a).
- I'll call them:
 - ▶ principle of contradiction: PC
 - ▶ principle of sufficient reason: PSR

Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) and Conceptual Containment

- PSR follows from Leibniz's conception of truth as a claim in which a predicate is contained in a subject.
 - "All true predication has some basis in the nature of things and...when a proposition is not an identity, that is, when the predicate is not explicitly contained in the subject, it must be contained in it virtually" (D8, AW 228).
- All true propositions are divided into basic ones, in which the predicate is explicitly contained in the subject, and derived ones, which follow by analysis.
 - Finite analysis gets to necessary truths
 - Infinite analysis is required for contingent truths, so can only be completed by God.
- The identities are known according to PC; their denial is an explicit contradiction.
 - David is a married bachelor.
 - David is a married unmarried man.
- Analysis is the foundation of twentieth-century analytic philosophy, having been adopted by Frege, and later Russell, Wittgenstein, and the logical positivists.
- From the theory of truth as conceptual containment, Leibniz argues, we can derive PSR.
 - 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.

From PSR to II

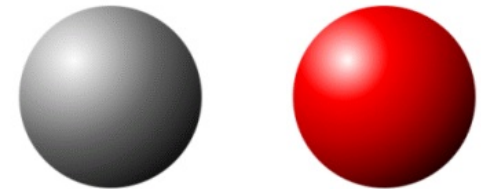
II1. If there were two indiscernible individuals, a and b, in our world, W, then there must also be another possible world, W^* , in which a and b are “switched”.

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

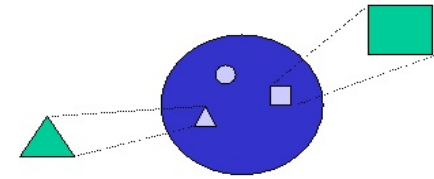
II3. God must have a reason for acting as he does, by PSR.

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

Simple substances must have distinct properties.



Monads and Minds



Metaphysically, all properties of monads are 'internal' or 'innate' – but many exist as 'expressions' of relations to other monads.

- Monads are representative in character; they express the way the world is.
- All monads are mind-like
 - “One can call all simple substances or created monads entelechies, for they have in themselves a certain perfection...; they have a sufficiency...that makes them the sources of their internal actions, and, so to speak, incorporeal automata (M18, AW 276b-277a)”.
- Only some monads have sense perception and memory; these we can call minds, or souls.
- But all monads, being simple substances, have internal causes, independence from other monads.
- They are the causes of their own activity; they are not merely passive receptors.
- Their changes are representations, or perceptions.
- These perceptions are pre-arranged by God, in harmony with the perceptions of all other monads.
- They express the nature of the entire universe.
 - “Since every present state of a simple substance is a natural consequence of its preceding states, the present is pregnant with the future” (M22, AW 277a).

Perception and Consciousness

- Descartes argued that the essential characteristic of a mind is consciousness.
- Leibniz mainly adopts Descartes's claim.
- Leibniz's class of entelechies is wider than Descartes's class of minds.
- Thus, Leibniz's characterization of the essential characteristic of substance will have to be correspondingly broader.
- The perception of a monad consists in its ability to represent, from its internal state, the entire history of the universe.
- "The passing state which involves and represents a multitude in the unity or in the simple substance is nothing other than what one calls *perception*, which should be distinguished from apperception, or consciousness...This is where the Cartesians have failed badly, since they took no account of the perceptions that we do not apperceive. This is also what made them believe that minds alone are monads and that there are no animal souls or other entelechies" (M14, AW 276a).

Predicate Containment and Complete Concepts

- Truth: to say of what is that it is
- That the concept of any substance has to contain all the properties that might be predicated of it, in order for there to be true predications.
 - ▶ “We can say that the nature of an individual substance or of a complete being is to have a notion so complete that it is sufficient to contain and to allow us to deduce from it all the predicates of the subject to which this notion is attributed” (D8, AW 228a)
- The substance of Alexander the Great must correspond to a complete concept which will differentiate it from other substances.
 - ▶ His substance (his haecceity) contains all of the attributes of Alexander.
 - ▶ The concepts may be analyzed down to true predications.
 - ▶ “When we consider carefully the connection of things, we can say that from all time in Alexander’s soul there are vestiges of everything that has happened to him and marks of everything that will happen to him and even traces of everything that happens in the universe, even though God alone could recognize them all” (D8, AW 228b).
 - ▶ “Every substance is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way” (D9, AW 229a).



The Complete-World View of Substance

- The history of the universe, past and future, can be seen in every individual substance.
- Consequences:
 - ▶ A substance can begin only by creation and end only by annihilation...
 - ▶ A substance is not divisible into two...
 - ▶ One substance cannot be constructed from two...
 - ▶ The number of substances does not naturally increase and decrease...
 - ▶ Every substance is like a complete world and like a mirror of God or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way (D9, AW 229a).

Voltaire on the World-View of Monads

“Can you really believe that a drop of urine is an infinity of monads, and that each of these has ideas, however obscure, of the universe as a whole?” (Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. 22, p. 434)

The Plenum

the inter-connectedness of the universe and the independence of individual monads

- “Everything is a plenum, which makes all matter interconnected. In a plenum, every motion has some effect on distant bodies, in proportion to their distance. For each body is affected, not only by those in contact with it, and in some way feels the effects of everything that happens to them, but also, through them, it feels the effects of those in contact with the bodies with which it is itself immediately in contact. From this it follows that this communication extends to any distance whatsoever” (M61, AW 280b).
- Universal gravitation (and other field theories) extends the force of one body on others to infinity.
 - ▶ But, such force is often negligible.
 - ▶ It is not clear that Leibniz thinks that the effects of one thing on another is ever quite that small.
- And there aren't really any bodies.
 - ▶ “I don't really eliminate body, but reduce it to what it is. For I show that corporeal mass, which is thought to have something over and above simple substances, is not a substance, but a phenomenon resulting from simple substances, which alone have unity and absolute reality.”

■

Bodies

- Bodies are the appearances of monads.
 - ▶ That is why monads are not in space.
 - ▶ But there is an appearance of space, which Leibniz takes seriously.
 - ▶ Bodies in space are governed by laws of efficient causes.
- Three metaphysical positions
 - ▶ A materialist thinks that everything is bodies.
 - ▶ A dualist thinks that there are both minds and bodies.
 - ▶ An idealist thinks that everything is minds.
- Leibniz is really an idealist.
 - ▶ Real world (monads with their appearances/bodies)
 - ▶ Phenomenal world (bodies)
 - ▶ Ideal world (space and time)
- Organized bodies are divine machines, M64

Minds

- All monads are entelechies, or souls.
- We are monads of a particular sort.
 - We have simple unity.
 - Recall Descartes on the unity of the soul.
- Our minds are governed by laws of final causes.
- The final causes guide their series of perceptions.
 - The life of a monad is like unfolding its inner core.
 - For non-soul monads, the series of their perceptions are all unconscious.
 - But, even for conscious monads, the series is often unconscious, as when we sleep.
- Given that they obey different laws, why are the laws governing final causes precisely compatible with the laws governing efficient causes?

Spinoza and the Problem of Interaction

parallelism

- The body is another perspective on the mind.
 - OK with Leibniz
- The singularity of substance
 - Not OK
 - Leibniz embraces the multiplicity.

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.
 - ▶ Recall Spinoza's claims about the independence of substance.
 - ▶ "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.

Leibniz and Pre-Established Harmony

- “The soul follows its own laws and the body also follows its own; and they agree in virtue of the harmony pre-established between all substances, since they are all representations of a single universe” (M78, AW 282a).
- God puts the universe in motion in such a way that the mind and body seem to affect each other, and such that monads seem to affect each other.
- But, the truth is that the appearance of transeunt causation is an illusion.
- Immanent causation, the relations among perceptions of a monad, are not impugned, here.
- But the relations among monads are just the effects of the pre-established harmony.
- The appearance of transeunt causation is, as it was for Spinoza, an illusion.
- Pre-established harmony undermines the freedom of the will, by positing a determined sequence of events, it also makes that freedom easier to describe, since interactions among bodies need not be taken as governed by external laws.