

Annual Theme 2015|16

Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities

LEIBNIZ: THE TASK OF VISIONS

The Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities takes the double Leibniz anniversary in 2016 (370th birthday on July 1 and 300th anniversary of death on November 14) as an opportunity to dedicate its Annual Theme 2015|16 "Leibniz: The Task of Visions" to its founder, the philosopher, mathematician, physicist, historian, diplomat, politician, and librarian, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

The activities within the scope of the Annual Theme portray Leibniz as a visionary thinker whose multidisciplinary oeuvre inspires and stimulates even today not only the field of academics, but also economics, politics and society as a whole. With this Annual Theme, the Academy particularly aims to take a look far into the future and applies Leibniz' ideas to the shaping of the world of tomorrow.

Leibniz' approach to science was a holistic one, based on the idea of the unity of science. He emphasised the responsibility of science to extend beyond any divisions between theory and practice. Nowadays, this concept is primarily relevant for the applied sciences. However, it also addresses the field of basic research: What benefits lie in looking for answers without yet knowing the questions? And how much theory does practice itself require?

Leibniz' inquiring mind leads us to some fundamental questions: What are we and what do we aim to be? And what can be called a "good life"? His inventions and discoveries shape our daily lives, as for instance the binary numeral system, which is especially formative in the ever-expanding digital world. It is essential to discuss both the potential in and the risks of digital networks in which living and working environments become merged. Yet Leibniz' curiosity and creativity themselves are also considered: How do new concepts emerge in science and art? What does it really mean to be creative and original?

Leibniz was a free spirit who considered communication to be a tool for gaining knowledge – a fact proven by his interest in other cultures as China or Russia,

where Leibniz encouraged the creation of the Academy of Petersburg and thus indicated his great interest in institutional improvements. Every single perspective shows us an aspect of the world's diversity. Leibniz' social ambitions are based on the thought that every person in his individual development contributes to that richness: His understanding of solidarity goes beyond the boundaries of one's professional or social status and therefore can be seen as the precursor to the modern insurance industry. But is solidarity actually fair?

All these topics reflect Leibniz' conviction that the "best of all possible worlds" is no utopia but reality itself. The task is not only to explore and understand the world, but also to deconstruct and shape it in a visionary way.

Various concepts are applied within the Annual Theme 2015|16 "Leibniz: The Task of Visions" in order to meet the challenge of identifying the options as to how we can shape the real world anew. Scientists, politicians, journalists, students and pupils seek points of intersection and points of friction between the interdisciplinary sphere of science and the economy or society itself. They explore new ways of collaboration and learn from their differences in a productive way. The Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities cordially invites you to take part in this discussion.

The Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities established the "Annual Theme" programme in 2007. It is committed to promoting the dialogue between the sciences and society. Its first goal is to inform the public about the Academy's research projects and encourage discussion. Secondly, it strives to bundle the activities of scientific and cultural institutions in Berlin and Brandenburg into one thematic complex, and in doing so sustainably strengthen the inter-institutional network.

For further information please visit <http://jahresthema.bbaw.de>

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