

# Leibniz-Clarke Reading List

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This is my reading list for the Prelims course ‘The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence’. I am indebted to Adam Caulton and James Read for much of the material on it (and some of the essay questions). A few preliminaries on how this reading list works:

- I *highly* recommend that you try to read through most (if not all) of the correspondence (Alexander, H. G. (ed.) (1956). *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.) in the Easter vacation, prior to your tutorials. Do not be put off if there are passages you find difficult on a first reading (there almost certainly will be)—more important is to get a sense of the overall architecture of the text and become acquainted with some of the key ideas and arguments in it.
- ‘Core’ reading is compulsory. (*But* there is no need to cite a ‘core’ paper if you don’t end up using it in your essay.)
- Items on the ‘additional’ reading (where I have provided it) are directly relevant to the essay question provided, but not compulsory. Items on the ‘further’ reading (where I have provided it) are intended to provide additional material which may or may not be directly relevant to your essay (but may be relevant to future exam questions!), or to highlight some of the more recent literature on issues related to the topic. Almost all the ‘further’ papers should be intelligible to most first-year undergraduates; where a paper has more advanced (likely mathematical) prerequisites I have flagged it.

I have tried to provide DOIs for all items on this list where they exist; any issues locating an item, as well as questions, comments, or suggestions, can be directed to me at [eleanor.march@philosophy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:eleanor.march@philosophy.ox.ac.uk).

## Descartes' account of motion

Discuss the principal weaknesses in Descartes' account of the true, or "philosophical" motion of bodies. What was Newton's approach to overcoming them?

### Core

- Descartes, Rene (1985). "The Principles of Philosophy." In *The Philosophical Writings of Rene Descartes, Volume 1*. Translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch. Cambridge: CUP. Part II
- Newton, Isaac (2004). "De Gravitatione." In Andrew Janiak (ed.), *Newton: Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge, CUP. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09781107326347>.
- Barbour, Julian B. (2001). *The Discovery of Dynamics: A Study from a Machian Point of View of the Discovery and the Structure of Dynamical Theories*. Oxford: OUP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195132021.001.0001>. chs. 8.5-8.8, 11.3
- Huggett, Nick (1999). *Space from Zeno to Einstein*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. chs. 6-7
- Slowik, Edward. "Descartes' Physics." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/descartes-physics/>.

### Additional

- Stein, Howard (2002). "Newton's Metaphysics." In *The Cambridge Companion to Newton*, edited by I. Bernard Cohen and George E. Smith. Cambridge: CUP. pp. 256-307. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521651778>.
- Dainton, Barry (2010). *Time and Space*. Montreal: McGill—Queen's University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315539324>. ch. 10
- Newton, Isaac (1999). "Scholium to the Definitions". In his *Principia Mathematica Philosophae Naturalis*. 3rd ed. Translated by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman. Oakland, CA: UCP.
- Rynasiewicz, Robert (1995). "By their Properties, Causes and Effects: Newton's Scholium on Time, Space and Motion – I. The Text." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 26 (1): pp. 133-153. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681\(94\)00035-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681(94)00035-8).
- Rynasiewicz, Robert (1995). "By their Properties, Causes and Effects: Newton's Scholium on Time, Space and Motion – II. The Context." *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 26 (2): pp. 295-321. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681\(94\)00049-F](https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681(94)00049-F).

## Newton's bucket experiment and globes thought-experiment

Do Newton's discussions of the rotating bucket experiment and globes thought-experiment provide the basis of an argument for the existence of absolute space?

### Core

- Newton, Isaac (1999). "Scholium to the Definitions." In his *Principia Mathematica Philosophae Naturalis*. 3rd ed. Translated by I. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman. Oakland, CA: UCP.
- Rynasiewicz, Robert. "Newton's Views on Space, Time, and Motion" *In The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/newton-stm/>.
- Earman, John (1989). *World Enough and Space-Time*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. pp. 61-73, 81-84
- Huggett, Nick (1999). *Space from Zeno to Einstein*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. ch. 7
- Barbour, Julian B. (2001). *The Discovery of Dynamics: A Study from a Machian Point of View of the Discovery and the Structure of Dynamical Theories*. Oxford: OUP. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195132021.001.0001>. ch. 12.5

### Additional

- Rynasiewicz, Robert (1995). "By their Properties, Causes and Effects: Newton's Scholium on Time, Space and Motion – I. The Text." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 26 (1): pp. 133-153. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681\(94\)00035-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681(94)00035-8).
- Maudlin, Tim (1993). "Buckets of Water and Waves of Space: Why Space-time Is Probably a Substance." *Philosophy of Science* 60 (2): pp. 183-203. <https://doi.org/10.1086/289728>.
- Laymon, Ronald (1978). "Newton's Bucket Experiment." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16 (4): pp. 399-413. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2008.0681>.
- Dasgupta, Shamik (2015). "Substantivalism vs. Relationalism About Space in Classical Physics." *Philosophy Compass* 10 (9): pp. 601-624. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12219>.

- Huggett, Nick (1999). “Why Manifold Substantivalism Is Probably Not a Consequence of Classical Mechanics.” *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 13 (1): pp. 17-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02698599908573605>.

## Leibniz’s arguments against absolute space

“I have many demonstrations, to confute the fancy of those who take space to be a substance, or at least an absolute being.”(LEIBNIZ) Explain and assess Leibniz’s arguments against the reality of absolute space.

### Core

- Alexander, H. G. (ed.) (1956). *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. chs. 3-5.
- Newton, Isaac (2004). “De Gravitatione.” In Andrew Janiak (ed.), *Newton: Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge, CUP. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CB09781107326347>.
- Maudlin, Tim (1993). “Buckets of Water and Waves of Space: Why Space-time Is Probably A Substance.” *Philosophy of Science* 60 (2): pp. 183-203. <https://doi.org/10.1086/289728>.
- Huggett, Nick (1999). *Space from Zeno to Einstein*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. ch. 8
- Hofer, Carl, Huggett, Nick, and Read, James. “Absolute and Relational Space and Motion: Classical Theories.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2024 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman.  
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/spacetime-theories-classical/>.

### Additional

- Rynasiewicz, Robert (1995). “By their Properties, Causes and Effects: Newton’s Scholium on Time, Space and Motion – II. The Context.” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 26 (2): pp. 295-321. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681\(94\)00049-F](https://doi.org/10.1016/0039-3681(94)00049-F).
- Sklar, Lawrence (1977). *Space, Time and Spacetime*. Berkeley, CA: UCP. pp. 161-181
- Dasgupta, Shamik (2015). “Substantivalism vs. Relationalism About Space in Classical Physics.” *Philosophy Compass* 10 (9): pp. 601-624. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12219>.
- Dainton, Barry (2010). *Time and Space*. Montreal: McGill—Queen’s University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315539324>. chs. 10-11
- Horwich, Paul (1978). “On the Existence of Time, Space and Space-Time.” *Noûs* 12 (4): pp. 397-419. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2214497>.

## Further

- Earman, John (1989). *World Enough and Space-Time*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. chs. 2-3, 6
- Saunders, Simon (2013). “Rethinking Newton’s *Principia*.” *Philosophy of Science* 80 (1): pp. 22-48. <https://doi.org/10.1086/668881>.
- Wallace, David (2020). “Fundamental and Emergent Geometry in Newtonian Physics.” *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 71 (1): pp. 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjps/axx056>.
- Dasgupta, Shamik (2015). “Inexpressible Ignorance.” *Philosophical Review* 124 (4): pp. 441-480. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00318108-3147001>.
- Dasgupta, Shamik (2011). “The Bare Necessities.” *Philosophical Perspectives* 25 (1): pp. 115-160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1520-8583.2011.00210.x>.

## The Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles

“To suppose two things indiscernible is to suppose the same thing under two different names.” (LEIBNIZ) What did Leibniz mean by this, and is he right?

### Core

- Alexander, H. G. (ed.) (1956). *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. chs. 2-6.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1989). “Primary Truths.” In *G. W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, edited by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Black, Max (1952). “The Identity of Indiscernibles.” *Mind* 61 (242): pp. 152-164. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LXI.242.153>.
- Pears, David (1955). “The Identity of Indiscernibles.” *Mind* 64 (256): pp. 522-527. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/LXIV.256.522>.
- Forrest, Peter. “The Identity of Indiscernibles.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2025 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2025/entries/identity-indiscernible/>.

### Additional

- Rodriguez-Pereyra, Gonzalo (1999). “Leibniz’s Argument for the Identity of Indiscernibles in his Correspondence with Clarke.” *Australian Journal of Philosophy* 77 (4): pp. 429-438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048409912349201>.
- Hacking, Ian (1975). “The Identity of Indiscernibles.” *Journal of Philosophy* 72 (9): pp. 249-275. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2024896>.
- Russell, Bertrand (1937). *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*. London: Routledge. ch. 5
- Strawson, P. F. (1990). *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203221303>. ch. 4
- Belot, Gordon (2001). “The Principle of Sufficient Reason.” *Journal of Philosophy* 98 (2): pp. 55-74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2678482>.