

# “On the Reason Why These Things Exist Rather Than Any Others”<sup>1</sup>

Translated by Donald Rutherford

Any reason which makes it that these things exist rather than any others also makes it that something exists rather than nothing; for if a reason is given why these things exist, one will also be given why some things exist. This reason consists in the prevalence of reasons for existing over reasons for not existing, or, as I would say in a word, in the tendency-to-exist [*Existiturientia*] of essences, so that the things which will exist are those which are not impeded. For if there were nothing that tended-to-exist, there would be no reason for existing. Moreover, a reason cannot be given why one possible rather than another should tend-to-exist. But with the tendency-to-exist of all things assumed, there follows the existence of some, for since all things cannot coexist, there follows the existence of those through which the most coexists. Just as if *a* and *b*, and also *c*, were equals, and *a* were incompatible with *b* and *c*; but *b* were incompatible with *a* and compatible with *c*; and similarly *c* were incompatible with *a* and compatible with *b*, it would not follow that all three, *a*, *b*, and *c*, exist simultaneously; nor one only of *a* or *b* or *c*, but a pair; and of the pairs, not *ab* nor *ac*, but *bc* alone. From this it is obvious that every possible tends toward existing of itself, but is impeded *per accidens*, and that there are no other reasons for not existing except those which arise from the conjunction of reasons for existing.

Furthermore, the ground of the tendency-to-exist of essences must be something which exists in its own right, otherwise essences will surely be nothing but a figment of the mind; and since nothing follows from nothing, there will be nothing eternally and necessarily. But this origin cannot be anything other than a necessary being, the foundation of essences, the source of existences, that is, God, acting perfectly, since all things are in him and of him, and so voluntarily, but nevertheless determined toward that which is the best. He therefore selects that which claims the greatest perfection among the assembly of things tending-to-exist, which assembly is itself through him, because such is the wisdom and power of the first cause that it supplies and displays the force of the highest reason, [i.e.] it is real and has effect. For only in God and through God do essences make a way for themselves toward existing, so that in God is the reality of essences or eternal truths, and the production of existences or contingent truths.

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<sup>1</sup> LH IV 1, 14c Bl. 6. A VI.4, N. 314, pp. 1634-5 (Latin). The Akademie editors tentatively date this text between March and August 1689, during Leibniz’s Italian journey.