

(A) Imagine two clocks or watches which are in perfect agreement. Now this can happen in *three ways*. The *first* is that of natural influence. This is the way with which Mr. Huygens experimented, with results that greatly surprised him. He suspended two pendulums from the same piece of wood. The continued strokes of the pendulums transmitted similar vibrations to the particles of wood, but these vibrations could not continue in their own frequency without interfering with each other, at least when the two pendulums did not beat together. The result, by a kind of miracle, was that even when their strokes had been intentionally disturbed, they came to beat together again, somewhat like two strings tuned to each other. The *second* way of making two clocks, even poor ones, agree always is to assign a skilled craftsman to them who adjusts them and constantly sets them in agreement. The *third* way is to construct these two timepieces at the beginning with such skill and accuracy that one can be assured of their subsequent agreement.

Now put the soul and the body in the place of these two timepieces. Then their agreement or sympathy will also come about in one of these three ways. The *way of influence* is that of the common philosophy. But since it is impossible to conceive of material particles or of species or immaterial qualities which can pass from one of these substances into the other, this view must be rejected. The *way of assistance* is that of the system of occasional causes. But I hold that this makes a *deus ex machina* intervene in a natural and ordinary matter where reason requires that God should help only in the way in which he concurs in all other natural things. Thus there remains only my hypothesis, that is, the *way of pre-established harmony*, according to which God has made each of the two substances from the beginning in such a way that though each follows only its own laws which it has received with its being, each agrees throughout with the other, entirely as if they were mutually influenced or as if God were always putting forth his hand, beyond his general concurrence. I do not think there is anything more than this that I need to prove – unless someone should demand that I prove that God is skilful enough to make use of this foresighted artifice, of which we see samples even among men, to the extent they are able men. And assuming that God can do it, it is clear that this way is the most beautiful and the most worthy of him.

–Leibniz, “Second Explanation of the New System,” L, pp. 459-460

(B) There is nothing in things but simple substances, and in them, perception and appetite. . . . I don’t really eliminate body, but reduce it to what it is. For I show that corporeal mass, which is thought to have something over and above simple substances, is not a substance, but a phenomenon resulting from simple substances, which alone have unity and absolute reality.

–Letter to De Volder, 1704-05, AG, p. 181

(C) Although this [dividing of bodies into parts] goes on to infinity, it is evident that, in the end, everything reduces to these unities, the rest or the results being being nothing but well-founded phenomena.

–Note on Foucher’s Objection, 1695, AG, p. 147

(D) It follows from the supreme perfection of God that he chose the best possible plan in producing the universe, a plan in which there is the greatest variety together with the greatest order. The most carefully used plot of ground, place, and time; the greatest effect produced by the simplest means; the most power, knowledge, happiness, and goodness in created things that the universe could allow.

–“Principles of Nature and Grace,” AG, p. 210

(E) And lest anyone think that I am here confusing moral perfection or goodness with metaphysical perfection or greatness, and grant the latter while denying the former, one must realize that it follows from what I have said that not only is the world physically (or, if you prefer, metaphysically) most perfect, that is, that the series of things which has been brought forth is the one in which there is, in actuality, the greatest amount of reality, but it also follows that the world is morally most perfect, since

moral perfection is in reality physical perfection with respect to minds. From this it follows that the world is not only the most admirable machine, but, insofar as it is made up of minds, it is also the best republic, the republic through which minds derive the greatest possible happiness and joy, in which their physical perfection consists. –“Ultimate Origination,” AG, pp. 152-53

(F) But, you ask, don’t we experience quite the opposite in the world? For the worst often happens to the best, and not only innocent beasts, but also humans are injured and killed, even tortured. In the end, the world appears to be a certain confused chaos rather than a thing ordered by some supreme wisdom, especially if one takes note of the conduct of the human race. I confess that it appears this way at first glance, but a deeper look at things forces us to quite the contrary view. From those very considerations which I brought forward it is obvious *a priori* that everything, even minds, is of the highest perfection...

And indeed, it is unjust to make a judgment unless one has examined the entire law, as lawyers say. We know but a small part of the eternity which extends without measure, for how short is the memory of several thousand years which history gives us. But yet, from such meager experience we rashly make judgments about the immense and the eternal...Look at a very beautiful picture, and cover it up except for some small part. What will it look like but some confused combination of colors, without delight, without art...But as soon as the covering is removed, and you see the whole surface from an appropriate place, you will understand that what looked like accidental splotches on the canvas were made with consummate skill by the creator of the work. What the eyes discover in the painting, the ears discover in music. Indeed, the most distinguished masters of composition quite often mix dissonances with consonances in order to arouse the listener, and pierce him, as it were, so that, anxious about what is to happen, the listener might feel all the more pleasure when order is soon restored...He who hasn’t tasted bitter things hasn’t earned sweet things, nor indeed, will he appreciate them. Pleasure does not derive from uniformity, for uniformity brings forth disgust and makes us dull, not happy: this very principle is a law of delight. –“Ultimate Origination,” AG, p. 153

(G) God could give to each substance its own phenomena independent of those others, but in this way he would have made as many worlds without connection, so to speak, as there are substances, almost as we say when we dream, we are in a world apart and that we enter into the common world when we wake up. –Letter to Basnage de Beauval, July, 1698; L, p. 493

(H) Your other objection is the following:

If all monads get their perceptions out of their own store, so to speak, and without any physical influence of one upon another; if, furthermore, the perceptions of each monad correspond exactly to the rest of the monads which God has now created, and to their perceptions; then God cannot have created any one of these monads which now exist without having constituted all the rest, etc.

My reply is easy and has already been given. He can do it absolutely; he cannot do it hypothetically, because he has decreed that all things should function most wisely and harmoniously. There would be no deception of rational creatures, however, even if everything outside of them did not correspond exactly to their experiences, or indeed if nothing did, just as if there were only one mind; because everything would happen just as if all other things existed, and this mind, acting with reason, would not charge itself with any fault. For this is not to err. That the probable judgment which this mind formed of the existence of other creatures should be true, however, would no more be necessary than it was necessary that the earth should stand still because, with few exceptions, the whole human race once held this to be right. Not from necessity, therefore, but by the wisdom of God does it happen that judgments formed upon the best appearances, and after full discussion, are true.

–Letter to Des Bosses, April 29, 1715; L, p. 611

AG=Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, tr., G.W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays* (Hackett, 1989)

L=Leroy E. Loemker, ed., Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2nd edition (D. Reidel, 1976)