

Reading Assignment 13: Leibniz's Reaction to Descartes

Required Readings:

- "Letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia" in G.w. leibniz: Philosophical essays. *Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company*, 1989.
- "Critical Thoughts on the General Principles of Descartes." [Leibniz, 1969, §42]. Read Leibniz's criticisms of Articles 1, 5, 26, 31/35, 43/45/46, and 75.

Questions:

- Explain what Leibniz means by "nominal definition" and "common sense." In his letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte, what notions are clear and distinct according to Leibniz?
- What is a "necessary truth", and why does Leibniz think that the senses are incapable of providing us knowledge of necessary truths?
- In his critical thoughts on the general principles of Descartes, Leibniz proposes replacing Descartes' doctrine that we ought to believe only what we clearly and distinctly perceive. What does Leibniz propose instead?

References

G.w. leibniz: Philosophical essays. *Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company*, 1989.

G. W. Leibniz. Gottfried wilhelm leibniz: philosophical papers and letters. 1969.