



Discourse on Metaphysics

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

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Leibniz (1646 - 1716) was a true polymath and has been called the most comprehensive thinker since Aristotle. In these two great works by the founder of modern German speculative philosophy, the reader is introduced to Leibniz's metaphysics, including his conception of physical substance, the motion and resistance of bodies, and the role of the divine within the dynamic universe.

Discourse on Metaphysics Details

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Diego says

It was a good speech, with some interesting thoughts, however, I dislike that the base of all the Leibniz's philosophical work is the belief of god and the bible, the goodness of the men, unfortunately the good nature is not in human.

Joan Sebastián Araujo Arenas says

(La publicaré en otro momento...)

Brandt says

Employing the principle of charity, I will initiate a review of this book with as little criticism as practicable. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is a significant figure, not for philosophy *per se*, but for originating Mathematical Logic – so, I guess philosophy – and the ideas of kinetic energy, and Calculus. Of course, you can debate the whole Newton vs. Leibniz hokum somewhere else! All of these accomplishments are astounding; therefore, I opine that Leibniz should be remembered for all the preceding achievements.

Now is where it gets awkward. Leibniz accepted the ontological proof for the existence of God; and by God, I mean the Christian God of 17th Century (the purpose of this review is not to talk about beliefs, I will just leave that phrasing ambiguous). Leibniz advised that God could have chosen any sort of world; since, it is possible. Nevertheless, since He [God] is perfect by definition, “this is the best of all possible worlds.” Of course, Leibniz would be ridiculed by Voltaire for this ludicrous deduction, in Candide; but I digress. Leibniz's argument goes something like this: **Life is not worth living if we do not have free will. Free will is the purchase price of sin. A world without free will is not worth living in. Therefore, “this is the best of all possible worlds.”** Yes, it does go like that, and even the insouciant reader can sense something inexplicable afoot in Leibniz's reasoning.

Frankly, the order of Leibniz' writing is to be celebrated. It is clearly written, and situated in an order where each argument builds upon previous premises, conclusions, and arguments. Both the *Discourse on Metaphysics* and *The Monadology* can be read quickly. However, this is the extent of my extolment for Leibniz. The message in his arguments is utterly farcical. Instead of investigating the nature of existence, he immediately starts from the point of view that his God exists, and as such, Leibniz is only reporting the reality. Yes facts! As an example, Leibniz indicates that, there is a universal order and everything conforms to it. “This is so true,” Leibniz observes, “that not only does nothing occur in this world which is absolutely irregular, but it is even impossible to conceive such an occurrence.” Think about that for a few seconds. Okay, time is up. I have thought of many things that are absolutely irregular that occur. The point is that Leibniz was wrong!

I am hesitant to go any further in the *Discourse on Metaphysics*; nonetheless, I still judge it to be important reading. Not necessarily for what Leibniz was right about, but because it demonstrates the error process that can affect even the most brilliant of humans. This is an important point, because very often, arguments are made – and ideas embraced – that are fallacious appeals to authority, belief, popularity, etc. It is troublesome to express this in a positive way.

Turning toward *The Monadology*, here Leibniz outdid himself by conveying the idea of infinite units of force made up of “soul,” that make up everything else. Some of these “monads” do not interact, and as a result, bad things can sometimes be good?! No worries though, the God of Leibniz knows everything, because He has “divine foreknowledge.” Once again, you might want to pause here and consider the implications.

Peradventure, look up the “Consequence Argument”. Here is a link to a short book that perfectly explains it in Chapter 3: A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will. Once you understand the "Consequence Argument," you will comprehend the problem; *viz.*, if God has foreknown what we will do, we *cannot now do otherwise* than we actually do! Therefore, if free will requires the power to do otherwise, then no one has free will. Yet, remember the premises and conclusion in one of the previous paragraphs? No worries, I used the bold formatting to help you find it... You know, the one where Leibniz claims, Life is not worth living if we do not have free will. Free will is the purchase price of sin. A world without free will is not worth living in. Therefore, “this is the best of all possible worlds.” This is representative of the inconsistencies in Leibniz's arguments *in toto*.

Consequently, Leibniz's arguments tend to have problems. Leibniz's reasoning is inclined towards inconsistencies, and at times, incoherence. Moreover, Leibniz's formulation of us living in "the best possible world" is difficult to quantify when, in modernity, you see an ample share of the world living in unbearable circumstances (v.g., I flush my toilet everyday with water cleaner than most of the world's drinking water). To explain to someone that the reason they are living in squalor is for the "greater good" would be derisory. Hence, one can easily understand why Voltaire so effortlessly lampooned Leibniz on his "best possible world" postulation.

In conclusion, I do consider there is much to be derived from reading Leibniz; even though I dissent from many of his arguments. The fundamental contribution is that he formulates his arguments well, and this is central to philosophy. Sometimes reading philosophy is more for understanding the mistakes that others have made to ensure you do not make the same mistakes in your own reasoning. Happy reading.

David Balfour says

Pretty terrible. He appeals not to rationality, but to how awesome he thinks God must be. He argues, for instance, that memory must live on after death because God is perfect and it would be **bad** if memory didn't live on after death.

mohab samir says

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Nick Bond says

Leibniz has some interesting insights, but unlike some of his contemporaries (e.g. Spinoza), he chooses not to challenge the traditional interpretation of Christianity. As a result, his views on some things (like the meaning of life) seem a bit over-simplistic.

Abdelrahman Mustafa says

Must read again and take notes

Matthew Ciaramella says

It get a bonus star to come to four because it was one of the clearest philosophy translations I have ever had.

Abdulla Awachi says

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Stephen Keene says

I listened to the two-hour audiobook from Audible. This is one that I will return to as a reference from time to time. I cannot say that it was a thrilling read, but it is a “must read” for anyone interested in philosophical disciplines. I majored in Chemistry at a Methodist Church-related university. Having been steeped in Wesleyan doctrine and philosophy from childhood, I found Leibniz ideas to be quite satisfying. When I see and hear various self-proclaimed scientific experts trying to use science to tear down faith or self-proclaimed pillars of religion trying battle against science using fundamentalist dogma, I would like to lock up both factions in a room, bind and gag them, and force them to listen to lectures and sermons from Leibniz and John Wesley while Charles Wesley’s hymns are playing in the background. They would all be forced to stay there eating meager rations and taking Holy Communion until they found some points in each side where they could agree. Only then would said experts be allowed to have their opinions see the light of day.

Walid says

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Don Incognito says

So speculative; and I can't say it had any influence or practical import whatsoever on my life or how I think. Interesting ideas; nothing more.
