

Concerning Those Things That Are Conceived Through Themselves¹

Translated by David Blumenfeld

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It seems that existence [*esse*] is conceived through itself. For if we suppose that it is conceived through other things, such as *a* and *b*, it seems that the existence of these things also could be conceived, which is absurd. Therefore, existence [*existentia*] is an uncompounded or irresolvable notion.

Just as existence is conceived through itself, so it also seems that essence, that is, reality in kind or possibility (or intelligibility) is conceived through itself.

All things have something in common, namely, essence or reality itself.

All things are homogeneous with respect to essence or reality, just as all bodies are homogeneous with respect to mass.

The distinction between reality and essence: reality is the same in all things, but essence is not the same in all things.

Since reality is one in all things, [and] essence diverse, for that reason that by which things are distinguished must not include reality, if in fact it is a positive thing. For should the difference of those very things *A* and *B* again include reality, then it will not be a mere difference. Therefore, the pure or mere difference of two things, in which indeed there is nothing further in common, will include no absolute reality.

More briefly and clearly. If there are two things, *A* and *B*, which definitely are distinct, there will be ascribed, first, what is common to them and then what is in them as individuals, that is, the pure difference which contains nothing further in common. I assert that the pure difference does not include reality because reality is something common which must not be included in the pure difference. Nevertheless, when the matter has been carefully considered, there seems to be a sophism in the reasoning and that something impossible has been postulated, for since all things that are conceived by us are thinkable real things [*realia cogitabilia*] (for reality is nothing other than thinkability), it follows that we must not postulate some ultimate difference in which reality or thinkability is not contained, for we have supposed that it is contained in all things. But from this it will further follow that we think nothing that is absolutely simple, for it has at least two things, thinkability and the form of thinkability, that is to say, something common and something particular. But in the particular there is again thinkability. Otherwise it would not be thought. Therefore, from this it will follow that those two things should not be separated nor thought by us except in one act.

About the subject and what is joined to it, there is also much subtlety. We think of a subject or substance when we say: *I, that, this*, for in these we think of something in common, that is, the subject even in bodies themselves, as if by personification [*quasi per*

¹ LBr 227 Bl. 34. A VI.4, N. 9, pp. 25-26 (Latin).

² The Akademie editors indicate that Leibniz added the date later.

prosopopoeiam]. Every thinkable quality is constituted from thinkability and the subject of thinkability. Thinkability is contained in this subject, but the thinkability is one thing, the subject another. Therefore, this relation to the subject cannot be thought.