

**Larry M. Jorgensen and Samuel Newlands, eds.** *New Essays on Leibniz's Theodicy*. Oxford University Press 2014. 288 pp. \$65.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199660032).

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz published one book in his lifetime, the *Essays of Theodicy: On the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, standardly—and henceforth in this review—referred to as the *Theodicy*. The importance of the *Theodicy* has long been recognized, and it has been mined in the scholarly investigation of particular topics, but the *Theodicy* remains to be received *as a work*—at least by English-language scholars. This may be because Leibniz's writing makes the book, according to the editors of the volume under review, 'appear dense, rambling, opaque, and full of obscure and distracting references' (2). The fact that the only extant English translation of the *Theodicy* is dense, opaque, and does not annotate any of Leibniz's numerous references, which might well lead the reader to find them obscure and distracting, may contribute to English-language readers' frustration with the *Theodicy*. *New Essays on Leibniz's Theodicy*, the first volume in English devoted to the *Theodicy*, with contributions from a distinguished group of scholars, is a welcome corrective to this neglect of the *Theodicy* as a whole that will promote its reception. In what follows, we treat the essays in the volume in the order in which they appear; we conclude with some general remarks about the volume.

The first and longest essay, Christia Mercer's 'Prefacing the *Theodicy*', seeks to show that attention to the Preface of the *Theodicy* reveals that 'the goal of the *Theodicy* is to promote divine love and produce virtuous and pious souls' (14). In support of this thesis, Mercer adduces, in turn: the full title of the *Theodicy*, whose first word, 'Essays', locates the work in the essayist tradition deriving from Montaigne that had virtue as its aim; the frontispiece of the first edition of the work; and the first few pages of the Preface, of which she gives a very close reading. Mercer's interpretive claims outstrip her evidence; she seems especially to overreach in her long treatment of the essay tradition. The essay does, however, bring out the importance of the Preface of the *Theodicy*: Mercer's paper is the only sustained published treatment of this section of the book.

In 'Which "Reason?" Bayle on the Intractability of Evil'—the only essay in the volume that considers the work of Pierre Bayle, the target of Leibniz's *Theodicy*—Kristen Irwin argues that Leibniz's distinction between what is above reason and what is against reason, between truths that are incomprehensible and putative truths that are impossible, 'fails to address Bayle's actual position on the use of reason in attempting to make sense of evil' (43). Irwin believes that because Leibniz's project depends on that distinction, it does not successfully engage Bayle. But she does not examine whether Leibniz has the resources to respond to Bayle's position as she construes it. This topic merits more scholarly attention, given the undeniable significance of Bayle's writings to the *Theodicy*.

The answer to the question Nicholas Jolley poses in the title of 'Is Leibniz's Theodicy a Variation on a Theme by Malebranche?' is 'no'. Commentators have hitherto taken Malebranche and Leibniz to agree about the nature of the problem of evil, despite differences in their approaches to it. Jolley argues that Malebranche, in sharp contrast to Leibniz, is unconcerned with God's justice, because, in virtue of original sin, God owes His creatures nothing—not even justice. Jolley does not dig deeply into the interpretive implications of this difference between Leibniz and Malebranche. He devotes two-thirds of the essay to the philosophers' treatment of animal pain and human suffering. Jolley's thesis should serve as a starting point both for future investigations into Leibniz's and Malebranche's approaches to the problem of evil.

In 'Justice and Circumstances: Theodicy as Universal Religion', Donald Rutherford claims that the *Theodicy* is 'the expression of a distinctive theological outlook and a particular conception of universal religion which Leibniz cultivated throughout his career' (70). Rutherford argues that in the *Theodicy* Leibniz seeks to accommodate the Christian concept of grace outside a theological framework, and, effectively, seeks to transform a doctrine of revealed theology into one of natural theology. Rutherford's interesting general interpretive claim regarding Leibniz's universal religion is suggestive, but he does not elaborate on it: perhaps he will do so in future work.

Paul Rateau's 'The Theoretical Foundations of the Leibnizian Theodicy and its Apologetic Aim' considers what is distinctive and original in the *Theodicy*. Rateau distinguishes two parts to Leibniz's treatment of the problem of evil: one treats God, the other man. Rateau also distinguishes two different types of arguments deployed by Leibniz: *defensive* arguments meant to refute objections, and *doctrinal* arguments meant to establish truths. The latter arguments 'are complementary and even closely connected. Defense relies on the results of doctrine... doctrine is not sufficient without defense' (102). The paper digests interpretations elaborated at greater length in Rateau's book, *La Question du Mal chez Leibniz: Fondements et Elaboration de la Theodicée* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008), the only monograph devoted to the *Theodicy*.

Maria Rosa Antognazza's incisive and illuminating contribution, 'Metaphysical Evil Revisited', advances a new interpretation of Leibniz's tripartite taxonomy of evil in the *Theodicy*: the distinction between physical, moral, and metaphysical evil. Antognazza argues that Leibniz's categories of physical and moral evil correspond, respectively, to the medieval distinction between *malum poenae*—evil of punishment—and *malum culpae*—evil of fault. On Antognazza's interpretation, physical evil corresponds to *malum poenae*, not—*pace* standard interpretations—to natural evil, which, like the necessary limitations of finite creatures, instead belongs to the category of metaphysical evil. Antognazza concludes by defending Leibniz against the charge that this characterization of metaphysical evil 'implies that creatures qua creatures are to some extent intrinsically evil' (134) because for Leibniz 'privations do not have positive ontological status' (134).

Leibniz's commitment to God's causal contribution to the sinful actions of created agents raises two distinct problems: the problem of divine physical concurrence—'God seems to be the author of sin insofar as his action is involved in its production' (136)—and the problem of divine moral concurrence—'God seems to be morally culpable for his failure to prevent sin' (136). In 'Moral Evil and Divine Concurrence in the *Theodicy*', Tad Schmaltz focuses on Leibniz's account of divine moral concurrence, arguing that it is unsatisfactory because Leibniz does not articulate an 'acceptable notion of permission' (136). Recent scholarship on Leibniz on divine concurrence has focused on physical concurrence. Schmaltz's essay is distinctive because it concentrates on moral concurrence, which Leibniz himself claimed was the 'more perplexing' (136) type of divine concurrence.

Michael J. Murray devotes the bulk of 'Vindicatio Dei: Evil as a Result of God's Free Choice of the Best' to explicating the views of Spanish Jesuit moral necessitarians, with which, he asserts, both Leibniz and his contemporary readers would have been familiar. The success of Leibniz's defense against necessitarianism in the *Theodicy*, depends, according to Murray, 'on the viability of the notion of moral necessity' (171). He draws suggestive parallels between the views of the moral necessitarians and certain of Leibniz's remarks in the *Theodicy*. Whether these parallels manifest deep conceptual similarities between the moral necessitarians and Leibniz, however, remains to be

determined. Clearly, further investigation of this issue that considers the criticisms of this line of interpretation advanced by Robert Adams and R. C. Sleigh, Jr. is in order.

Augustín Echavarría investigates ‘Leibniz’s Dilemma Regarding Predestination’, arguing that Leibniz’s commitments to complete individual concepts, whereby ‘each individual substance is defined through all the past, present, and future determinations which can truthfully be predicated of it’ (177) and the thesis that ‘all divine decrees are simultaneous and are reciprocally connected, resulting in a single decree’ (178), are in tension with Leibniz’s distinction between what God would will regarding some state of affairs taken in abstraction from other states of affairs (God’s antecedent will), and what God would will regarding all the states of affairs that jointly constitute a world (God’s consequent will). Because that distinction is crucial to Leibniz’s irenic solution to his contemporaries’ disagreements over divine predestination, Leibniz is faced with an apparently irreconcilable dilemma, to which Echavarría sketches, but does not elaborate, a solution. Readers interested in this essay should consider Echavarría’s monograph, *Metafísica leibniziana de la permission del mal* (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2011), wherein he treats these and related issues in more detail.

In ‘Justice, Happiness, and Perfection in Leibniz’s City of God’, Robert Merrihew Adams argues that Leibniz’s defense of God’s justice depends not only on the perfection of the actual world, as some have maintained, but also on the happiness and virtue of the City of God, whose members include all intelligent creatures. The City of God *must* manifest ‘the justice of God, as a social virtue and species of charity’ (201), in order for Leibniz to achieve the aim of vindicating God’s justice, and so it is just as important to Leibniz’s theodicy, as his concept of the best possible world. This magisterial essay reveals a new way of understanding what is meant by Leibniz’s concept of the *best of all possible worlds*.

Daniel Garber opens ‘Monads and the *Theodicy*: Reading Leibniz’, by asking why Leibniz’s view that monads are the ultimate constituents of the world—the metaphysical view for which he is best known today—does not figure in the *Theodicy*. Garber’s answer is that the view is ‘not directly relevant to the questions centrally at issue in that book’ (204). Garber explains what he takes to be this puzzling fact, by arguing that Leibniz’s philosophy is ‘modular’ (227)—its elements are argumentatively independent—so the doctrine of monads can be detached from the treatment of theodicean issues. Garber does not dig deeply into the issues that he treats, and his argumentation is dogmatic, but he raises questions about the systematicity of Leibniz’s philosophy that deserve more attention than they have hitherto received.

The volume concludes with Jonathan Israel’s ‘Leibniz’s *Theodicy* as a Critique of Spinoza and Bayle—and Blueprint for the Philosophy Wars of the 18th Century’. Israel claims that in targeting Bayle and Spinoza, the *Theodicy* anticipates the opposition in Enlightenment works ‘between defenders of divine providence and Spinoza and Bayle’ (240). The essay, liberally salted with unexplained references to figures and movements—most notably, the Enlightenment—will be a resource for readers interested in the reception of the *Theodicy*.

The essays in the volume have different virtues. The essays of Adams, Antognaza, and Rutherford should be required reading for anyone interested in the general nest of issues treated in these papers and in Leibniz’s treatment of them in particular, and should serve as starting points for future research. The essays by Echavarría and Rateau advertise monographs that merit attention. The

essays of Garber, Israel, Irwin, Jolley, Mercer, Murray, and Schmaltz raise interpretive questions that deserve further scholarly scrutiny. Many of the essays are suitable for advanced undergraduates: this volume should stimulate interest in the *Theodicy* not only among those already working on Leibniz but also among those new to the study of Leibniz, who, we hope, will take the lead from the essays in this volume and deepen the understanding of the *Theodicy*. The press is to be congratulated for the fine production values of the volume: the dust jacket features a beautiful reproduction of figures representing justice and injustice by Giotto (although it might have been nice if a more historically appropriate Baroque image could have been found to serve as the basis for the jacket image). The book itself withstands the rereading that some of the essays in the volume merit and repay.

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