

**Philosophy 203**  
***History of Modern Western Philosophy***



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**Class #11**

**Leibniz on Theodicy, Necessity, and Freedom  
with some review of Monads, Truth, Minds, and Bodies**

# Business

- For Panel Presentations:
  - ▶ Don't just take turns saying what each philosopher said
  - ▶ Make connections
  - ▶ Try to be creative.

# Leibniz Overview

- Leibniz rejects:
  - ▶ Hobbes's materialism
  - ▶ the atheism/naturalism of Hobbes and Spinoza
  - ▶ Spinoza's determinism
  - ▶ Galileo's exclusive emphasis on efficient causes
- Leibniz defends:
  - ▶ multiplicity of substance
  - ▶ final causes
  - ▶ free will and God's foreknowledge
  - ▶ a parallelist solution to the problem of interaction

# Our Approach to Leibniz's Work

- ✓1. Monads;
- ✓2. The Complete-World View of Substance;
- ☞3. The Mind/Body Distinction;
- 4. Theodicy;
- 5. Freedom and Harmony;
- 6. The controversy with Newton over space and time.

# 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.
  - Leibniz solves them by eliminating bodies.
  - Bodies are mere phenomena, like a rainbow
- Many of the moderns thought that there was also a problem with CI1.
  - The Problem of Transeunt Causation
  - Bodies are passive and can do nothing but respond to the will of an active substance.



# 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)

# Revenge of the Problem of Interaction

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

- Leibniz's denial of the existence of bodies entails that C1-C3 are all moot.
- Leibniz holds on to CI4.
  - 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.
- Why do there appear to be transeunt, efficient-causal interactions when there are only immanent, final-causal sequences of perceptions?

# 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 appearance of transeunt causation is an illusion.
- Immanent causation, the relations among perceptions of a monad, are not impugned.
- Spinoza’s parallelism, reframed?
  - Spinoza: two attributes of one substance
  - Leibniz: goodness of God



# Free Will Preview

- Pre-established harmony undermines the freedom of the will.
  - Over time, our monad unfolds in a determined sequence of events.
  - The sequence has to be determined for God to get the clocks aligned.
- But Leibniz's idealism also makes freedom easier to describe.
  - Interactions among bodies need not be taken as governed by external laws.

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- ✓3. The Mind/Body Distinction;
- ☞ 4. Theodicy;
- 5. Freedom and Harmony;
- 6. The controversy with Newton over space and time.

# Theodicy

1. God is omnipotent and omniscient and benevolent and the free creator of the world.
2. Things could have been otherwise—i.e., there are other possible worlds.
3. If this world is not the best of all possible worlds, then at least one of the following must be the case:
  - 3a. God was not powerful enough to bring about a better world; or
  - 3b. God did not know how this world would develop after his creation of it; or
  - 3c. God did not wish this world to be the best; or
  - 3d. God did not create the world.
4. 3a-3d all contradict 1.
5. Therefore, this world is the best of all possible worlds.

# What is a Best World?

- We might wonder how worlds get ranked in order of goodness, what the criteria of goodness are.
- Spinoza worried about our anthropocentric projections, especially of the nature of goodness, onto God.
- Leibniz takes the universality of mathematics as paradigmatic, using simplicity and richness as criteria.
- “God has chosen the most perfect world, that is, the one which is at the same time the simplest in hypotheses and the richest in phenomena, as might be a line in geometry whose construction is easy and whose properties and effects are extremely remarkable and widespread” (D6, AW 227a-b).

# The Voltaire Objection

we can imagine better possible worlds

- We might agree with Spinoza in thinking that everything non-contradictory is possible.
- No obvious contradiction arises from the concept of a world just like this one but with, say, less famine and war.
- Thus, there seem to be other possible worlds better than this one.
- Are there other possible worlds?
- Modal Realism
  - ▶ Spinoza thought that everything non-contradictory is possible (and indeed actual in God).
  - ▶ David Lewis, in the 20th Century argued for modal realism: all possible worlds exist.
  - ▶ Leibniz insists that the possibility of some event alone does not entail its compossibility with other events.
  - ▶ Thus, alternative worlds appear possible, but only because we are seeing them incompletely.

# 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).
- Leibniz's view recalls Descartes's claim that 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 Accounts of the Illusion

- Leibniz is arguing that the imperfections we see are illusory.
- One typical 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.

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# 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

## Compatibilism

- “It is not impossible for what is foreseen not to happen; but it is infallibly sure that it will happen” (*Theodicy* ~407).
  - ▶ The kind of statement that gives compatibilism a bad name

# Three Hints

How could Leibniz hold this compatibilist view?

1. Other worlds are possible.
2. Contingent claims can be discovered only by infinite analysis, while necessary truths are discoverable by finite analysis.
3. The distinction 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).

# On Other Worlds

- Leibniz's weakest claim about other possibilities, and our freedom to create them, is that they are merely chimerical.
- It looks to us as if the world which is just the same as it is, except that Hamilton College is located on a small Caribbean island with fruited mango trees and sea breezes on campus all year around, is possible.
- But, Leibniz argues, to make even one change in the world entails changing other factors in that world.
- What seems possible in itself may not be compossible with other changes that moving Hamilton would entail.



# 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 doppelgangers 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.  $(\forall x)(\forall y)(Ixy \supset Wy)$

- ▶ worlds are the containers of objects

C2.  $(\forall x)(\forall y)(\forall z)[(Ixy \cdot Ixz) \supset y=z]$

- ▶ individuals can only exist in one world

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

C4.  $(\forall x)(\forall y)[Cxy \supset (\exists z)$

- ▶ all counterparts exist in worlds

C5.  $(\forall x)(\forall y)(\forall z)[(Ixy \cdot Izy \cdot Cxz) \supset x=z]$

- ▶ there are no distinct counterparts in any given world

C6.  $(\forall x)(\forall y)(Ixy \supset Cxx)$

- ▶ a thing is the counterpart of itself

C7.  $(\exists x)[Wx \cdot (\forall y)(Iyx \equiv Ay)]$

- ▶ 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



# Three Hints

## Hint #2: Finite and infinite analysis

- In a finite analysis, we can unpack a complex concept until we reach what Leibniz calls an identity statement.
  - ▶  $3^2 = \sqrt{81}$
  - ▶  $3 \times 3 = 9$
  - ▶  $3 \times 3 = 3 \times 3$
  - ▶ Later, we will call such claims analytic truths.
- Similarly, given a false statement, we will arrive at some kind of contradiction by analysis.
- Consider: 'Russell has two children'.
  - ▶ According to the doctrine of conceptual containment, my concept contains my having two children.
  - ▶ Nevertheless, there are possible worlds in which I don't have two children.
  - ▶ Correspondingly, when we analyze the concept 'Russell', we will not be able to unpack the claim that I have two children.
  - ▶ God could do so, but we can not.

# Three Hints

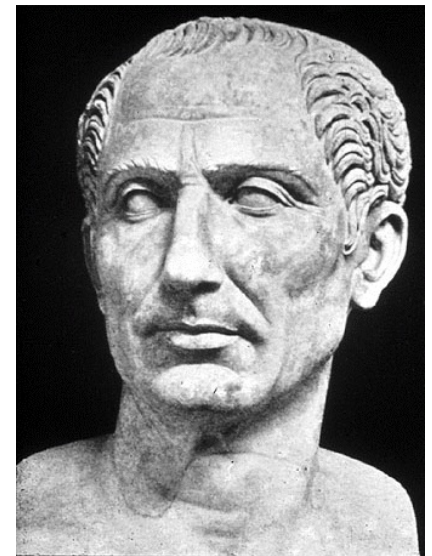
- ✓1. While Leibniz states that this is the best of all possible worlds, he does accept that such other worlds are possible.
- ✓2. Contingent claims can be discovered only by infinite analysis, while necessary truths are discoverable by finite analysis.
- 3. Leibniz distinguishes between certain truths 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).

# Certainty and Necessity

- “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).

# 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).



# Three Hints

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# Human Freedom

- Leibniz takes active, thinking things as elemental.
- The life of the monad consists of the unfolding of its perceptions.
- When these perceptions are conscious, as in a person, they are called apperception.
- But they are always self-determined, according to laws of final causes, as Leibniz denies any transeunt causation.
- The activity of a monad corresponds to the distinctness of its perceptions
  - “The action of the internal principle which brings about the change or passage from one perception to another can be called *appetition*; it is true that the appetite cannot always completely reach the whole perception toward which it tends, but it always obtains something of it, and reaches new perceptions” (D15, AW 276b).
- As the monads of persons have both conscious experience (distinct perception) and memory, we apperceive our appetite.

# Freedom, sort of

- Human freedom, like God's freedom, is restricted.
- God understands what is best, and freely chooses it; what is possible is independent of God's will, but not his understanding.
- Our freedom, like God's, is the name we give to our faculty for striving, for unfolding the internal principles of our essence.
- We strive for future states, even if they are states of pain and unhappiness, as these are preferable to the alternative, which is non-existence.

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  - With Sean on Thursday
  - See you next week!
  - (I'll be around on Friday.)