

A Résumé of Metaphysics (c. 1697)

1. There is a reason in Nature why something should exist rather than nothing. This is a consequence of the great principle that nothing happens without a reason, and also that there must be a reason why this thing exists rather than another.

2. This reason must be in some real entity, or cause. For a *cause* is simply a real reason, and truths about possibilities and *necessities* (that is, where the possibility of the opposite has been denied) would not produce anything unless those possibilities were founded on a thing which actually exists.

3. This entity must be necessary; otherwise a cause must again be sought outside it for the fact that it exists rather than does not exist, which is contrary to the hypothesis. This entity is the ultimate reason for things, and is usually called by the one word 'God'.

4. There is, therefore, a cause for the prevalence of existence over non-existence; or, *the necessary being is existence-creating*.^a

5. But the cause which brings it about that something exists, or that possibility demands existence, also brings it about that everything possible has an urge to existence; for a reason for restricting this to certain possible things in the universe cannot be found.

6. So it can be said that *everything possible demands existence*,^b inasmuch as it is founded on a necessary being which actually exists, and without which there is no way by which something possible may arrive at actuality.

7. But it does not follow from this that all possibles exist; though this would follow if all possibles were compossible.

8. But since some things are incompatible with others, it follows that certain possibles do not arrive at existence;

again, some things are incompatible with others, not only with respect to the same time, but also universally, since future events are involved in present ones.

9. Meanwhile, from the conflict of all possibles demanding existence this at any rate follows, that there exists that series of things through which the greatest amount exists, or, the greatest of all possible series.

10. This series alone is determinate, as among lines the straight line is determinate, among angles the right angle, and among figures the most capacious, namely the circle or sphere. And just as we see liquids spontaneously collect in spherical drops, so in the nature of the universe the most capacious series exists.

11. There exists, therefore, that which is the most perfect, since *perfection* is simply quantity of reality.

12. Further, perfection is not to be located in matter alone, that is, in something filling time and space, whose quantity would in any way have been the same; rather, it is to be located in form or variety.

13. So it follows that matter is not everywhere alike, but is rendered dissimilar by its forms; otherwise it would not obtain as much variety as it can. I pass over what I have shown elsewhere, that otherwise no diverse phenomena will arise.

14. It follows also that that series has prevailed through which there arises the greatest amount of what is distinctly thinkable.

15. Distinct cogitability gives order to a thing and beauty to a thinker. For order is simply a distinctive relation of several things; confusion is when several things are present, but there is no way of distinguishing one from another.

16. This removes atoms, and in general those bodies in which there is no reason for distinguishing one part from another.

17. It also follows in general that the world is a cosmos, full of ornament; that is, that it is made in such a way that it gives the greatest satisfaction to an intelligent being.

18. An intelligent being's *pleasure* is simply the perception of beauty, order and perfection. All pain contains something disordered, though only relative to the percipient; for in the absolute sense all things are ordered.

19. So when something in the series of things displeases us, that arises from a defect of our understanding. For it is not possible that every mind should understand everything distinctly; and to those who observe only some parts rather than others, the harmony in the whole cannot appear.

20. The consequence of this is that in the universe, justice also is observed; for *justice* is simply order or perfection with respect to minds.

21. And the greatest account is taken of minds, since through them there arises the greatest variety in the smallest space.

22. It can also be said that minds are the primary unities of the world and are the closest likenesses of the first Being, for they distinctly perceive necessary truths, that is, the reasons which moved the first Being, and must have formed the universe.

23. Further, the first cause is of the highest *goodness*, for whilst it produces as much perfection as possible in things, at the same time it bestows on minds as much pleasure as possible, since *pleasure* consists in the perception of perfection.

24. So much so, that evils themselves serve a greater good, and the fact that pains are found in minds is necessary if they are to reach greater pleasures.