

# Review of: "A Priori Arguments for Determinism/Universal Necessity – and the Leibnizian Theodicy"

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Uwe Meixner offers thoughtful and detailed analysis of Leibniz's theory that our world is the best possible one as grounded in Leibniz's PSR. As I understand the author, he argues that there are few possible problems with this theory, but his concern is that the theory suggests and defends deterministic view of reality as outlined in Leibniz's *Theodicy*, even though Leibniz objects to such interpretation. The author concludes that Leibniz must contend with it if one is to accept Leibniz's arguments as stated and defended.

The author's arguments are well stated and reasonably defensible. However, they rely on somewhat novel interpretations of Leibniz's notions of freedom, necessity, contingency, PSR, etc. Such treatment in itself isn't problematic if new approach is pursued, but if the goal is to demonstrate that Leibniz's arguments as stated, presuppose determinism, then tracking Leibniz's notions as closely as possible is required. Uwe Meixner notes for example, that he'll consider two possible ways to attack the Leibnizian argument one of which from the perspective of an atheist. There is nothing wrong with such approach but before one can object to Leibniz's claim, one must offer an argument that God could not possibly exist and only after, argue that the argument fails for this reason. For Leibniz does not merely assume that God exists but offer an argument for God's existence. In other words, by premising that God doesn't exist the author shifts the discussion without offering a reason as Leibniz would say, for such a shift. And while one might not accept Leibniz's argument for the existence of God, one must point to its insufficiencies rather than simply assume that God doesn't exist. Indeed, I am not aware of a theory arguing the impossibility of God's existence, at best, philosophers usually outline the shortcomings of theories attempting to deal with the issue of God's existence. In this case, the author doesn't object to Leibniz's argument for God's existence but rather, uses said argument if I am correct to show that God's nature presupposes determinism. It seems the objection from atheist perspective isn't available in such case.

The author also argues that we could not possibly know whether the actual world is the best possible world since we lack the capacity to know everything about our world. Reasonable objection but again, this would make the argument epistemic rather than metaphysical. One must remember that Leibniz does not argue that we can or do know everything about our world but given his argument about God's nature and the claim that God created the world, the conclusion that only one possible world can be actualized at a time, and that ours is an actual world - then the conclusion that ours is the best possible world seems inevitable. That is, the author should either deal with the premises and show problems with them or argue that the conclusion does not follow from the premises.

The author also introduces the notion of Sufficient *Good* Reason and makes an admirable effort to derive it from Leibniz's

arguments for PSR and God's perfection. As I understand the adjective good however, it belongs in the province of Ethics as Moore puts it, which is probably why Leibniz qualifies reason as sufficient or requisite rather than good. And while the author refers to Leibniz's discussion about moral necessity as a component of Leibniz's argument for God's perfection necessitating the actualization of the best possible world and could argue that moral necessity belongs in the province of Ethics, it would help if he offered clarification about his notion of Sufficient Good Reason as well as its meaning and referent. Wouldn't such qualification be analogous to referring to an argument as good instead of valid which would be a rather imprecise description? I suppose if one were to move from moral necessity to metaphysical necessity, one would need a reason to be good rather than sufficient, but I don't suppose it would be an acceptable move.

Finally, as I understand the author's contention, he argues that though Leibniz avails himself of the distinction between necessarily true propositions and contingently true propositions, ultimately since every contingent but true proposition is morally necessary, therefore it is also metaphysically necessary making determinism a tangible threat to Leibniz's freedom. Perhaps, but I don't believe Leibniz would accept such an interpretation of his position as he notes that: "...a notion of possibility and necessity according to which there are some things that are possible, but yet not necessary, and which do not really exist. From this it follows that a reason that always forces a free mind to choose one thing over another (whether that reason derives from perfection of a thing, as it does in God, or from our imperfection) does not eliminate our freedom." And Leibniz further elaborates: "From this it is also obvious how the free actions of God are to be distinguished from his necessary actions... it is necessary that God love himself... But it cannot be demonstrated that God makes that which is most perfect, since the contrary does not imply contradiction; otherwise the contrary would not be possible, contrary to the hypothesis". (On Freedom and Possibility, 1680-82)

I would also suggest that the first part of the essay is shortened a bit given that the author simply presents Leibniz's position in terms of modal logic without arguing against it, even if such an exposition is relied upon later in the author's argument for determinism.