**Philosophy 320L – Philosophy in Translation: Latin**

**G. W. Leibniz’s *Confessio philosophi***

Spring 2020

Syllabus

Jeffrey K. McDonough



“Satan before the Lord,” by Corrado Giaquinto, ca. 1750

**Important Information:**

Meeting: Emerson Hall 107 (Bechtel Room), TBA

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**Course Description:**

A theodicy is an attempt to explain how the existence of evil in the world is may be reconciled with the existence of a benevolent and all-powerful god. G. W. Leibniz famously coined the term in 1710 in his book-length attempt to “vindicate the justice of God,” the *Théodicée*. Leibniz’s thinking about divine justice and evil, however, reached much farther back. In his *Confessio philosophi* and other short pieces written between the years 1671 and 1678, Leibniz wrestled with the same issues and developed initial responses that would receive their canonical statements in later works. As in those later works, Leibniz’s thinking about divine justice and evil intertwines with a wide-range of deep and interesting philosophical themes, including, for example, the principle of sufficient reason, identity, responsibility, perfection and modality. This course will meet weekly to read passages in Latin from Leibniz’s *Confessio philosophi* and related texts. It is open to undergraduates, graduates, and faculty of all reading levels. It can be audited with minimal commitment or taken as a course towards the satisfaction of the Philosophy Department’s language requirement. Please contact the instructor if you would like to be placed on the course e-mail distribution list.

**Principal Texts:**

G.W. Leibniz, Confessio philosophi: *Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil, 1671-1678*, Edited and translated by Robert C. Sleigh, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press). This text includes the Latin text, a facing English translation, and a helpful introduction by the editor. An electronic copy will be made available to participants in the course.

**Supplemental Texts:**

Catherine Wilson, “Leibnizian Optimism,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 1983 (80:11) 765-783. (A classic discussion of Leibniz’s theodicy and its connections to his larger philosophical system.)

G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, ed., Austin Farrer, trans. E. M. Huggard, Chicago: Open Court, 1990. (Leibniz’s mature, book-length response to the problem of evil.)

Paul Rateau, *Leibniz on the Problem of Evil*, Oxford University Press, 2019. (State-of-the-art discussion of the problem of evil as treated by Leibniz with attention to the development of Leibniz’s thought from the time of the *Confessio*.)

Robert M. Adams, *Leibniz: Determinist, Theist, Idealist*, Oxford University Press, 1994. (An authoritative, advanced discussion of themes related to Leibniz’s theodicy.)

Maria Rosa Antognazza, *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography*, Cambridge University Press, 2009. (The now standard biography in English. Highly recommended as an overview of Leibniz’s life and works.)

Steven Nadler, “Choosing a Theodicy: The Leibniz-Malebranche-Arnauld Connection,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1994 (55:4) 573-589. (An engaging discussion of the relationship between Leibniz’s and Malebranche’s theodicies that draws insight from Arnauld’s viewpoint.)

Larry M. Jorgensen and Samuel Newlands, *New Essays on Leibniz’s Theodicy*, Oxford University Press, 2014. (A recent collection of essays on Leibniz’s Theodicy by top scholars.)

Michael J. Murray and Sean Greenberg, "Leibniz on the Problem of Evil", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/leibniz-evil/>. A helpful discussion of Leibniz’s theodicy framed in terms of “The Underachiever Problem” and “The Holiness Problem.”

Donald Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. (An advanced, yet accessible discussion of central themes in Leibniz’s metaphysics with an opening part dedicated to Leibniz’s theodicy.)

**Tentative Schedule**

Note: Broader context readings are indicated by book page numbers (located in the corners at the top of each page). Latin passages are indicated by the Akademie page numbers (located in bold in the margins of pages). The beginning of the relevant passage is indicated by a quotation followed by an ellipsis. The end of the relevant passage is indicated by a quotation preceded by an ellipsis.

**Reading #1: The Problem of Evil**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 26-33 |
| 1. God is just | 116: “Theologus. Ergo, ut arcem causae invadamus …TH. Fateor.” |
| 2. God loves all | 117: “PH. Praestiti ergo quod susceperam …Cur autem Deus unum prae alio amet, non est huius loci definire.” |
| 3. Problem of Evil | 117: “TH. Imo vero, hinc difficultates potissimum nascuntur … Denique si ultima ratio rerum Deus est, quid hominibus, quid diabolis imputamus?” |

**Reading #2: The Principle of Sufficient Reason**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 33-39 |
| 1. The PSR | 118: “TH. Ergo distinctius agamus …vel vulgus in vulgarem jam tum et familiarem, ubi subsistent” |
| 2. A chain of difficulties | 118: “TH. Concedis ergo, nihil esse sine ratione. … se noxium, illum crudelem; se infelicem, illum injustum” |
| 3. The ultimate ground of sin | 120: “TH. At cur bonum putavit, quod malum erat? … Agnosco difficultatem, recolligamque me paulisper, ac respirabo.” |

**Reading #3: Author of Sin**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 39-49 |
| 1. The author of sin | 121: “PH. Ne festina tantopere: non inquam, non possum negare…TH. Miram rem narras.” |
| 2. Sin as a necessary consequence of divine nature | 122: “TH. Senties non me huc frustra digressum …Eiusdem enim rationis eiusque sufficientis et integrae, quails Deus est universe, oppositas esse consequentias, seu eodem sequi diversum, tam impossible est, quam idem esse diversum” |
| 3. Are good things from the divine will? | 124: “PH. Occupabo respondere ad objectionem priorem … et mira ratione compensates, reddita est delectabilis. |

**Reading #4: Necessitarianism?**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 49-61 |
| 1. Are sins necessary? | 125: “TH: Perplacet institutum tuum, quo sic satis ostendis Deum omnium existentium rationem, sed … a toto genere humano receptum.” |
| 2. Explicating terms | 126: “PH. Necessarium ergo illud vocabo, cuius oppositum implicat contradictionem, seu intelligi clare non potest … His ita positis asserere ausim, nullis consequentiarum fidiculis aliquid parum honorificum Justitiae divinae extorqueri posse.” |
| 3. Sins are not necessary | 127: “TH. Quid ergo respondes illi argumento supra proposito … Quare errant quicunque (absolute id est per se) impossible pronuntiant, quicquid nec fuit, nec est, nec erit.” |

**Reading #5: Freedom**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 61-73 |
| 1. Does God will sins? | 130: “TH. Superest questio, an Deus peccata velit nolitve. … Deus nec velle, nec nolle, sed permittere dicatur” |
| 2. Objection: freedom? | 132: “PH. Quid ergo porro objicis? …sive non existentis existentiam imaginemur.” |
| 3. Defining freedom | 132: “TH. Non habeo quid respondeam rationi tuae, sed nec tu quod objection meae … quam si nobis monstrosam illam potentiam rationalis cuiusdam irrationalitatis dedisset.” |

**Reading #6: Lament of the Damned**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 73-81 |
| 1. Guise of the good | 134: “TH. Sed quid dices ad vulgatum ilud, video Meliora proboque, deteriora sequor … PH. Fateor.” |
| 2. Lament of the damned | 136: “PH. Ita est omnio, imo ita necesse est esse, nemo ipse se volens malum fecit … ut aliorum Felicitas scilicet conspectior esset, contineretur.” |
| 3. No one to blame | 138: “PH. Quid? Nisi in omnibus judiciis ad poenam infligendam … conscientia ergo perpetuo reclamante ne queri quidem constanter unquam posse sine contradictione.” |

**Reading #7: Locked from the Inside**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 82-89 |
| 1. Always damnable | 138: “PH. An oblitus es, quid tibi rationem damnati Judae postulanti responderim? … id est de novo damnari a se ipsis.” |
| 2. Vision of God | 139: “TH. Alterum obiter incidens, alterum principale. Ais crescere perpetuo, ut miseriam, ita et felicitatem … ut alterum pro altero non raro accipiamus.” |
| 3. Contentment | 141: “PH. Quod in corpore est conatus, id in mente affectus … Deum ipso facto odere, etsi quod odere, Deum non appellant.” |

**Reading #8: Drawing Implications**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 89-107 |
| 1. Past and future | 141: “TH. Si sic philosophamur, ne in emendandis quidem rebus laborare fas erit … Deum ergo amantis est boni consulere praeterita, optima reddere conari future.” |
| 2. Why are some damned? | 145: “Nemo queri fateor, quidam mirari poterunt tantum duo …nondum ad arcana visionis Dei admisso, impossibilem petis.” |
| 3. Why are these damned? | 148: “PH. Quid? Nisi animas quoque, seu ut appellare malo, mentes, loco et tempore velut individuari seu fieri, has. … non se sed alium hominem fore in mundo.” |

**Reading #9: Conversation with Steno, Part 1**

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| Read all in Latin: | Book page numbers: 112-116 |

**Reading #10: Conversation with Steno, Part 2**

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| Read all in Latin | Book page numbers: 118-122 |

**Reading #11: Conversation with Steno, Part 3**

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| Read all in Latin | Book page numbers: 124-130 |

**Reading #12: Odds and Ends**

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| Broader context: | *Confessio*, Sleigh trans. pp.: 130-133, 138-141 |
| 1. Middle knowledge | *Scientia media* - read all |
| 2. Choosing the best | *De necessitate eligendi optimum* – read all |
| 3. Understanding possibles | *Demonstratio quod Deus omnia possibilia intelligit* – read all |