



The Monadology

∞ Infinite Monad Theory by philosopher
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

Table of Contents (TOC)

1. Introduction

2. The Monadology

§ 1 Defining the Monad: Simple Substance

§ 2 Reality's Foundation: Why Simples Exist

§ 3 True Indivisible Atoms of Nature

§ 4 Eternal by Nature: Monads Can't Perish

§ 5 Eternal by Origin: Monads Can't Form Naturally

§ 6 Divine Creation/Annihilation Necessity

§ 7 Windowless Monad: No True External Influence

§ 8 Why Monads Need Qualities to Explain Change

§ 9 Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles

§ 10 Inherent Changeability of Created Things

§ 11 Internal Source of Natural Change

§ 12 Need for Change Principle & Specifics

§ 13 Multitude in Unity: Simple Being's Change

§ 14 Perception (Unconscious) & Consciousness Distinction

§ 15 Appetition: Internal Change Driver

§ 16 Soul Proves Multitude in Simple Substance

§ 17 Refuting Materialism: Perception Isn't Mechanical

§ 18 Entelechy: Monad's Inner Perfection & Self-Sufficiency

§ 19 Soul Gradations: Bare Monads to Conscious Minds

§ 20 Temporary Unconscious State

§ 21 Constant Reality of "Little Perceptions"

§ 22 Law of State Continuity

§ 23 Proof of Unconscious Perceptions from Consciousness

§ 24 Bare Monads: Perpetual Stupefaction

§ 25 How Organs Create Distinct Perception in Animals

- § 26 Empirical Reasoning: Memory Mimics Reason
- § 27 Source of Powerful Imagination
- § 28 Humans as Empirics in Most Actions
- § 29 Reason's Distinguishing Feature: Necessary Truths
- § 30 How Reflexive Acts Lead to God & Metaphysics
- § 31 First Great Principle: Contradiction
- § 32 Second Great Principle: Sufficient Reason
- § 33 Two Truth Realms: Necessary vs. Contingent
- § 34 Analytical Model of Necessary Truths
- § 35 Analysis Foundation: Simple Ideas & Identical Truths
- § 36 Applying Sufficient Reason to Contingent Facts
- § 37 Infinite Regress of Contingent Reasons
- § 38 Necessary Being as Ultimate Reason
- § 39 Conclusion: God's Unity & Sufficiency
- § 40 Necessary Being Attributes: Unlimited & All-Real
- § 41 Defining God's Absolute & Infinite Perfection
- § 42 Imperfection Origin in Limited Creatures
- § 43 God as Ground of Possibility & Essence
- § 44 Why Possibility Requires Existing Necessary Being
- § 45 A Priori (Ontological) & A Posteriori (Cosmological) God Proofs
- § 46 God's Intellect vs. Will: Necessary Truths' Non-Arbitrary Nature
- § 47 Continuous Monad Emanation from God
- § 48 Triune God Structure & Monad Reflection
- § 49 Action as Distinct Perception, Passion as Confused
- § 50 Measure of Creature's Perfection & Activity
- § 51 Inter-Monadic Influence: Ideal & God-Mediated
- § 52 Action/Passion Relativity
- § 53 Need for Sufficient Reason to Choose One World
- § 54 Choice Criteria: Perfection Degrees
- § 55 Actualizing Best World by Divine Wisdom, Goodness, Power
- § 56 Universal Inter-Expression: Each Monad Mirrors Universe
- § 57 Perspectivalism: Same Universe, Different Views

- § 58 Optimizing Formula: Max Variety, Max Order
- § 59 Grand Hypothesis Magnifying God's Glory
- § 60 Monad Represents Whole Universe from Limited View
- § 61 Physical Basis of Expression: Matter's Interconnectedness
- § 62 Body as Soul Expression Mediator
- § 63 Soul-Organic Body Union Creates Living Being
- § 64 Natural Machines' Infinite Complexity vs. Artificial
- § 65 Matter's Actual Infinite Division
- § 66 World Within: Every Matter Part Full of Life
- § 67 Life's Infinite Recursion: Worlds Within Worlds
- § 68 Life Pervasive, Even in "Inanimate" Matter
- § 69 Chaos & Sterility Illusion
- § 70 Living Beings Hierarchy: Dominant & Subordinate Monads
- § 71 Against Fixed Matter: Body in Perpetual Flux
- § 72 Metamorphosis, Not Transmigration (Metempsychosis)
- § 73 No True Generation/Death, Only Transformation
- § 74 Preformation: Animal Already in Seed
- § 75 Spermatic Animals & Few "Elect"
- § 76 Natural Eternity of Every Animal
- § 77 Indestructibility of Soul & Animal Itself
- § 78 Mind-Body Problem Answer: Pre-established Harmony
- § 79 Efficient & Final Causes Harmony
- § 80 Correcting Descartes' Soul-Body Error
- § 81 Pre-established Harmony Summary
- § 82 Rational Souls' Special Creation
- § 83 Spirits as God Images: Capable of Knowledge & Creation
- § 84 God's Relationship with Spirits: Prince & Father
- § 85 Culmination: City of God
- § 86 Moral World as God's Supreme Masterpiece
- § 87 Higher Harmony: Nature & Grace
- § 88 Natural Events Serve Moral Purposes
- § 89 The Mechanical Justice of the Universe

Printed on November 22, 2025

<https://cosmicphilosophy.org/books/leibniz-monadology/>

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

The Monadology (1714) by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

In 1714, German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz proposed a theory of ∞ infinite monads. The Monadology (French: La Monadologie) is one of Leibniz's best known works of his later philosophy. It is a short text which presents, in some 90 paragraphs, a metaphysics of simple substances, or ∞ infinite monads.

During his last stay in Vienna from 1712 to September 1714, Leibniz wrote two short texts in French which were meant as concise expositions of his philosophy. After his death, "*Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondés en raison*", which was intended for prince Eugene of Savoy, appeared in French in the Netherlands. Philosopher Christian Wolff and collaborators published translations in German and Latin of the second text which came to be known as "*The Monadology*".

The publication of the book on  CosmicPhilosophy.org was translated into 42 languages from the original French text using the latest AI technologies of 2024/2025. The quality of the new German and English translations may rival the original translations from 1720. For many languages, the publication is a world first.

CHAPTER 2.



The Monadology

By Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, 1714

Principia philosophiæ seu theses in gratiam principis Eu-genii
conscriptæ

§ 1

The Monad, which we shall discuss here, is nothing but a simple substance that enters into compounds; simple, meaning without parts (*Theodicy*, § 10⁴).

§ 2

And there must be simple substances since there are compounds; for a compound is nothing but a collection or aggregatum of simples.

§ 3

Now where there are no parts, there can be neither extension, nor shape, nor possible divisibility. These Monads are the true Atoms of Nature and, in short, the elements of things.

§ 4

There is also no dissolution to fear, and there is no conceivable way in which a simple substance could perish naturally (§ 89).

§ 5

For the same reason, there is no way in which a simple substance could begin naturally, since it cannot be formed by composition.

§ 6

Thus, one can say that Monads can only begin or end all at once, that is, they can only begin by creation and end by annihilation; whereas what is compound begins or ends by parts.

§ 7

There is also no way to explain how a Monad could be altered or changed internally by any other creature, since nothing can be transposed within it, nor can there be conceived within it any internal motion that could be excited, directed, increased, or diminished, as can happen in compounds where there are changes among the parts. Monads have no windows through which anything could enter or leave. Accidents cannot detach themselves and walk about outside of substances, as the sensible species of the Scholastics once did. Thus, neither substance nor accident can enter a Monad from outside.

§ 8

Nevertheless, Monads must have some qualities, otherwise they would not even be beings. And if simple substances did not differ at all in their qualities, there would be no way to perceive any change in things, since what is in the compound can only come from its simple ingredients; and if Monads were without qualities, they would be indistinguishable from one another, since they also do not differ in quantity. Consequently, assuming a plenum, each

place would always receive, in any motion, only the equivalent of what it had before, and one state of things would be *indistinguishable* from another.

§ 9

It is even necessary that each Monad be different from every other. For there are never two beings in nature that are perfectly alike and in which it is impossible to find an internal difference or one based on an intrinsic denomination.

§ 10

I also take for granted that every created being is subject to change, and consequently the created Monad as well, and indeed that this change is continuous in each.

§ 11

It follows from what we have just said that the natural changes of Monads come from an *internal principle*, since an external cause cannot influence its interior (§ 396, § 900).

§ 12

But besides the principle of change, there must also be a *detail of what changes*, which constitutes, so to speak, the specification and variety of simple substances.

§ 13

This detail must involve a multiplicity in unity or in the simple. For since every natural change takes place gradually, something changes and something remains. Consequently, there must be a plurality of affections and relations in the simple substance, although it has no parts.

§ 14

The transient state which involves and represents a multiplicity in unity or in the simple substance is nothing other than what we call *Perception*, which should be distinguished from apperception or consciousness, as will become clear in what follows. This is where the Cartesians made a great mistake, by treating as negligible those perceptions of which we are not conscious. This is also what led them to believe that only spirits were Monads, that there were no souls of Beasts or other Entelechies. With the common people, they confused a long stupor with death in the strict sense, which led them to fall into the scholastic prejudice of completely separate souls, and even confirmed misguided minds in their belief in the mortality of souls.

§ 15

The action of the internal principle which produces the change or passage from one perception to another may be called *Appetition*. It is true that appetite cannot always completely attain the whole

perception toward which it tends, but it always obtains something of it and reaches new perceptions.

§ 16

We experience ourselves a multiplicity in the simple substance when we find that the least thought of which we are conscious involves variety in its object. Thus all those who recognize that the soul is a simple substance should recognize this multiplicity in the Monad; and Mr. Bayle should not have found any difficulty in this, as he did in his Dictionary article *Rorarius*.

§ 17

Moreover, one must confess that Perception and what depends on it is *inexplicable by mechanical reasons*, that is, through shapes and motions. Suppose there were a machine whose structure produced thinking, feeling, and perception; one could conceive of it as enlarged while maintaining the same proportions, so that one could enter into it, as one enters into a mill. That being so, on examining its interior, we would find only parts that push one another, and never anything that could explain perception. Thus, it is in the simple substance, and not in the compound or in the machine, that perception must be sought. Indeed, this is all that can be found in the simple substance—namely, perceptions and their changes. It is also in this alone that all the Internal Actions of simple substances can consist (Pref. ***, 2 b⁵).

§ 18

One could give the name of Entelechies to all simple substances, or created Monads, for they have in themselves a certain perfection (*échousi to entelés*), there is a self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) which makes them the sources of their internal actions and, so to speak, incorporeal automata (§ 87).

§ 19

If we wish to call Soul everything that has *perceptions and appetites* in the general sense I have just explained, then all simple substances or created Monads could be called Souls. But since sentiment is something more than a mere perception, I agree that the general name of Monads and Entelechies should suffice for simple substances which have only that, and that we should call *Souls* only those whose perception is more distinct and accompanied by memory.

§ 20

For we experience within ourselves a state where we remember nothing and have no distinct perception, as when we faint or when we are overwhelmed by a deep, dreamless sleep. In this state, the soul does not differ noticeably from a simple Monad; but since this state is not lasting, and it emerges from it, it is something more (§ 64).

§ 21

And it does not follow that the simple substance is then without any perception. This cannot be, for the reasons stated above; for it cannot perish, nor can it subsist without some affection, which is nothing other than its perception: but when there is a great multitude of small perceptions, where nothing is distinct, one is stunned; as when one turns continuously in the same direction several times in succession, where dizziness comes that can make us faint and leaves us unable to distinguish anything. And death can give this state to animals for a time.

§ 22

And as every present state of a simple substance is naturally a consequence of its preceding state, such that the present is pregnant with the future (§ 360);

§ 23

Therefore, since upon awakening from stupor one becomes *aware* of one's perceptions, one must have had them immediately before, even though one was not aware of them; for a perception can only naturally come from another perception, just as a movement can only naturally come from another movement (§ 401–403).

§ 24

From this we see that if we had nothing distinct and, so to speak, heightened, and of a higher taste in our perceptions, we would always be in a state of stupefaction. And this is the state of bare Monads.

§ 25

Thus we see that Nature has given heightened perceptions to animals, through the care she has taken to provide them with organs that gather multiple rays of light or multiple waves of air, to make them more effective through their union. There is something similar in smell, taste, and touch, and perhaps in many other senses unknown to us. And I will soon explain how what happens in the soul represents what occurs in the organs.

§ 26

Memory provides souls with a kind of *consecutiveness* that imitates reason but must be distinguished from it. We see that animals, having the perception of something that strikes them and of which they have had similar perception before, expect through the representation of their memory what was joined to it in the previous perception and are led to feelings similar to those they had then. For example: when one shows a stick to dogs, they remember the pain it has caused them and cry out and flee (Prelim.⁶, § 65).

§ 27

And the strong imagination that strikes and moves them comes either from the magnitude or the multitude of previous perceptions. For often a strong impression produces at once the effect of a long *habit* or of many mediocre perceptions repeated.

§ 28

Men act like beasts insofar as the consecutive series of their perceptions are governed only by the principle of memory; resembling empirical physicians, who have mere practice without theory; and we are empiricists in three-quarters of our actions. For example, when we expect that there will be daylight tomorrow, we act empirically, because this has always happened until now. Only the astronomer judges this through reason.

§ 29

But the knowledge of necessary and eternal truths is what distinguishes us from mere animals and gives us *Reason* and the sciences, raising us to the knowledge of ourselves and of God. And this is what we call in us Rational Soul, or *Spirit*.

§ 30

It is also through the knowledge of necessary truths and through their abstractions that we are raised to reflexive acts, which make us think of what we call self and consider that this or that is in us: and it is thus that in thinking of ourselves, we think of Being, of

Substance, of the simple and the compound, of the immaterial and of God himself; conceiving that what is limited in us is in him without limits. And these reflexive acts provide the principal objects of our reasoning (*Theod.*, Pref. *, 4, a⁷)

§ 31

And it does not follow that the simple substance is then without any perception. Our reasoning is based on *two great principles*, that of contradiction, by virtue of which we judge as *false* that which involves it, and true that which is opposed or contradictory to the false (§ 44, § 196).

§ 32

And *that of* sufficient reason, by virtue of which we consider that no fact can be true or existing, no statement true, without there being a sufficient reason why it is thus and not otherwise. Although most often these reasons cannot be known to us (§ 44, § 196).

§ 33

There are also two kinds of *truths*, those of *Reasoning* and those of *Fact*. Truths of Reasoning are necessary and their opposite is impossible, while those of Fact are contingent and their opposite is possible. When a truth is necessary, one can find its reason through analysis, resolving it into simpler ideas and truths, until

one reaches the primitive ones (§ 170, 174, 189, § 280-282, § 367. Summary obj. 3).

§ 34

It is thus that among Mathematicians, speculative *theorems* and practical canons are reduced by analysis to *Definitions, Axioms, and Postulates*.

§ 35

And finally, there are *simple ideas* of which no definition can be given; there are also axioms and postulates, or in a word, *primitive principles*, which cannot be proved and need no proof: these are *identical propositions*, whose opposite contains an express contradiction (§ 36, 37, 44, 45, 49, 52, 121-122, 337, 340-344).

§ 36

But *sufficient reason* must also be found in *contingent truths or truths of fact*, that is, in the sequence of things spread throughout the universe of creatures; where the resolution into particular reasons could go into endless detail, because of the immense variety of things in Nature and the infinite division of bodies. There is an infinity of present and past figures and motions that enter into the efficient cause of my present writing; and there is an infinity of small inclinations and dispositions of my soul, present and past, that enter into the final cause.

§ 37

And as all this *detail* involves only other prior contingents or more detailed ones, each of which needs a similar analysis to give its reason, we are no further ahead: and the sufficient or final reason must be outside the sequence or *series* of this detail of contingencies, however infinite it might be.

§ 38

And thus the ultimate reason of things must be in a necessary substance, in which the detail of changes exists only eminently, as in their source: and this is what we call God (§ 7).

§ 39

Now this substance being a sufficient reason for all this detail, which is also connected throughout; *there is only one God, and this God suffices.*

§ 40

One can also judge that this supreme substance, which is unique, universal and necessary, having nothing outside it that is independent of it, and being a simple consequence of possible being, must be incapable of limits and contain as much reality as is possible.

§ 41

From which it follows that God is absolutely perfect; *perfection* being nothing other than the magnitude of positive reality taken precisely, setting aside the limits or bounds in things that have them. And where there are no bounds, that is, in God, perfection is absolutely infinite (§ 22, Pref. *, 4 a).

§ 42

It also follows that creatures have their perfections from God's influence, but they have their imperfections from their own nature, incapable of being without bounds. For it is in this that they are distinguished from God. This *original imperfection* of creatures is observed in the *natural inertia* of bodies (§ 20, 27-30, 153, 167, 377 ff.).

§ 43

It is also true that in God is not only the source of existences, but also that of essences, insofar as they are real, or of what is real in possibility. This is because God's understanding is the region of eternal truths, or of the ideas on which they depend, and without him there would be nothing real in possibilities, and not only nothing existing, but also nothing possible (§ 20).

§ 44

For if there is reality in essences or possibilities, or in eternal truths, this reality must be grounded in something existing and actual; and consequently in the existence of the Necessary Being, in whom essence includes existence, or in whom it suffices to be possible to be actual (§ 184-189, 335).

§ 45

Thus God alone (or the Necessary Being) has this privilege that He must exist if He is possible. And since nothing can prevent the possibility of that which contains no limits, no negation, and consequently no contradiction, this alone suffices to know God's existence a priori. We have also proved it through the reality of eternal truths. But we have just proved it also a posteriori since contingent beings exist, which can have their ultimate or sufficient reason only in the necessary being, who has the reason for His existence in Himself.

§ 46

However, one must not imagine, as some do, that the eternal truths, being dependent on God, are arbitrary and depend on his will, as Descartes appears to have thought and later M. Poiret. This is true only of contingent truths, whose principle is *fitness* or the choice of the *best*; whereas necessary truths depend solely on his understanding and are its internal object (§ 180-184, 185, 335, 351, 380).

§ 47

Thus God alone is the primitive unity, or the original simple substance, from which all created or derivative Monads are productions and arise, so to speak, through continuous Fulgurations of the Divinity from moment to moment, limited by the receptivity of the creature, to which it is essential to be limited (§ 382-391, 398, 395).

§ 48

In God there is *Power*, which is the source of everything, then *Knowledge*, which contains the detail of ideas, and finally *Will*, which makes changes or productions according to the principle of the best (§ 7, 149-150). And this corresponds to what, in created monads, constitutes the subject or base, the perceptive faculty and the appetitive faculty. But in God these attributes are absolutely infinite or perfect; and in created Monads or entelechies (or perfectihabies, as Hermolaus Barbarus translated this word) they are only imitations, to the degree that there is perfection (§ 87).

§ 49

A creature is said to *act* externally insofar as it has perfection, and to *undergo* from another insofar as it is imperfect. Thus *action* is attributed to the Monad insofar as it has distinct perceptions, and *passion* insofar as it has confused ones (§ 32, 66, 386).

§ 50

And one creature is more perfect than another insofar as one finds in it that which serves to explain a priori what happens in the other, and it is through this that one says it acts upon the other.

§ 51

But in simple substances there is only an ideal influence of one monad upon another, which can have its effect only through God's intervention, insofar as in God's ideas one monad rightly demands that God, in regulating the others from the beginning of things, should have regard to it. For since one created Monad cannot have any physical influence on the interior of another, it is only by this means that one can be dependent on another (§ 9, 54, 65-66, 201. Summary obj. 3).

§ 52

And it is through this that among creatures actions and passions are mutual. For God, comparing two simple substances, finds in each reasons that oblige him to accommodate the other to it; and consequently what is *active* in certain respects is *passive* from another point of view: *active* insofar as what we know distinctly in it serves to explain what occurs in another, and *passive* insofar as the reason for what occurs in it is found in what is known distinctly in another (§ 66).

§ 53

Now, as there is an infinity of possible universes in God's Ideas and only one can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for God's choice, which determines him to one rather than another (§ 8, 10, 44, 173, 196 ff., 225, 414-416).

§ 54

And this reason can be found only in *fitness*, or in the degrees of perfection that these worlds contain; each possible having the right to claim existence in proportion to the perfection it contains (§ 74, 167, 350, 201, 130, 352, 345 ff., 354).

§ 55

And this is the cause of the existence of the best, which wisdom makes known to God, which his goodness makes him choose, and which his power makes him produce (§ 8, 7, 80, 84, 119, 204, 206, 208. Summary obj. 1, obj. 8).

§ 56

Now this *connection* or this accommodation of all created things to each and of each to all others, means that each simple substance has relations that express all the others, and that it is consequently a perpetual living mirror of the universe (§ 130, 360).

§ 57

And as the same city viewed from different sides appears entirely different and is, as it were, multiplied perspectively, it similarly happens that, through the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are as many different universes, which are nevertheless only perspectives of a single one according to the different points of view of each Monad.

§ 58

And this is the means of obtaining as much variety as possible, but with the greatest order possible, that is, it is the means of obtaining as much perfection as possible (§ 120, 124, 241 sqq., 214, 243, 275).

§ 59

Also, it is only this hypothesis (which I dare say is demonstrated) that properly exalts the greatness of God: this is what Mr. Bayle recognized when, in his Dictionary (article *Rorarius*), he raised objections to it, where he was even tempted to believe that I gave too much to God, more than is possible. But he could not give any reason why this universal harmony, which makes every substance exactly express all others through the relations it has to them, should be impossible.

§ 60

Moreover, we can see in what I have just reported the a priori reasons why things could not be otherwise. Because God, in regulating the whole, has taken into account each part, and particularly each monad, whose nature being representative, nothing could limit it to representing only a part of things; although it is true that this representation is only confused in the detail of the whole universe, and can be distinct only in a small part of things, that is, in those which are either closest or largest in relation to each Monad; otherwise each monad would be a Divinity. It is not in the object, but in the modification of knowledge of the object, that monads are limited. They all tend confusedly toward the infinite, toward the whole; but they are limited and distinguished by degrees of distinct perceptions.

§ 61

And compounds symbolize in this with simples. For, as all is full, which makes all matter linked, and as in the plenum all motion has some effect on distant bodies, according to the distance, so that each body is affected not only by those that touch it and feels in some way everything that happens to them, but also through them feels those that touch the first ones by which it is immediately touched: it follows that this communication extends to any distance whatsoever. And consequently, every body feels everything that happens in the universe; such that one who sees all could read in each what happens everywhere and even what has happened or will happen; by observing in the present what is distant, both in time and place: *sumpnoia panta*, as Hippocrates

said. But a Soul can read in itself only what is distinctly represented there; it cannot unfold all at once all its folds, for they extend to infinity.

§ 62

Thus although each created monad represents the entire universe, it represents more distinctly the body that is particularly affected to it and of which it is the entelechy: and as this body expresses the entire universe through the connection of all matter in the plenum, the soul also represents the entire universe by representing this body, which belongs to it in a particular way (§ 400).

§ 63

The body belonging to a Monad, which is its entelechy or Soul, constitutes with the entelechy what can be called a *living being*, and with the soul what is called an *animal*. Now this body of a living being or an animal is always organic; for every Monad being a mirror of the universe in its own way, and the universe being regulated in perfect order, there must also be order in the representative, that is, in the perceptions of the soul, and consequently in the body, according to which the universe is represented therein (§ 403).

§ 64

Thus each organic body of a living being is a kind of divine machine, or natural automaton, which infinitely surpasses all artificial automata. Because a machine made by human art is not a machine in each of its parts. For example: the tooth of a brass wheel has parts or fragments that are no longer something artificial to us and no longer have anything that indicates a machine in relation to the use for which the wheel was intended. But the machines of nature, that is, living bodies, are still machines in their smallest parts, to infinity. This is what makes the difference between Nature and art, that is, between Divine art and ours (§ 134, 146, 194, 483).

§ 65

And the author of nature has been able to practice this divine and infinitely marvelous artifice because each portion of matter is not only infinitely divisible as the ancients recognized, but is actually subdivided without end, each part into parts, each of which has some proper motion; otherwise it would be impossible for each portion of matter to express the whole universe (Prelim. [Disc. d. 1. conform.], § 70. Theod., §195).

§ 66

Whereby one sees that there is a world of creatures, of living things, of animals, of entelechies, of souls in the smallest part of matter.

§ 67

Each portion of matter can be conceived as a garden full of plants and as a pond full of fish. But each branch of the plant, each member of the animal, each drop of its humors is still such a garden or such a pond.

§ 68

And although the earth and air intercepted between the plants of the garden, or the water intercepted between the fish of the pond, is neither plant nor fish; they still contain them, but most often of a subtlety imperceptible to us.

§ 69

Thus there is nothing uncultivated, sterile, or dead in the universe, no chaos, no confusion except in appearance; much like what would appear in a pond from a distance where one would see a confused motion and swarming, so to speak, of the fish in the pond, without discerning the fish themselves.

§ 70

One sees by this that each living body has a dominant entelechy which is the soul in the animal; but the members of this living body are full of other living things, plants, animals, each of which has again its entelechy, or its dominant soul.

§ 71

But one must not imagine, as some who had misunderstood my thought did, that each soul has a mass or portion of matter proper or assigned to it forever, and that it consequently possesses other inferior living beings, always destined for its service. For all bodies are in perpetual flux like rivers, and parts enter and leave them continually.

§ 72

Thus the soul changes its body only gradually and by degrees, so that it is never stripped all at once of all its organs; and there is often metamorphosis in animals, but never metempsychosis or transmigration of Souls: there are also no completely separate Souls, nor spirits without bodies. God alone is entirely detached from them.

§ 73

This is also why there is never either complete generation nor perfect death taken in the strictest sense, consisting in the separation of the soul. And what we call Generations are developments and growths; as what we call deaths are envelopments and diminutions.

§ 74

Philosophers have been very perplexed about the origin of forms, entelechies, or Souls; but nowadays, when it has been perceived, through exact research done on plants, insects, and animals, that the organic bodies of nature are never produced from chaos or putrefaction, but always from seeds, in which there was undoubtedly some preformation; it has been judged that not only was the organic body already present before conception, but also a soul in this body, and in short, the animal itself; and that by means of conception this animal has only been disposed to a great transformation to become an animal of another species.

§ 75

The animals, of which some are elevated to the degree of larger animals by means of conception, can be called spermatic; but those among them which remain in their species, that is, the majority, are born, multiply, and are destroyed like the large animals, and there is only a small number of elect ones that pass to a greater theater.

§ 76

But this was only half the truth: I have therefore judged that if the animal never begins naturally, it also never ends naturally; and that not only will there be no generation, but also no entire destruction, nor death taken in the strictest sense. And these reasonings made a posteriori and drawn from experiments accord perfectly with my principles deduced a priori as above.

§ 77

Thus one can say that not only the soul (mirror of an indestructible universe) is indestructible, but also the animal itself, although its machine often perishes in part, and takes off or puts on organic spoils.

§ 78

These principles have given me a way to naturally explain the union or conformity of the soul and the organic body. The soul follows its own laws and the body follows its own as well; and they meet by virtue of the pre-established harmony between all substances, since they are all representations of the same universe.

§ 79

Souls act according to the laws of final causes through appetitions, ends, and means. Bodies act according to the laws of efficient causes or movements. And the two kingdoms, that of efficient causes and that of final causes, are harmonious with each other.

§ 80

Descartes recognized that souls cannot give force to bodies, because there is always the same quantity of force in matter.

However, he believed that the soul could change the direction of bodies. But this was because in his time the law of nature, which also maintains the conservation of the same total direction in matter, was not known. Had he noticed it, he would have arrived at my System of Pre-established Harmony.

§ 81

This System makes bodies act as if (impossibly) there were no souls; and Souls act as if there were no bodies; and both act as if one influenced the other.

§ 82

As for Spirits or Rational Souls, although I find that fundamentally the same thing exists in all living beings and animals, as we have just said (namely that the animal and the soul begin only with the world and likewise do not end before the world), there is nevertheless something particular about Rational Animals: their small spermatic Animals, as long as they are only that, have only ordinary or sensitive souls; but when those that are elected, so to speak, attain through actual conception to human nature, their sensitive souls are elevated to the degree of reason and to the prerogative of Spirits.

§ 83

Among other differences between ordinary Souls and Spirits, of which I have already noted some, there is also this: that souls in general are living mirrors or images of the universe of creatures; but spirits are also images of the Divinity itself, or of the author of nature himself: capable of knowing the system of the universe and of imitating something of it through architectonic samples; each spirit being like a small divinity in its department.

§ 84

This is what makes Spirits capable of entering into a kind of Society with God, and that He is to them not only what an inventor is to his Machine (as God is in relation to other creatures) but also what a Prince is to his subjects, and even a father to his children.

§ 85

From which it is easy to conclude that the assembly of all Spirits must compose the City of God, that is, the most perfect State possible under the most perfect of Monarchs.

§ 86

This City of God, this truly universal Monarchy is a Moral World within the Natural world, and what is highest and most divine in God's works: and it is in this that God's glory truly consists, since there would be none if His greatness and goodness were not

known and admired by spirits. It is also in relation to this divine City that He properly has Goodness, while His wisdom and power are shown everywhere.

§ 87

As we have established above a Perfect Harmony between two natural Kingdoms, one of Efficient causes, the other of Final causes, we must note here yet another harmony between the Physical kingdom of Nature and the Moral kingdom of Grace, that is, between God considered as Architect of the Machine of the universe, and God considered as Monarch of the divine City of Spirits (§ 62, 74, 118, 248, 112, 130, 247).

§ 88

This Harmony ensures that things lead to Grace through the very paths of Nature, and that this globe, for example, must be destroyed and repaired by natural means at the moments required by the government of Spirits; for the punishment of some, and the reward of others (§ 18 sqq., 110, 244-245, 340).

§ 89

One can also say that God as Architect satisfies in everything God as legislator; and thus sins must carry their punishment with them through the order of nature and by virtue of the very mechanical structure of things; and likewise good actions will

attract their rewards through mechanical ways with respect to bodies; although this cannot and should not always happen immediately.

§ 90

Finally, under this perfect government there would be no good Action without reward, no bad one without punishment: and everything must work out for the good of the good; that is, of those who are not malcontents in this great State, who trust in Providence, after having done their duty, and who love and imitate, as they should, the Author of all good, taking pleasure in the consideration of His perfections according to the nature of true *pure love*, which makes one take pleasure in the happiness of what one loves. This is what makes wise and virtuous people work at everything that appears to conform to the presumptive divine will, or antecedent will; and be content nevertheless with what God actually brings about through His secret will, consequent and decisive; recognizing that if we could sufficiently understand the order of the universe, we would find that it surpasses all the wishes of the wisest, and that it is impossible to make it better than it is; not only for the whole in general, but also for ourselves in particular, if we are properly attached to the Author of all, not only as the Architect and efficient cause of our being, but also as our Master and the final cause that must be the whole aim of our will, and can alone make our happiness (Pref. *, 4 a b¹⁴. § 278. Pref. *, 4 b¹⁵).

END

¹⁴ Edit. Erdm., p. 469.

¹⁵ Edit. Erdm., p. 469 b.



CosmicPhilosophy.org

<https://cosmicphilosophy.org/>

Printed on November 22, 2025

Our other projects:

- ▶ GMODEbate.org: A project that investigates the philosophical underpinnings of eugenics, scientism, the "emancipation-of-science from philosophy" movement, the "anti-science narrative" and modern forms of scientific inquisition.