

Selections from: G. W. Leibniz, *De Summa Rerum*, G. H. R. Parkinson, tr. (Yale Univ. Press, 1992).

From: "On Magnitude," p. 39 (note, p. 131).

A *rule* is an instrument or action, determining the form of the action by the perpetual and successive application of the agent to the parts of the instrument.<sup>7</sup> A pair of compasses is an instrument of action that determines the form of the action, but without the required successive application to the parts of the compasses. So a thread in a labyrinth, a footpath on a plain is a rule of action. A rule can also be curved; e.g., if I apply a pen to an orb that is smooth and round and make a movement with my hand around the orb, the orb will be a rule for me. The instruction which an emperor gives to a deputy on the latter's departure is a rule if it is written in such a way that the deputy, in his action, can only follow it in order. There can therefore be a *law* which is not a rule, as when the order of the precepts is different from that of the actions, even though it is possible to derive from the precepts, by correct reasoning, the order of action.

7. Compare a table of definitions, second half of 1671–early 1672? (A VI.2, 498): "A *rule* is an instrument which determines the shape of a motion whilst its application to space lasts. A pair of compasses, therefore, is not a rule. Some circle or solid ring would be a rule, if someone were to use it in describing a circle."

From: "On Truths, the Mind, God, and the Universe," pp. 63, 65, 67 (notes, pp. 133f).

On due consideration, only this is certain: that we sense, and that we sense in a consistent way, and that some rule<sup>12</sup> is observed by us in our sensing. For something to be sensed in a consistent way is for it to be sensed in such a way that a reason can be given for everything and everything can be predicted. This is what existence consists in—namely, in sensation that involves some certain laws; for otherwise, everything would be like dreams. Further, it consists in the fact that several people sense the same, and sense what is coherent; and different minds sense themselves and their own effects. From this it follows that there is one and the same cause which causes our own and others' sensations. But it is not therefore necessary that we act on them or they act on us, but only that we sense what is consistent; and necessarily so, on account of the sameness of the cause. Further, it is not necessary that a dream differs from waking experience by some intrinsic reality, but it is only necessary that they differ in form or in the order of the sensations. Therefore there is no reason why we should ask whether there exist certain bodies outside us, or whether space exists, and other things of this sort; for we do not explain adequately the terms that are involved here. Unless, that is, we say that we call a

"body" whatever is perceived in a consistent way, and say that "space" is that which brings it about that several perceptions cohere with each other at the same time—so that if, by a journey which is so long, I arrive at a certain place, and by a journey of another length at another place, and by a third journey at a third place, and again from one of these to another, then from these I infer how long it will take me to arrive, from one of the remaining places, at another of the remaining places, from the assumption of the unity of space. Therefore the idea of space is recognised by this: namely, that it is that by which we separate the place and, as it were, the world of dreams from our own. As this is so, it does not follow that there exists anything but sensation, and the cause of this sensation and of its consistency. From this it follows that infinitely many other spaces and other worlds can exist, in such a way that between these and ours there will be no distance, if there exist certain minds to which other things appear which are in no respect consistent with ours. Further, just as the world and space of dreams differ from ours, so there could be different laws of motion in that other world. From this it is evident that so far is it from being the case that material things are more real than others, but that on the contrary one can always doubt of their existence; or rather, they do not differ materially, i.e., in their existence in themselves, from the existence of dreams, even though they differ in beauty. When we awaken from our dreams we find more consistency in the control of our bodies, but not in the control of our minds, i.e., in the best republic; and it can happen that when at some time we awaken even from the sleep of this life, we shall come into a more perfect world. Though it can also happen that for certain periods we fall asleep again, i.e., that we return to this life and to another which is like it. Anyone who asks if there can be another world, or another space, is simply asking if there are other minds which have no communication with ours. From this it can easily be understood that the eternity of the world is not necessary; indeed it cannot be proved from what we sense. For although some mind is always necessary, and it cannot be understood how a particular mind can begin and end, yet as far as corporeal things are concerned it is always intelligible that this world should have begun at some time; that is, that there are sensations which cohere in this way.

If some mind thinks nothing in particular, but thinks nevertheless, it will be God, or, it will think all things. If the mind could have begun, it will be able to be extinguished; and just as it was made by God, so it will return to God. This would be a view which agrees with that of Aristotle, and of those who speak of a universal intellect.<sup>13</sup> To me, on the other hand, it seems that no soul has ever begun, or can cease. But the mind will nonetheless be created by God, since it will exist and remain by the will of

God, that is, by the will of a good intellect. For to exist is simply to be understood to be good. Existence is stated equivocally of bodies and of our mind. We sense or perceive that we exist; when we say that bodies exist, we mean that there exist certain consistent sensations, having a particular constant cause. Just as the number 3 is one thing, and 1, 1, 1 is another—for 3 is  $1 + 1 + 1$ , and to this extent the form of the number 3 is different from all its parts—in the same way creatures differ from God, who is all things. Creatures are some things.

12. For Leibniz's views about rules, compare No. 6 above, A 483.

13. Leibniz has in mind the Aristotelean doctrine of the active intellect, especially as interpreted by the Averroists.

From: "On the Origin of Things from Forms," pp. 77.

It seems to me that the origin of things from God is of the same kind as the origin of properties from an essence; just as  $6 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ , therefore  $6 = 3 + 3$ ,  $= 3 \times 2$ ,  $= 4 + 2$ , etc. Nor may one doubt that the one expression differs from the other, for in one way we think of the number 3 or the number 2 expressly, and in another way we do not; but it is certain that the number 3 is not thought of by someone who thinks of six units at the same time. It would be thought of, if the person were to impose a limit after three had been thought. Much less does someone who thinks of six units at the same time think of multiplication. So just as these properties differ from each other and from essence, so do things differ from each other and from God. I use the word "thing" readily, for we are accustomed to say, "God is a being," but we are not accustomed to say, "God is a thing."