Leibniz

Bio:

- Born Leipzig, Germany in 1646 (Meditations published 1642)
    - Thirty Year's War ended 1648, the peace set the course for peaceful coexistence of Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran Christians
- Historical context informs Leibniz's approach to philosophy
    - Seeks to reconcile feuding sides to disputes: Cartesians and Scholastics, different religious sects, etc.
- Worked in many different fields besides philosophy:
    - Math (invented Calculus, along with Newton)
    - Mine engineering
        - Tried to increase productivity of silver mines essential to his Hanoverian patrons, failed
    - History
        - Primary historical task is to establish the exalted lineage of the Guelph family, his patrons and the local rulers in Hannover
            - Included George Ludwig, future King George 1 of England
- Never wrote a central philosophical work like Descartes's Meditations, so his work is not accessible
- Plus, Leibniz changes his mind and his terminology over time
    - Must piece together his ideas from his shorter works and his enormous correspondence
    - Only half of his writings have actually been published

Proof of God's existence

Leibniz's proof of the existence of God follows from his claims about reason and truth:

Two principles of *reason:*

      Principle of Contradiction: we judge all contradictions to be false, and the negation of any contradiction to be true

      Principle of Sufficient Reason: we judge that for any true proposition P, there is a sufficient reason why P is true and not false
            Frequently we are not in a position to know what the reason is, but we always assume that there is one

Two kinds of *truths:*

      Truths of reason: necessary; negation is impossible.
- Provable from 'primatives' on the model of Euclidean geometry
- Primitive truths 'cannot be proved and which need no proof'
- Primitive truths reduce to identity statements
  - (More on this later)

      Truths of fact: contingent; negation is possible'

By PSR, there is a sufficient reason for every truth

Truths of reason are either primatives or reducible to primatives, so those don't need any further reason

But Contingent truths aren't like that: they're the product of infinitely complex causal chains.

What's the sufficient reason for the causal chain that leads to any given contingent truth?

God
- exists necessarily - his existence is a primitive truth – so no reason for his existence is required
- But, God is infinite, so he's a sufficient cause for all contingent truths

Argument:
1. All truths or facts require a sufficient explanation (PSR)
2. The sufficient reason for all the contingent truths must be
    a. Infinite
    b. Sufficient
3. Only God is (2a) and (2b)
4. So, God exists

Problems with the argument:
- why think that God's existence is primitive?
    - How would Leibniz argue with someone who claims that God's non-existence is primitive? Or that '2+2=7' is primive?
- Why don't necessary truths require sufficient reasons? Isn't that arbitrary?
- Why think that all contingent truths require sufficient reasons at all?
    - NB: Leibniz provides no reason to accept PSR

Consequences of the argument:

The Problem of Evil has it that:

1. If an O3 God exists then the world is as good as it could possibly be
2. The world is not as good as it could possibly be (evil, pointless suffering, mosquitos, etc.)
3. So, it's not the case that an O3 God exists

But once Leibniz has proved that God exists, he thinks that he can Modus Ponens the Modus Tollens:

1. If an O3 God exists, then the world is as good as it could possibly be
2. An O3 God exists
3. So, the world is as good as it could possibly be

But wait: what about all the evil and pointless suffering in the world? How could this be the best of all possible worlds?

Leibniz: God's omnipotence is limited by certain logical and metaphysical principles that precede even him:
- Principle of Sufficient Reason, Principle of Non-Contradiction, etc

God is also subject to the rules of morality, rather than the creator of those rules:
- ○ To think otherwise trivializes the goodness of God:

  "...in saying that things are not good by virtue of any rule of goodness but solely by virtue of the will of God, it seems to me that we unknowingly destroy all of God's love and all his glory. For why praise him for what he has done fi he would be equally praiseworthy in doing the exact contrary? Where will his justice and wisdom reside if there remains only a certain despotic power, if will holds the place of reason, and if, according to the definition of tyrants, justice consists in whatever pleases the most powerful?" (DM 2)

So why does the world seem like it could be better? Why all the evil and pointless suffering?

- ○ Although this is the best of all possible worlds, that doesn't mean that it's perfect
- ○ sometimes in order to achieve something good one must include some lesser evils
  - ○ compare: an appendectomy involves cutting someone open (a bad thing) but it achieves something good: it saves a life
    - the good is inseparable from the bad (we suppose)
    - And, the good greatly outweighs the bad
    - So, the best possible outcome is that you get the surgery, taking the bad with the good

So:

> "The general knowledge of this great truth, that Go acts always in the most perfect and desirable way possible, is, in my judgment, the foundation of the love that we owe God in all things, since he who loves seeks his satisfaction in the happiness or perfection of the object loved and in his actions. To will the same and dislike the same is true friendship. And I believe that it is difficult to love God well when we are not disposed to will what God wills, when we might have the power to change it. In fact, those who are not satisfied with what God does seem to me like dissatisfied subjects whose attitudes are not much different from those of rebels.
> In accordance with these principle, in order to act in accordance with the love of God, it is not sufficient to force ourselves to be patient; rather we must truly be satisfied with everything that has come to us according to his will" (DM 4)

Objection:
- ○ suppose we concede this general sort of response: even an O3 god can't create a perfect world.
- ○ Still, is this world really the best it could possibly be?
  - ○ Is there always some good that comes of every evil and outweighs it?

- Holocaust? Disease and starvation? What good outweighs these evlis?

Leibniz's suggested response: evil actions are permitted because they make possible 'punishment and atonement' that

"...corrects this evil and repays the evil with interest in such a way that in the end there is more perfection in the whole sequence than if the evil had not occurred..." (DM 7)

Is that plausible?

[for next time: read DM8-13]

Theory of Truth

Big question: What is truth?

Propositions as the sorts of things that are true or false

Propositions are *structured* into subjects and predicates
    Example: All red socks are red

According to Leibniz, a proposition is true iff its subject is contained in the predicate:

"It is evident that all true predication has some basis in the nature of things and that, when a propositions is not an identity, that is, when the predicate is not explicitly contained in the subject, it must be contained in it virtually [or *implicitly*]... Thus the subject term just always contain the predicate term, so that one who understands perfectly the notion of the subject would also know that the predicate belongs to it." (DM 8)

Example: All red socks are red

Here the predicate, *is red*, is explicitly contained in the subject, *All red socks*

Leibniz's claims:
1. 'All red socks are red' is true in virtue of this containment
2. anyone who completely understands what a red sock is – anyone who understands the subject – also understands that the predicate *is red* is contained by the subject
3. Moreover, one doesn't need experience with red socks to know that all red socks are red
    a. If you understand what a red sock is then it's a priori that all red socks are red

Sometimes it's less obvious: All bachelors are unmarried

Leibniz:
1. the predicate *are unmarried* is contained in the subject *All Bachelors*
2. 'All bachelors are unmarried' is true in virtue of this containment
3. anyone who completely understands what a bachelor is – anyone who understands the subject – also understands that the predicate *is unmarried* is contained by the subject
4. Moreover, if you understand the concept of a bachelor then 'all bachelors are unmarried' is a prior

According to Leibniz, this is the only way to make sense of truth. So all true propositions are true in this way:

> "In every true proposition, necessary or contingent, universal or singular, the notion of the predicate is contained in some way in the subject. If not, I do not know what truth is." (letter to Arnauld 14 July 1686)

Complete Individual Concepts

'all red socks' and 'all bachelors' refer to broad classes of objects, rather than particular objects.

Lots of interesting claims are like that, including claims about math ('all squares have four sides') and the empirical sciences ('all squirrels are mammals')

What about propositions about particular objects?

>   Example: 'Alexander the Great is a king'

This is true, so according to Leibniz

> 1.   the predicate *is a king* is contained in the subject *Alexander the Great*
> 2. 'Alexander the Great is a king' is true in virtue of this containment
> 3. anyone who completely understands the concept 'Alexander the Great' – anyone who understands the subject – also understands that the predicate *is a king* is contained by the subject
> 4. In principle, 'Alexander the Great is a king' is knowable a priori, at least if you fully understand the concept 'Alexander the Great'

The same is true for **any other predicate** of Alexander the Great, or of any other particular object.

Aristotelian essentialism vs Leibnizian Super-essentialism

So the concept of any particular object or 'individual substance' contains *all* of the predicates that the concept will every instantiate:

> "… 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. An accident, on the other hand, is a being whose notion does not include everything that can be attributed to the subject to which the notion is attributed. Thus, taken in abstraction from the subject, the quality of being a king which belongs to Alexander the Great is not determinate enough to constitute an individual and does not include the other qualities of the same subject, nor does it include everything that the notion of this prince includes. On the other hand, God, seeing Alexander's individual notion or haecceity, sees in it at the same time the basis and reason for all the predicates which can truly be said of him, for example, that he vanquished Darius and Porus; he even

knows *a priori* (not by experience, whether he died a natural death or whether he was poisoned, something we can know only through history." (DM8)

Interlude: Possible Worlds

A possible world is a set of individual substances + a set of laws of nature
- Not every pair of individuals can exist together in the same world
  - General principle: if X is older than Y, then Y is not older than X
    - This must be true of all individual substances X and Y in all worlds
  - So, if in some world Sally is older than Tom, then Tom cannot be taller than Sally (in that particular world)
- Similarly, the properties of an individual substance might be inconsistent with a law of nature:
  - Example: Sally cannot have the property of traveling faster than the speed of light, given the actual laws of nature

Leibniz:
"I think there is an infinity of possible ways in which to create the world, according to the different designs which God could form, and that each possible world depends on certain principal designs or purposes of God which are distinctive of it, that is, certain primary free decrees (conceived sub ratione possibilitatis) or certain laws of the general order of this possible universe with which they are in accord and whose concept they determine, as they do also the concepts of all the individual substances which must enter into this same universe." (G II 51/L 333)

Back to DM8 and CIC's: it's not just properties of *Alexander* that compose his CIC:

Leibniz goes on:

"Thus 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, even though God alone could recognize them all." (DM8)

Hence Leibniz's famous **Doctrine of Marks and Traces**: Alexander's CIC contains all facts about all other individuals in his possible world – this one
Why? Leibniz doesn't really explain.

Possible reconstruction:

Distinction:
- *Intrinsic properties* of Alexander the Great don't involve other individual substances:
  - Alexander the Great is human
  - Alexander the great is a king
  - Alexander the great is dead
- *Extrinsic properties* of Alexander the Great involve other individual substances:
  - Alexander the Great conquered Darius
  - Alexander the Great was king of Macedonia
  - Alexander the Great died in Babylon

Leibniz thinks that *all* of Alexander's properties – intrinsic and extrinsic – are part of his CIC

Alexander bears at least *some* relation to every individual substance in this possible world

So, every individual substance existing in the actual world – and hence very actualized CIC – is represented in Alexander the Great's CIC.

Since all facts about a possible world follow from the CIC's actualized in that possible world, it follows that all facts about the actual world are represented in Alexander's CIC

This point is expressed in DM9:

> "Each substances is like a complete world and like a mirror of God and of the entire universe, which each on expresses in its own way, somewhat as the city is variously represented depending on the different positions from which it is viewed… every substance bears in some way the character of God's infinite wisdom and omnipotence and imitates him as much as it is capable. For it expresses, however confusedly, everything that happens in the universe, whether past, present, or future – this has some resemblance to an infinite perception or knowledge." (DM9)

Some 'notable paradoxes' that follow from complete individual concepts:

As above, Leibniz doesn't really explain *why* they follow, but here's a reasonable reconstruction:

1. *Indiscernibility of Identicals (Leibniz's Law):* It's impossible that "two substances can resemble each other completely and differ only in number" (DM9)

a. Suppose A is not identical to B, but they share all the same properties
b. By PSR, there must be some sufficient reasons for the fact that A and B are not identical
c. But since A and B have all the same properties, intrinsic and extrinsic, there could be no such reason
d. So, it's impossible for A to be non-identical to B but for A and B to share all properties
2. Substances cannot come to exist or cease to exist except by God's creation/ annihilation
a. Possible worlds just are sets of individual substances, i.e. actualized CIC's
b. Remove one individual and the CIC's of all other substances change
c. But CIC's can't change: any change means a different CIC, which means a different individual substance, which means a different possible world

Necessity and Contingency

Leibniz's theory account of CIC's set up a problem for DM13:

"We have said that the notion of an individual substance includes once and for all everything that can ever happen to it and that, by considering this notion, one can see there everything that can truly be said of it, just as we can see in the nature of a circle all the properties that can be deduced from it. But it seems that this would eliminate the difference between contingent and necessary truths, that there would be no place for human freedom, and that an absolute fatalism would rule all our actions as well as all the other events of the world."

Break that into two parts: threat to freedom, and threat to contingency

Threat to freedom

Intuition: two things are required in order to act freely:
1. I must have been able to do otherwise.
    a. Garden of forking paths
2. My actions must arise from within myself, not be random or compelled from outside of me

Traditional threat to free will: Causal Determinism
- Threat to actions arising from myself (I'm compelled to act by forces outside of me)
- Threat to alternative possibilities/ forking paths
    o Given causal rules and background conditions, my future actions are necessary

Leibniz denies that substances interact causally:
- If all of my properties are already in my CIC, then how can another object cause me to do something/ have some property? Impossible

Alternative theory of 'causation': pre-established harmony
- Objects never interact, they 'mirror' one another
- When two billiard balls appear to collide and act upon each other, really they move independently until they touch and then move apart under their own force
- 2 clocks example

But does this help?

According to Leibniz,
- Alexander the Great's CIC includes the property/ predicate *conquered Darius*
- So, it's impossible that Alex didn't conquer Darius
- The properties in Alex's CIC include all of the properties he'd have throughout history
    - It the property of conquering Darius even before it happened

So does Alexander the Great have free will?
1. Do his actions flow from himself?
    a. Pro: they're never caused by any outside object, and they're not random (they flow form his CIC, the essence of who he is)
    b. Con: don't they really flow from the fact that he was created with the CIC that he does in fact have, i.e. don't they flow from God?
2. No alternative paths
    a. But…

Leibniz is a compatibilist:

Compatibilism – free will is compatible absence of forking paths (determinism)

Popular with Hobbes, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Mill

Compatibilist claim: I'm free to do x if I have the power or ability to do x, should I choose to do x
- That requires that I'm free of constraints: jail, gunpoint, disability, psychological compulsions, etc.

Free: Choose X -------------(no constraints here)--------$\rightarrow$ Do X
Unfree: Choose X -------------(blocked by constraints)

What about freedom to do otherwise?
- I'm free to do *other than x* if I have the power or ability to do x, should I choose to

If I'm free to do x and also free to do not-x, then we have a forking path

But, simply being free to do x *does not* require freedom to do otherwise

What about necessity and contingency can certainty?

Necessary truths: the negation is a contradiction
- Necessary truth: if Tom is tall then Tom is tall
- Contradictory denial of necessary truth: not all fish are fish, i.e. something is both a fish and not a fish

Contingent truths: the negation is not a contradiction
- Contingent truth: Alexander the Great conquered Darius
- False, but not contradictory denial of contingent truth: Alexander the great did not conquer the

The negation of a contingent truth *impossible by hypothesis*
- Impossible only given the hypothesis that God actualized the possible world in which Alexander the Great conquered Darius
- If God had actualized a world which included an Alexander the Great-like pseudo-doppelganger, then it would be false

The negation of necessary truths are *impossible in themselves:*
- their falsehood follows from the rules of logic
- rules of logic are the same in every possible world, so it doesn't matter which world God actualizes, they're false.