Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

Universal Genius & Last Renaissance Man

leibniz.org

leibniz_gw

founder_president

Polymath extraordinaire with expertise in mathematics, philosophy, theology, law, and diplomacy.

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Royal Court of Hanover. Hanover, 30159, Lower Saxony, DE

Skills

Mathematics: Calculus | Binary System | Infinitesimal Analysis | Topology | Mathematical Logic

Philosophy: Metaphysics | Logic | Epistemology | Theodicy | Possible Worlds Theory

Languages: Latin | German | French | Italian | Ancient Greek | Hebrew

Diplomacy: International Relations | Religious Reconciliation | Court Politics | Genealogical Research

Experience

House of Hanover

hanover.court

Court Mathematician & Librarian

Dec 1675 – Nov 1716

Primary intellectual advisor to the Dukes of Brunswick-Lüneburg and later the Elector of Hanover.

- Maintained the ducal library with obsessive precision
- Wrote family genealogy tracing Hanover lineage to Italian nobility
- Provided mathematical consultation on mining operations
- Diplomatically advised on succession matters (helped secure British throne for Hanover)

University of Altdorf

altdorf.university

Doctoral Candidate & Rising Star

Dec 1665 – Dec 1667

Completed doctorate in law at age 20, declined professorship offer because the world was too big to settle down.

- Youngest doctoral graduate in university history
- Dissertation on legal reasoning impressed faculty so much they offered immediate tenure
- Politely declined to pursue broader intellectual adventures

Baron von Boineburg's Service

Legal Advisor & Intellectual Companion

Dec 1666 – Dec 1672

Served influential German statesman while developing early philosophical and mathematical ideas.

- Drafted legal documents by day, revolutionized mathematics by night
- Proposed unification of Christian churches (ambitious side project)
- Designed early calculating machine to automate 'unworthy' arithmetic tasks

French Court (Unofficial)

Diplomatic Mathematician

Dec 1671 – Dec 1676

Attempted to convince Louis XIV to conquer Egypt instead of Europe (unsuccessful but educational).

- Developed calculus while trying to distract French from German territories
- Met with leading mathematicians and philosophers of Paris
- Learned that even brilliant mathematical arguments can't redirect royal ambitions

Projects

Binary Number System
Dec 1678 – Nov 1716

Inventor, Philosopher, Cultural Bridge-builder

Developed complete binary arithmetic system, connecting it to Chinese I Ching philosophy

- Laid foundation for modern computer science
- Saw theological significance in creation from nothing (0) and something (1)
- Impressed Chinese Emperor with binary interpretation of ancient texts

Binary Computing Philosophy Cross-cultural Exchange

Education

University of Leipzig
uni-leipzig.de

Bachelor and Master Philosophy and Law
Dec 1660 – Dec 1666

Overall GPA: Summa Cum Laude (invented new categories of excellence)

Courses: Aristotelian Logic (later revolutionized); Roman Law (found it insufficiently mathematical); Scholastic Philosophy (appreciated the systematic approach)

University of Altdorf
altdorf.university

Doctorate Law
Dec 1665 – Dec 1667

Overall GPA: Distinction (faculty begged him to stay)

Courses: Jurisprudence; Legal Philosophy; The Art of Making Everything Mathematical

Languages

Latin
Native (academic)

German
Native

French
Fluent (court language)

Italian
Fluent

Mathematical Notation
Inventor

Awards

Fellow of the Royal Society of London
Royal Society of London

Elected for mathematical innovations, despite ongoing calculus priority dispute with Newton.

Foreign Member of the French Academy of Sciences
Académie des Sciences

International recognition for contributions to mathematics and natural philosophy.

Inventor of Calculus (Co-Title, Disputed)
Mathematical Community

First to publish calculus notation still used today, though Newton claims earlier invention.

Certificates

Master of All Trades
Posterity

history.com/leibniz

Volunteer

Berlin Academy of Sciences

bbaw.de

Founding President Dec 1699 – Nov 1716

Founded and led scientific academy to advance human knowledge across all disciplines.

- Convinced Elector Frederick III that Prussia needed its own scientific academy
- Established academy motto: 'Theory and Practice'
- Promoted international scientific collaboration despite ongoing European wars

Universal Reconciliation Project

Chief Optimist Dec 1679 – Nov 1716

Lifelong effort to reunite Christian churches through rational dialogue.

- Corresponded with Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed theologians
- Argued that doctrinal differences were mostly semantic misunderstandings
- Maintained hope despite consistent evidence to the contrary

Publications

Discourse on Metaphysics

December 31, 1685

Self (circulated in manuscripts)

philosophy.com/leibniz/discourse

Outlined theory of individual substances and best of all possible worlds.

New Essays on Human Understanding

December 31, 1764

Posthumous Publication

philosophy.com/leibniz/new-essays

Point-by-point response to Locke's Essay, defending innate ideas and rationalism.

Theodicy

December 31, 1709

Amsterdam

philosophy.com/leibniz/theodicy

Defended God's justice in permitting evil; coined 'best of all possible worlds'.

Monadology

December 31, 1719

Posthumous Publication

philosophy.com/leibniz/monadology

90 propositions explaining reality as composed of simple, indivisible monads.

References

Sir Isaac Newton

A man of extraordinary genius, though we disagree on priority matters and the nature of space and time. His mathematical abilities are... adequate.

Sophie Charlotte of Hanover

My most brilliant philosophical correspondent and pupil. Made the court infinitely more intellectually stimulating.

John Locke
We fundamentally disagree on the nature of human understanding, but his commitment to rigorous analysis is admirable.

Interests

Universal Characteristic

Universal Language · Logical Calculus · Automated Reasoning · Symbolic Logic

Chinese Philosophy

I Ching · Binary Interpretations · East-West Synthesis · Jesuit Correspondence

Mechanical Engineering

Calculating Machines · Mining Technology · Windmill Design · Submarine Concepts

Collecting Thoughts

15,000 Letters · 40,000 Documents · Systematic Filing · Intellectual Hoarding