

# Philosophical Optimism and the Philosophy of Leibniz

Yurii Kondrashkov

University of Northampton, United Kingdom

## ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the historical and philosophical analysis of the philosophical texts and life views of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. In the text, the author considers the possibility of considering the philosophy of the German scientist as optimistic. As a definition of philosophical optimism itself, the author takes the ideas of Voltaire, which are clearly presented in his book "Candide". The analysis is based on a number of new essays and articles devoted to the philosophy and worldview of Leibniz. The purpose of the analysis is to revise the tired understanding that Leibniz's philosophy has a direct connection with philosophical optimism.

## Introduction

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is one of the central figures in the development of science and in particular philosophy in the form in which we know it. The list of significant achievements of this scientist is not limited to one discipline. Nonetheless, despite major advancements in the fields of physics, mechanics, mathematics, and other fields, Leibniz is most remembered in history as a philosopher and strict logician.

He never wrote strictly structured philosophical treatises, so researchers still face the task of ordering and systematizing Leibniz's views in many aspects of his philosophy, for example, in relation to what the German philosopher puts into the concept of philosophy itself. In my opinion, it is quite possible that the research of his philosophy will never be sufficiently developed and lost relevance.

In connection with the fact that Leibniz lived and worked in the New Age, he was faced with the difficult task of adapting with his philosophy to the advancement of science to new advanced positions, taking into account the post-medieval religious worldview of people (a little more about this later). Despite a number of outstanding works and a large number of small essays in connection with the described historical context, his most relevant book was *Theodicy*, which remains at the center of a series of discussions to date. As is clear from the title, which can literally be translated as "the justification of God", Leibniz in his work defended the position of European monotheism in this completely new and original way for the time, namely by putting at the center of his work the assertion that the existing world is the best possible.

With relation to the argument used by the philosopher himself in *Theodicy* and in other equally significant works, a scourge of criticism has fallen upon him, which continues to this day, but some have been on his side. Many researchers consider him a follower of philosophical optimism and a man who made a significant contribution to the development of this direction for which they are criticized or even ridiculous. Moreover, there are modern investigations where he is undoubtedly attributed to optimists or even one of the originators of this direction, his philosophy is called optimistic (Gluchman, 2021).

This article is an attempt to look at Leibniz's philosophy from another side. This article is dedicated to putting into question, on the basis of the analysis of the literature devoted to his philosophy and the treatises of Leibniz himself, the assertion that Leibniz was involved in philosophical optimism.

The questions of the creation of the world and the foundations of being, which Leibniz dealt with, than to a greater extent and became famous as a philosopher, have not lost their relevance and still continue to be investigated in the books, articles and dissertations of many modern philosophers. All developments of this type continue to be

speculative because in most cases they are based on the works of other philosophers, and not on generally recognized scientific facts and mostly have a purely historical or philosophy-historical orientation. Therefore, Leibniz's arguments presented in his *Theodicy* continue to live in many discussions in the modern scientific world.

It is also important to note that the topic chosen for this article is not only in the philosophical field, it is clear from the fact that Leibniz himself was not only a philosopher. Mainly the Leibniz developments that will be discussed in this article concern such areas as ethics and philosophy of religion. The subject itself lies at the intersection of philosophy, religion and history. The development of this topic was carried out by many researchers who came to different results, often based on different assumptions. This article is an attempt to revise previous ideas about Leibniz's philosophy based not only on the analysis of his texts but also on his biography with the help of modern research. This makes the topic clearly interesting and important for research which will be described in this article.

## Key points in Leibniz's early biography

In order to introduce the reader to the context, it is important to indicate a number of biographical facts about the life of Leibniz, they are written below. He was born in 1646 in a German intellectual family. His father was a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Leipzig, Friedrich Leibniz, his mother Catherine Schmuck was also from a well-known professor family. The gifted in everything, Wilhelm soon passed from ordinary reading to observation; he was not interested in books in themselves, but in the reading experience that his parents had created and which he himself had created (Markov, 2018). He competed with the records of understanding set by his parents, and with considerable pleasure sought more. Leibniz was fascinated in his childhood with antique literature, he was struck and inspired by pathetic and at the same time refined beautiful descriptions of events (Markov, 2018). It is likely that, having absorbed this in his youth, Leibniz brought a part of this splendor into his philosophy. Later period of his youth Leibniz described as follows:

“When I grew up, I began to enjoy reading all sorts of historical stories. The German books I got in my hand I didn't let go until I read them to the end. I first studied Latin only in school, and I would have progressed with the usual slowness, had it not been by chance that I had taken a very peculiar path. In the house where I lived, I stumbled upon two books left by one student. One was the work of Livy, the other was the chronological treasury of Calvisius. As soon as these books got into my hands, I swallowed them.” (Filippov, 2018).

The historical period in which Leibniz lived and worked, called the New Age, was filled with sharp rise to the forefront positions of innovators in philosophy and science. Also in this historical period a scientific revolution is taking place. Science ceases to be the ordinary area of secular interests of the elite layer of the population, which had the character of collecting various unrelated facts, and becomes a real force influencing life. Of course, along with such changes, philosophy faces a new task, namely to cope with rapid changes in the world while in the old order. For this task Leibniz took over. Along with him, many other philosophers and scientists took up this task, but the main opponents and at the same time agonists for Leibniz became Descartes and Spinoza (Kaidakov, 1998).

Leibniz's first treatise was published in 1663 and was devoted to the principle of individuation: the reason by which we can assert the existence of individual objects without reducing them to deteriorated or improved realizations of ready-made ideas (Markov, 2018). Further, the young philosopher was fascinated by mysticism and mathematics and in 1666, at the age of twenty, published a treatise on the calculation of concepts. Each concept he considered as the sum of certain quantities, for example, the concept of height could be interpreted as a vertical with a certain increase in the number, and the notion of life - as a multiplication, reproducing its authenticity (Markov, 2018). Leibniz thought about how it would be possible with the help of machines to produce all the necessary words, the combination of which would give all mankind the right knowledge.

Ten years after that, Leibniz, being a diplomat, tried to persuade the king of France, Louis XIV, to start a war against Egypt (Markov, 2018). Leibniz, along with other researchers of his time, was convinced that Egypt was precisely the country that would enable France to expand its influence on the whole world. Nevertheless, the king did not listen to Leibniz's arguments, and later, when the Turks besieged Vienna in 1683, Leibniz issued a pamphlet

“Mars Christianissimus” in which he accused the elderly king that he should be ashamed that he had previously abandoned the glory of the new Caesar and that he indirectly supported the Turk while claiming the fame of the chief Christian ruler (Markov, 2018).

## Criticism of Leibniz by Voltaire and his supporters

In Amsterdam, the renowned *Theodicy*, with the full title “Essays of Theodicy on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil”, was published six years prior to Leibniz's sudden and untimely death. Leibniz dies alone, hoping to the last for a speedy recovery (Markov, 2018). After his death, the famous Voltaire publishes his book “Candide”. One of the heroes of the story, namely the servant Candide Pangloss, is obviously dedicated to Leibniz, or rather, to ridicule his philosophy as optimistic, that is, the one that sanctifies the world as if all events in it lead to the best. Every time Pangloss reiterates that everything is for the best, but in the context of what is happening within the plot it sounds ridiculous and funny every time:

“[A]ll events form a chain in the best of all possible worlds. For in the end, if you had not been given a good kick up the backside and chased out of a beautiful castle for loving Miss Cunégonde, and if you hadn't been subjected to the Inquisition, and if you hadn't wandered about America on foot, and if you hadn't dealt the Baron a good blow with your sword, and if you hadn't lost all your sheep from that fine country of Eldorado, you wouldn't be here now eating candied citron and pistachio nuts.” (Voltaire, 2018).

It is unclear why Voltaire chose to create the story “Candide”, either out of revenge on Leibniz for his revenge on the king, and which was said before only out of personal distaste for Leibniz and his beliefs, namely the principles of *Theodicy* (Markov, 2018). Despite the fact that Leibniz's claim about the best of all possible worlds has an evident flaw—namely, the existence of evil in the world—he nevertheless protects it in *Theodicy* by making the following claims. Assuming St. Augustine's stance, he wrote that all evil in the universe is not an independent phenomenon, but only a form of good, or rather its absence, just like nakedness is the absence of clothing, and dirtiness is the absence of cleanliness. Leibniz also suggested that if evil is overcome, greater good will be revealed to man (Leibniz, 2010). Voltaire thought of this as optimism in its purest form. Nevertheless, despite the enormous popularity of “Candide”, the book was soon banned for sale and publication under the pretext of obscenity, and Voltaire himself after that was so ashamed of what he had written that sometimes he even refused to acknowledge his authorship.

Nevertheless, “Candide” became a key moment in how Leibniz's philosophy was perceived and is perceived by many today. After Voltaire's novel, many philosophers supported criticism against Leibniz. Using more or less tough rhetoric, many philosophers accuse Leibniz of his naivety. Voltaire, in his satire, obviously meant that the existing world was not the best possible, Schopenhauer, following his pessimism, went further, calling in his work “On the Sufferings of the World” the present world the worst of possible worlds (Schopenhauer, 2010). He cited the earthquakes in Lisbon, Haiti, Pompeii, which was buried, the diseases that plague mankind, and the fact that nine-tenths of people at the time were living in poverty, on the verge of extinction, and scavenging for a meagre livelihood. “Actually optimism cuts so strange a figure on this scene of sin, suffering, and death, that we should be forced to regard it as irony [...]” (Schopenhauer, 2010).

Schopenhauer, like Voltaire, pointed out that, according to Christianity, the world is a tear valley in which man is purified from his suffering, and Leibniz's optimism is incompatible with Christianity (Gluchman, 2021).

## Analysis of current and past discussions about Leibniz's philosophy and philosophical optimism

Similarly, such ideas continue to live in modern critics of Leibniz, O. Wade, examining “Candide”, indicates that, according to Voltaire, which he supported, Leibniz in this case tried to combine two contradictory ideas - the idea of original sin and its entry into the Divine plan of election the best world of all (Gluchman, 2021). Voltaire rejected this view, because, in his opinion, human suffering is not beneficial and cannot be beneficial to God. Such a significant contradiction has a quite obvious solution.

Based on what Leibniz himself wrote, he was not a Christian, at least not in the usual sense (Lodge, 2020). In favor of such a statement, firstly, his nickname, which he was given in his native Hannover “Glaubenichts”, which literally translates as “does not believe in anything”, speaks. A second and much stronger proof of this assertion is his later work “Monadology”, which appears to be a summary of Leibniz's philosophy, in it, Leibniz speaks openly about God but does not include any mention of Jesus in the final sections on moral issues and political issues (Lodge, 2020). The most important is his preface to the *Theodicy* of 1710. In it, Leibniz expresses his gratitude to Jesus, calling him precisely the founder of the church. However, he describes him as a man who exclusively propagated the doctrine of immortality, which the philosopher suggests was already taught esoterically by the followers of Judaism (Lodge, 2020).

Accepting such a reading of Leibniz's ideas makes it clear that, while the German philosopher employs the customary theological arguments, he does so more in the spirit of natural theology than revelation. *Theodicy*, then, is partly an extended argument for taking seriously the claim that the cosmos was created by a God whose nature includes traditional attributes (Lodge, 2020). Concerning the very statement about the best possible world, contrary to Schopenhauer's understanding, if Leibniz spoke of this world as the best possible, he meant not that it would be impossible to mentally improve this world, but that the improvement of this world, which did not immediately become a reality, will show itself to be the worst hypocrisy (Markov, 2018).

Kant, whom I respect very much, came to the defense of Leibniz, understanding him as an optimist. Kant contends that the world as it is now is the best one that might have been since God chose it based on his wisdom and nobility, neither of which has any boundaries (Gluchman, 2021). Thirty years later, in another text, Kant rebutted detractors and reiterated his prior findings:

“That the world created by God is the best of all possible worlds, is clear for the following reason. If a better world than the one willed by God were possible, then a will better than the divine will would also have to be possible. For indisputably, that will is better, which chooses what is better. But if a better will is possible, then so a being who could express this better will. And therefore, this being would be more perfect and better than God. But this is a contradiction; for God is omnitudo realitatis.” (Kant, 1986).

Modern scholars also sometimes take the side of Kant's argument in favor of Leibniz. Jesse R. Steinberg and in general, to some extent, combines the statements of both Leibniz and Kant, thus acting as an apologist for the reasoning of both. Claims that if the best possible world did not exist, then God would refrain from creating, thus arguing that either the existing world is the best possible or God is not its creator (Gluchman, 2021).

The work “The best of all conceivable worlds: A story of philosophers, God, and evil” (2008) by Steven Nadler is one of the most thorough contemporary analyses of *Theodicy* and primarily Leibniz's concept of the greatest possible world. In his text, Nadler makes the case that Leibniz, in contrast to the protagonist of “Candide”, did not believe that if this is the best world that might exist, then it is better for him or someone else. In Leibniz's opinion, any other world—regardless of the preferences of particular individuals—would be worse than this one (Nadler, 2008). He also didn't believe that in the ideal world, everyone would be eternally happy and blissful. Even in the best world, misery is all that some people experience, according to Leibniz. Not all evil, or groups of evil, result in positive

outcomes, sometimes a person is not able to overcome them. Sometimes a life of misery comes to a tearful conclusion (Nadler, 2008).

Considering the in-depth research Nadler uses to support his claims, it becomes obvious that the conflict between the “naive” optimism of Leibniz and the Christian faith is not viable and almost invented, but the conflict between the philosophy of the German scientist and optimism is becoming more and more obvious. This confirms that, referring to Leibniz himself, Nadler describes that the best possible world includes the existence of a large number of beautiful things, as well as phenomena and events, but this concept of the world also contains a certain amount of evil, including the sin of created beings. In the best world, created by the wisest, most perfect God, there is also sin and suffering, since God can fulfill his will to create the best world, allowing the existence of sin and suffering in this world, and therefore the moral freedom of person (Nadler, 2008). The best possible world is not the best from an aesthetic point of view and also from an ethical point of view. Its status lies in its metaphysical merits compared to all other worlds. The existing world is a manifestation of the highest degree of perfection, which is expressed by the maximum level of impeccability of created being, in other words, reality (Gluchman, 2021).

Having penetrated the essence of the resulting conflict, one can observe the following. Leibniz, along with Kant, was the foremost philosopher of his time, one who went beyond scholasticism and actually founded classical German philosophy (Markov, 2018). However, if we claim that Leibniz was a proponent of philosophical optimism, then taking into account the theological foundation of his philosophy, we can claim that Leibniz actually remained within the parameters of the scholastic justification of the dogmas of the Christian church by simply making the process more difficult. Even his reputation in his native town runs counter to this (this was mentioned earlier).

Moreover, such a statement conflicts with the fact that Leibniz often went beyond the scope of scripture, and sometimes even contradicted it, as some researchers have found in their attempts to criticize it, as discussed earlier. This clearly indicates that Leibniz appealed to the God of the philosophers rather than to the God of the Christian church. This once again refers to the idea of unconfirmed arguments regarding the contradiction between Leibniz's philosophy and the dogmas of the Christian church.

Also, being a scientist who competed even with Newton, Leibniz more than once put forward ideas from the field of dynamics, which directly contradicted the scholastics. This can be seen in addition to *Theodicy* in his concept described in the treatise “Monadology” (Kaidakov, 1998). On the example of a pendulum, this open confrontation between Leibniz and the scholastics would look like this. A pendulum drawn to the right or to the left of the point of stable calm will move until it returns to its original position, but if it is brought to the opposite position to the point of calm, that is, it will not move upward. The scholastics argued that only external vibration can move it, while the pendulum itself, in their opinion, has only a bare potential for movement. Leibniz, on the contrary, wrote that the pendulum has always made, is making and will make efforts to move (Kaidakov, 1998).

## Philosophy of Leibniz as a way of life

A number of such small “internal” proofs that Leibniz's philosophy contains are also supported by more significant ones. For example, in his recent essay “Philosophy of Leibniz as a way of life?” Paul Lodge offers a fundamentally new look at the philosophy of Leibniz. In his essay, Paul Lodge refers to the work of another philosopher, namely Pierre Hadot. Hadot is the author of the essay “Philosophy as a Way of Life”, so that the reader can understand the subsequent arguments, it is worth briefly touching on the key positions of Pierre Hadot in his essay, as well as the conclusions made by Paul Lodge in his analysis and which I will use in mine.

The first thing Hadot does is conditionally divide philosophy into a discourse about philosophy and philosophy itself (Hadot, 1995). An example of a discourse about philosophy would be studying in a philosophy course at a university, and the description of philosophy itself is closer to the ancient one. Simplifying, we can say that to be in the discourse about philosophy is to study the theory of various areas of philosophy, and to engage in philosophy is to live this studied, forming a harmonious whole with it, an example of which he finds in the philosophy of the period of antiquity (Hadot, 1995).

Hadot states that: “one of the fundamental aspects of philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman eras comes clearly to the forefront [in this work]. During this period, philosophy was a way of life”(Hadot, 1995). He further writes: “for the ancients, the mere word philo-sophia—the love of wisdom—was enough to express this conception of philosophy” (Hadot, 1995) later clarifying this statement: “This is not only to say that [philosophy] was a specific type of conduct ... Rather it means that moral philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life” (Hadot, 1995). For further consideration of the topic, it is important to note that such an understanding is an understanding of philosophy and philosophizing as a specific lifestyle.

Analyzing this essay, Paul Lodge highlights a number of criteria that were inherent in Hellenistic and Roman philosophy and by which one can assess the belonging of a particular doctrine to philosophy and its creator to philosophers, respectively. Philosophy:

1. is a «type of moral conduct»;
2. is a «mode of existing-in-the-world»;
3. must be «practised at each instant»;
4. «has a goal,» namely, «to transform the whole of an individual's life»
5. «[philosophy] presented itself as a therapeutic, intended to cure mankind's anguish» (Lodge, 2020).

As well as an additional criterion, Hadot wrote about "spiritual practices" that were widespread and used by many ancient philosophers, especially the Stoics (Hadot, 1995).

First off, Leibniz consistently and broadly refers to different people as philosophers in his writings, regardless of their field of study. The word “philosophy” is also often found in his works. The only connotation that the German philosopher himself implied for the word philosophy—also devoid of specifics—is that philosophy is what philosophers do. Consequently, Paul Lodge draws his first conclusion that Leibniz considered philosophy “mode of existing-in-the-world” (Lodge, 2020).

Second, it can be shown that Leibniz advances the line of reasoning that their ideas are harmful because they condemn anyone who takes them seriously to a problematic manner of existence in his critique of Spinoza and Hobbes. Alternatively, Leibniz offers his own writings as the best of which can be cashed in terms of the preferred mode of existence (Lodge, 2020). In many of his texts, including the *Theodicy*, he accompanies the exposition of his ideas with reflections on their implementation. Confirmation of this is found, for example, in the “New Essays”:

“It should be borne in mind that matter, understood as a complete being . . . is nothing but an aggregate or the result of one; and that any real aggregate presupposes simple substances or real unities. If one also bears in mind what constitutes the nature of those real entities, namely perception and its consequences, one is transported into another world, so to speak: from having existed entirely amongst the phenomena of the senses, one comes to occupy the intelligible world of substances.” (Leibniz, 1996).

Going into the specifics of the metaphysical positions of the German scientist's philosophy is beyond the scope of this article, but it is clear from this passage that the author is assuming that people who are familiar with the theoretical discussion of the nature of matter and substances will come to understand themselves as a substance understood in this way (Lodge, 2020). This is advantageous demonstrates the viability of establishing connections between Leibniz's philosophy and Hadot's criteria, as Paul Lodge does in his essay.

Also in his text “On Wisdom” Leibniz says unequivocally that the goal of philosophy is the achievement of happiness. As Paul Lodge points out in one of his paragraphs, there is no evidence to suggest that this objective is not intended “to transform the whole of an individual's life”. In addition, the same concept of happiness in the “On Wisdom” text is interpreted in the same way as what should give “peace of mind (ataraxia)”, which also corresponds to one of the criteria, namely number five:

“[philosophy] presented itself as a therapeutic, intended to cure mankind's anguish” (Lodge, 2020).

The next criterion, which, as follows from the conclusions of Paul Lodge, also corresponds to the philosophy of Leibniz is that his philosophy is a “type of moral conduct” (Lodge, 2020). Confirmation of this is contained in his preface to the collection of writings “Codex Juris Gentium” namely in the concept of “a good man”. There he defines “right” as “moral force”, “moral necessity” later adding:

“[B]y moral ... I mean something equivalent to natural for a good man” (Lodge, 2020).

This determines whether Leibniz's philosophy meets criterion number two, that his philosophy is a "type of moral conduct".

It is important that Leibniz writes that a good man is one who is just and virtuous and also in all his texts where he touches on the issue of justice, he writes that: “we define justice ... as the charity of the wise man” (Lodge, 2020). Thus, to be a good person, according to Leibniz, is the same as being a sage, or very close to it. From this follows a conclusion that once again confirms the compliance of the philosophy of the German scientist with criterion number two:

“Thus, to be good and to be one who has successfully pursued wisdom are coextensive, and to be a philosopher one must also be a good person, or one who engages in moral conduct. On the assumption that this is the case, follows. For wisdom, as component of justice, is a “mode of existing-in-the-world”” (Lodge, 2020).

Of the main criteria, only the third remains, with which difficulties arise. After all, Leibniz openly only assumed that philosophy “to be studied above everything else,” and this is not enough for complete compliance (Lodge, 2020). However, this position can be indirectly confirmed. Leibniz often recommended Friedrich von Spee's “Güldenenes Tugend-Buch”. For example, he recommended André Morrell read it in his 1696 letter. In the letter, Leibniz speaks with approval of Spee's book: “even proposes a nice method for praising God at all moments” and, taking into account the general context of the letter, namely Leibniz writes there about the importance of a constant search for wisdom, it can be assumed that the German philosopher himself understands under “glorification” philosophizing in the extended sense (Lodge, 2020). Which, albeit indirectly, confirms, according to Lodge, compliance with criterion number three, with which I agree.

Leibniz, as has already been said (if we consider what is written here as said), also paid attention to the possibility of practical implementation of his ideas. Therefore, in the “New Essays” you can find the following recommendations:

“A lover will be cured by a voyage undertaken just for that purpose; a period of seclusion will stop us from keeping company with people who confirm some bad disposition in us. Francisco Borgia, the General of the Jesuits, who has at last been canonized, was given to drinking heavily when he was a member of fashionable society; when he was considering withdrawing from the world, he retrenched gradually to almost nothing, by each day letting a drop of wax fall into the flagon which he was accustomed to drinking dry. To dangerous interests we will oppose innocent ones like farming or gardening; we will avoid idleness, will collect curiosities, both natural and artificial, will carry out experiments and inquiries, will take up some compelling occupation if we do not already have one, or engage in useful and agreeable conversation or reading.” (Leibniz, 1996).

“[W]hat is required is that the mind be prepared in advance, and be already stepping from thought to thought, so that it will not be too much held up when the path becomes slippery and treacherous. It helps with this if one accustoms oneself in general to touching on certain topics only in passing, the better to preserve one's freedom of mind. Best of all, we should become accustomed to proceeding methodically and sticking to sequences of thoughts for which reason, rather than chance (i.e. insensible and fortuitous impressions), provides the thread. It helps with this if one becomes

accustomed to withdrawing into oneself occasionally, rising above the hubbub of present impressions—as it were getting away from one's own situation and asking oneself “Why am I here?”, “Where am I going?”, “How far have I come?”, or saying “I must come to the point, I must set to work!” (Leibniz, 1996).

The “New Essays” is by no means unique in regard to the presence of Leibniz's recommendations (Lodge, 2020). Of course, there is no information about how often it is recommended to practice what is recommended, but given how the philosopher insisted on the implementation of his recommendations and their diversity, this can be considered an adaptation of spiritual practices. For example, in the unfinished essay “Conversation Between Father Emery the Hermit and the Marquis of Pinese, Minister of Savoy, Which Has Yielded a Remarkable Change in the Minister's Life, or Dialogue About the Application One Must Have for One's Salvation” contains a series of practical advice which Leibniz described as “sensible means to arouse one daily” if one is “concerned with [one's] salvation” (Lodge, 2020).

Thus, the main conclusion after reading Lodge's essay that suggests itself is that Leibniz's philosophy was his own way of life, with all the ensuing consequences (Lodge, 2020). Here it is important to return again to the activities of Leibniz as a diplomat. It is authentically known that the German philosopher did not tolerate any manifestations of optimism in politics and diplomacy (Markov, 2018). Therefore, if Leibniz did not accept optimism in most areas of his life (which will be discussed below), then he could not build his philosophy on philosophical optimism. Together with the above analysis, this creates a strong position questioning Leibniz's involvement in philosophical optimism, if not placing him in opposition to it. Moreover, it avoids another kind of criticism often used against representatives of German classical philosophy, namely Kierkegaard's statement: “In relation to their systems, most systematisers are like a man who builds an enormous castle and lives in a shack beside it” (Martens, 2016).

There is no doubt that one of Leibniz's earlier publications could have ended the entire analysis in its infancy, “Dissertation on the Combinatorial Art” (1666). In this text, Leibniz himself suggests that theory is inseparable from practice under the slogan “*theoria cum praxi*” (Antognazza, 2021). However, this did not happen thanks to the precise remark of Paul Lodge:

“But, of course, such a slogan is consistent with a more modern conception of the way in which theories might be related to human activity, namely, as instrumentally valuable accounts of the nature of reality. While this is not entirely divorced from the living of a good life, it clearly lacks the kind of existential immediacy that Hadot intends.” (Lodge, 2020).

## Additional Notes

Before completing the analysis and moving on to the conclusions, it is worth mentioning one more important thing. It is worth pointing out that philosophical optimism, as Voltaire understood it, for example, proceeds from the fact that everything that happens is for the best. The lines between what is “right” and “wrong” and “rational” and “irrational” are blurred in this method. I will not go into the details of this in this article and do not claim that such criteria are acceptable to use or that they even exist, but I note that this can potentially lead to consistent relativism, which is based on the denial of any undeniable knowledge. Most New Age philosophers would find such a strategy undesirable, for example, for the already mentioned Descartes and Spinoza, all the more serious doubts arise when, in the key of philosophical optimism, one speaks of Leibniz, who was a high-class mathematician and logician. These doubts only confirm my intermediate conclusion, written above, that Leibniz was not an optimist, or at least was not one in the usual sense of the word.



## Conclusion

As part of this essay, an analysis of the literature was carried out, in which the theoretical basis of Leibniz's philosophy is considered to a lesser or greater extent, and some works of the German thinker himself were also analyzed. The analysis was carried out in order to outline a roadmap for subsequent studies of Leibniz's philosophy in order to give them a greater degree of scientific historical reliability and came to the following results.

Firstly, in this essay, an overview of Leibniz's philosophy was made, a number of key ideas of the thinker were considered, which made it possible in some aspects to draw attention to other interpretations of his philosophy. Secondly, in the course of the analysis, the deep personal context of the philosophy of the German thinker was touched upon.

Thirdly, as a result of the analysis, an attempt was made to create an opposition to the criticism of Leibniz's philosophy as optimistic. At this stage, it can be stated with due confidence that to rank Leibniz among the optimists without explanatory remarks is an obvious and unjustified simplification. It is also very likely that it cast a useless shadow on how his philosophy was perceived in the past and in some places is perceived now.

Ultimately, the analysis revealed contradictions and ignorance in several critical statements directed against the philosophy of Leibniz. While Leibniz has been criticized as an optimist, a closer examination of his philosophy reveals a more subtle and complex picture. To properly comprehend the relevance of Leibniz's contributions to philosophy, additional studies is ultimately required.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Northampton for the opportunity to study and work with cutting edge developments in the fields of philosophy, religious studies and history.

## References

1. Lodge, P. (2020) LEIBNIZ'S PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE? *Metaphilosophy*. [Online] 51 (2-3), 259–279.
2. Gluchman V. (2021) Leibniz's and Herder's philosophy of optimism. *Ethics & Bioethics*, Vol.11 (Issue 1-2), pp. 37-47. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ebce-2021-0006>
3. Markov A. V. (2018) The power of unprecedented generosity: the folds and apologies of Leibniz. In: G. W. Leibniz, 2018. "Monadology", pp. 5-26.
4. Kaidakov, S. V. (1998). Theological basis of Leibniz's philosophy. *History of Philosophy*, (3), 3-16.
5. Leibniz, G. W., & von Leibniz, G. W. F. (1996). *Leibniz: New essays on human understanding*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Loemker, L. E. (1958). Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. *Philosophical Papers and Letters*. *Philosophical Quarterly*, 8(32).
7. Voltaire, F. M. A. (2018). *Candide, or optimism*. liters.
8. Filippov, M. M. (2018). *Leibniz. His life and work: social, scientific and philosophical: ZHZL*. Strelbytskyy Multimedia Publishing.

9. Leibniz, G. W. (2010). *Theodicy*. Cosimo, Inc..
10. Schopenhauer, A. (2010). On the Sufferings of the World. *Life, death, and meaning: Key philosophical readings on the big questions*, 431-440.
11. Kant, I. (1986). *Lectures on philosophical theology*. Cornell University Press.
12. NADLER, S. (2008): The best of all possible worlds: A story of philosophers, God, and evil. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
13. Hadot, P. (1995). *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*.
14. Martens, P. (2016). Iris Murdoch: Kierkegaard as Existentialist, Romantic, Hegelian, and Problematically Religious. In *Volume 11, Tome III: Kierkegaard's Influence on Philosophy* (pp. 149-170). Routledge.
15. Antognazza, M. R. (2021). *Leibniz: Dissertation on Combinatorial Art*. Translated with Introduction and Commentary: M. Mugnai, H. van Ruler, and M. Wilson, editors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. x+307 pp.£ 53. ISBN 978-0-19-883795-4.