

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

(1646-1716) [Leipzig, Mainz, Paris, Hanover]



In 1714, G. W. Leibniz published his *Monadology*, which is often taken as the summary of his doctrine of substance. In snatches of time from his duties as a man in public life, he managed a thorough study of mathematics and gave the calculus the notation which has since been employed. He developed logic in new directions some of which supplied the roots for present-day symbolic logic; he constructed an idealistic metaphysics, approaching the subject from the side of Cartesian rationalism and balancing Berkeley's approach from the side of British empiricism.

In his *New Essays on Human Understanding* Leibniz answered Locke's criticism of Descartes. Leibniz stated that Locke had sought evidence of explicit innate ideas and had misconstrued Descartes' conception, which referred to latent tendencies to think in certain ways. Leibniz' position is expressed in the sentence: "There is nothing in intellect which was not first in sense, except intellect itself." It was from this standpoint that he had answered Locke's work, paragraph by paragraph. Leibniz' *New Essays* should be read along with Locke's *Essay* by all students of theory of knowledge.

In his logical studies Leibniz recognized processes such as logical addition and multiplication, which had not been given explicit formulation. In this way he generalized logical science to cover more than the tradition, and made it applicable to mathematical modes of thought as well as to the qualitative modes of ordinary discourse.

In his metaphysical doctrine Leibniz analyzed all reality into units of force, replacing the inert atoms of materialism. Each of these may be regarded as a perspective from which the universe can be viewed and is viewed with various degrees of clearness of consciousness. He called these units monads. There are body monads and soul monads, constituting the scale of reality from the lowest to the highest – God, the monad of monads. Each is unique and is not affected from without. Each lives out its own career, developing its own potentialities from within. Thus, there is what Leibniz called a pre-established harmony among them, but it is logical rather than causal.

The sum total of all the substances that are possible along with a given monad – mirrored in it – constitute a possible world. There are many possible worlds, many families of possible monads; this actual world is just one of the possibilities. Contrary to Spinoza, then, Leibniz held that the actual universe does not exist of necessity. Monads as active centers do not exist in space and in time; space and time are themselves the modes of expression of the consciousness the monad experiences.

Leibniz believed the universe is the expression of Perfect Reason. Therefore, it must be the best of all possible worlds. We can figuratively imagine God – the one being that is not merely possible, but necessarily existing – contemplating all the possible worlds and choosing one to actualize. He would clearly choose the “best” one, the one most like God himself, who is perfectly actual. This would be the universe that combines the most actuality (the richest variety of content) with the greatest simplicity

of laws. In that sense, Leibniz believed, we live in the best of all possible worlds. All apparent evil would be transformed by a larger view of the universe.

Exercises

Vocabulary Focus

explicit /ɪk'splɪsɪt/ adjective

clear and exact

She was very explicit about her plans.

He made no explicit references to Tess.

explicitly adverb

She explicitly stated that she did not want her name to be revealed.

harmony /'hɑ:məni/ noun

1 PEACE [U] when people are peaceful and agree with each other, or when different things seem right or suitable together

living together in peace and harmony

2 MUSIC [C,U] a pleasant sound in music, made by playing or singing a group of different notes together

The two sang in harmony.

inert /ɪ'nɜ:t/ adjective FORMAL

1 SUBSTANCE Inert substances do not produce a chemical reaction when another substance is added.

inert gases

2 NOT MOVING without power to move or act

Vanessa lay inert on the sofa.

inertly adverb

snatch¹ /snætʃ/ verb [T]

1 TAKE to take something or someone quickly and suddenly

Bill snatched the telephone from my hand.

The child was snatched from his bed.

جزد تسهله
حوار / او
اعتبه
2 DO QUICKLY to do or get something quickly because you only have a short amount of time

جزد تسهله
حوار / او
اعتبه
snatch² /snæts/ noun [C]
I managed to snatch some lunch.

a short part of a conversation, song, etc. that you hear
I keep hearing snatches of that song on the radio.

تبدیل
transform /træns'fɔ:m/ verb [T]

to change something completely, usually to improve it

تحويل
Within weeks they had transformed the area into a beautiful garden.

transformation /,trænsfə'meɪʃən/ noun [C,U]

a complete change

The company has undergone a dramatic transformation in the past five years.

Comprehension Focus

A. Answer the following questions.

1. What is Leibniz' answer to Locke's criticism of Descartes?
2. What did Leibniz recognize in his logical studies, which had not been given explicit formulation?
3. What are the units into which Leibniz analyzed all reality?
4. How can we imagine God, according to Leibniz?
5. What are monads, and do they exist in space and time?
6. What are space and time, according to Leibniz?
7. What does Leibniz mean by "pre-established harmony" among monads?
8. What is a possible world, and why does Leibniz think that our world must be the best of all possible worlds?

Lexeme Focus

B. From the list of words given, select at least one synonym and one antonym (if available) for the words in the table.

realization, motionless, obviously, decide, awareness, desire, still, evidently, lifeless, prefer, opt, notice, undoubtedly, probable, promising, visibly, likely, moving, unconsciousness, unlikely

Word	Synonym(s)	Antonym
consciousness	awareness / realization	unconsciousness
clearly	obviously / evidently	
choose	decide / opt / prefer	
possible		
inert		moving

C. Match each word with its definition.

- | Word | Definition |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. explicit | () a. not moving |
| 2. inert | () b. to change something completely, usually to improve it |
| 3. harmony | () c. clear and exact |
| 4. transform | () d. to take something or someone quickly and suddenly |
| 5. snatch | () e. when people are peaceful and agree with each other, or when different things seem right or suitable together |

D. Each of the following sentences contains a blank. Select the word that best completes the sentence. Apply any necessary change.

actual	actually
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1. What were his words?
2. The food was not all that expensive.
3. The cost was much higher than we had expected.
4. James looks younger than his wife but in fact (= really) he is several years older.
5. It was quite fun after all.

cause	causal
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1. Unemployment is a major of poverty.
2. He talked about the relationship between poverty and disease.
3. There was discussion about the fire and its likely CAUSE!
4. Drinking and driving is one of the most common of traffic accidents.

recognize	recognition
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1. Drugs were not as a problem then.
2. He glanced briefly towards her but there was no sign of
3. There is a general of the urgent need for reform.
4. They the need to take the problem seriously.

E. From the list of words given, select the correct word for each blank space. Apply any necessary change.

consciousness	snatch	harmony	explicit	inert
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1. I can't remember any more - I must have lost
2. He gave me very directions on how to get there.
3. I managed to an hour's sleep.

4. He lay with half-closed eyes.
5. She was quite about why she had left.
6. They lived together in perfect
7. She did not regain and died the next day.
8. She managed to the gun from his hand.
9. The president has to operate within a/an political system.

Preposition Focus

F. From the list of words given, select a preposition for each blank.

through	about	upon	into	off	on	as
against	from	with	out	by	in	to
across	after	over	for	up	of	at

Each ... these may be regarded as a perspective ... which the universe can be viewed and is viewed ... various degrees ... clearness ... consciousness. He called these units monads. There are body monads and soul monads; constituting the scale ... reality ... the lowest ... the highest – God, the monad ... monads. Each is unique and is not affected ... without. Each lives ... its own career, developing its own potentialities ... within. Thus, there is what Leibniz called a pre-established harmony among them, but it is logical rather than causal.