Mind and the World
Lecture: Leibniz
Dec. 4, 2006

1. A world of *monads*:
    a. Leibniz works with the familiar distinction between *formal* and *objective* reality.
        i. Monads are substances, and as such they have formal reality.
        ii. Monads are perceivers, and their acts of perception have formal reality; whereas, what they represent has objective reality.
        iii. At the "first level" of representation, monads represent other monads.
            1. Monads also represent what other monads represent, so they have a "second level" of representation.
            2. This goes on, in a "nested" fashion to an infinite level of complexity.
        iv. Monads are simple, yet they act through an internal principle of change, appetition. *Monadology*, §15
        v. Monads represent a multiplicity. *Monadology*, §16. So, at the level of formal reality, monads are simple; at the level of objective reality they are complex.
    b. The nature of perception:
        i. Unlike Descartes, Leibniz does not accept the inference from "M has an idea" to "M knows he has an idea (and can discern its qualities)."
        ii. Each monad, in fact, perceives much more than the monad has the capacity to discern.
            1. Each of us, for example, has some sort of representation of everything that is happening now or that happened at any point in the past.
            2. Only God has *perfect* perception, i.e. "perspicuous" (transparent) representations of anything.
        iii. Some perceptions are conscious; these are *apperceptions*. *Monadology*, §14
        iv. Different monads have representations ("perceptions") that differ in clarity or distinctness.
            1. Some monads, overall, "get" the world more clearly and distinctly than others, and only some have *consciousness*, or *awareness* of their representations at all.

2. Among conscious monads, some get one part of the world particularly clearly whereas others get a different part clearly. (This is the metaphysical grounding for both space and time.)

v. Perceptions arise "naturally" only from other perceptions. *Monadology*, §23
   1. The cause of perceptions is a major concern for 17^{th} – 18^{th} c. thinkers.
   2. It is one of the fundamental differences between Empiricists and Rationalists.

vi. Through *acts of reflection,* however, our perceptions can be brought into consideration in the light of the principles of *contradiction* and *sufficient reason*. *Monadology*, §28-32.

c. Our notions of other substances are *incomplete*, or partial.
   i. Notions are distinct from *perceptions*. Our notion of something is our capacity to think about it, to consciously represent it.
      1. The "complete representation" of something is infinitely detailed, including as it does everything that happens in the universe.
      2. It's also infinitely layered, a representation of a substance includes not only all that happens to it but also all of its representations, which include representations of other substances representations…
   ii. One substance, God, does have a complete concept of all other substances. Not only that, God has complete concepts of all substances, *possible or actual*.

d. All of this can be seen as a development of Leibniz's theory of truth.
   i. Metaphysically, all that happens in the universe, the only *real* truths (as opposed to phenomenal ones) are matters of *predicates* (or qualities) *inhering* in *substances.* The only *facts*, indeed the only *possible* facts, are *substances having qualities* or the other way around *qualities inhering in substances*.
   ii. Other apparent truths, relational "facts" for example, must be analyzed in terms that show this. So, $R(S_1, S_2)$ is analyzed as S_2-$R^*(S_1)$, or S_1-$R\hat{}(S_2)$.

e. Space and Time only have *objective* reality for Leibniz
   i. Both spatial and temporal relations must be analyzable as qualities-inhering-in-substances and only this.

ii. Monads are not spatial; perhaps they are not temporal (?). If they were, they wouldn't be simple. Metaphysically, they are *"perceptual programs,"* non-spatial, non-temporal representations of the universe (or a possible universe), where what each represents is an infinity of "compossible" substances. Each monad *"harmonizes"* with each other monad in its logically possible world.

iii. There is, however, an underlying formal, metaphysical reality that corresponds to the objective realities of space of time.

1. What we experience, and represent, spatially (temporally), is a confused representation of what is actually going on in the world. Furthermore, my particular representation may be a better or worse approximation, or I might be confused about what my representation depicts.
2. But various monads working at the same level of clarity might have real disagreements about spatial relations in the world, i.e. while all are "false" metaphysically, some nonetheless are "true phenomenal" representations.
3. One way of analyzing spatial relations among monads might be in the levels of nested-ness between their perceptions. S not only perceives S*, but the perceptions of S* as well. S* also has perceptions of S^, so S represents S*'s perceptions of S^, and so on. Order, in space or time, might be analyzable into such "generational" relationships. Spatially or temporally more distant events might be those at a greater "generational distance" from the point of view of the given monad.

2. Perfection

a. Perfection is a metaphysical concept for Leibniz, not a moral one.

i. The perfection of a monad at a given moment and place (so to speak) is a measure of the clarity and distinctness of its representations. (Leibniz is rather like Descartes here.)

ii. The perfection of a monad, overall, is the mean perfection it has throughout it's career as a constituent of a particular possible world.

iii. The perfection of a possible world is the sum of perfections enjoyed by the constituent monads.

iv. This comes down to us in two ways: the simplicity of the harmony exhibited by the constituent monads; the richness of their

representations. When the world is simple, the monads can get it more clearly and distinction; when it is rich, there's more to perceive.

b. The Principle of Perfection states that God will "actualize," bring into *formal being*, the world, among all possible worlds, that has the greatest perfection, i.e. that is simplest and richest among all possible worlds. Thus, the degree of perfection of a possible substance, or a possible world, is a measure of its potential for existence.
    i. Imperfection, then, is a limitation in the representations of monads as measured against some "standard of representation."
    ii. An unlimited representation would be fully clear and distinct, ultimately simple and rich, which can be unlimited only in an infinite being, i.e. God.
    iii. Metaphysically, this *is* God's perfection – his infinite capacity to represent all possible worlds fully and completely and thus to discern the degree of perfection within each world, overall or with respect to each constituent monad. (God is the set of all possible sets.)
c. God is "the necessary being," i.e. "…he must exist if he is possible." Leibniz treats this in the usual way, that metaphysical perfection ensures existence, but he insists, contra Descartes, that he must show that the idea of a "necessary being" is possible.
d. Leibniz argues for the possibility of the Necessary being on the grounds that if such a being did not exist, then nothing would exist. "…[God] is the source of what reality there is among possibilities. This is because God's understanding is the realm of eternal truths, or of the ideas on which they depend, and without God there would be no reality among possibilities: not only would nothing exist, but nothing would even be possible." *Monadology*, ¶ 43, p. 273.
    i. So, because some things so exist, not only possibly but actually, then the possibility of the Necessary being has been established, from which his actual (formal) existence follows.
    ii. How is it that actual substances depend on God, even as possibilities, let alone as realities? One way to look at this takes us back to Plato and Aristotle: Objective Being must precede Formal Being in the realm of particulars, i.e. monads in Leibniz's metaphysics. The World Soul, God, must be able to craft a world of monads, give them objective being as *possibilities*, before (logically speaking) they can become real. Leibniz is clear that what metaphysics offers us is not a rationale for scientific method (as Descartes thought), but an account in terms of final causes

for why the world should exists as it does (both in fact and in its particular ways).

3. Contingency
    a. The problem
        i. Reconcile Christian theology with science and metaphysics.
            1. Human free will
            2. Divine free will
        ii. Show that there is viable distinction between necessary and contingent truths.
            1. All true statements correctly represent the inherence of a quality in a substance.
            2. All true statements are analytic.
            3. If all analytic statements are necessary, then all statements are necessary, and there are no contingent truths.
    b. The key move
        i. The denial of a necessary statement is a contradiction.
        ii. If there are contingent truths, then the denial of these must not be contradiction (otherwise they would be necessary).
        iii. Can some statements be both analytic and yet the denial of these statements not be a contradiction?
            1. Leibniz, in effect, says "Yes, and no."
            2. He distinguishes between the *complete* notion of a substance and the *virtual* notion.
            3. Only God has a complete notion of any substance; limited substances have virtual notions.
            4. Suppose it is true that S_{232} is $P_{2,556}$
                a. For God, "S_{232} is not $P_{2,556}$" will be a contradiction.
                b. For us, given our incomplete notion of S_{232}, "S_{232} is not $P_{2,556}$", will be consistent.
            5. If the denial of a statement is not a contradiction, then it is not necessary. It will still be analytic in the sense that the predicate is in fact contained in the subject, but *not necessarily so*.
            6. Contingent truths cannot be fully analyzed by finite beings. "Here the resolution into particular reasons could be continued endlessly…" *Monadology*, §36. It is here that the third principle, the *Principle of Perfection* comes into play.

iv. But, didn't God make the world so that this predicate would be contained in this subject? Didn't he do so because this fact is part of "the best of all possible worlds"? Didn't God *have* to do this simply because he is a perfect being, one who *must* abide by the Principle of Perfection? If so, then contingency has *not* been salvaged. Everything is only as it *has to be*. Some things may appear to be contingent, but none really are.

c. The crux of Leibniz's resolution of this difficulty.

i. Contingency, or freedom, for Leibniz is not a matter of some things being true for no reason at all. Obviously, he insists with the Principle of Sufficient Reason that everything occurs for reasons. This surely squares with our own perspective on *free action* or things we do because we have chosen to them.

ii. But what if we choose to do something for some reason or other, but somehow we had no choice when it comes to that reason? The mugger says, with a gun under my chin, "Your money or your life," and I hand over my wallet. That's not choice but compulsion, even though I do reach into my pocket and hand over the wallet. Similarly, I may choose *what* I eat, but I have no choice when it comes to *eating*.

iii. On the other hand, suppose my choices reach back without hitting such a point. Imagine a chess game, perhaps… Nothing forces me to make a particular move, or play the game at all, or … Even if all this is somehow "grounded in my nature" to compete, or find amusement, or seek out companionship etc. I nonetheless am acting freely when I move a piece in a particular way.

iv. God gives reality to *this* fact rather than *that contrary* fact for good reason. *This* fact distinguishes *this* world from another which is very much like it, but not quite as good. But one change leads to others, since everything changes when one thing changes, at least in some small ways (or maybe it's all "Butterfly effects"). One change in *this* world opens the door, in fact, on a host of adjustments each of which might preserve compossibility. So God …