

Paul Rateau, *La Question du mal chez Leibniz. Fondements et élaboration de la Théodicée*, Preface by Michel Fichant, Paris: Honoré Champion 2008. 755 p.

Reviewed by Mogens Lærke, University of Aberdeen

Paul Rateau's book on the foundations and elaboration of the Theodicy is an impressive piece of work which constitutes a major contribution to Leibniz research. It will become *passage obligé* for anyone who wishes to write in a scholarly manner about Leibniz's theodicy, doctrine of natural right, universal jurisprudence and natural theology. It contains a wealth of detailed and precise analyses of countless well-known and unknown texts by Leibniz and touches on more philosophical subjects and points of doctrine than it would be possible to account for within the framework of a mere review. What is remarkable about Rateau's *magnum opus* however, is not simply the volume of research it contains, but also the fact that the author manages admirably to stitch together an incredible amount of information in such a way that the reader, when arriving at the last page, has a sense of the unity of Leibniz's entire project, but also of all its complexities and tensions.

* * *

As Michel Fichant points out in his preface, the *Essais de théodicée*, the only big book Leibniz published in his own lifetime, "has never been studied for itself," but has until now rather constituted a "store of quotations that were used to complete or illustrate the doctrinal analyses."¹ Rateau himself writes in his introduction: "The specificity of the text from 1710 and the genesis of it have not really been accounted for."² Apart from Gaston Grua's groundbreaking but today somewhat dated work from the 1950s,³ there exists no extensive study which focuses exclusively on Leibniz's theodicy. With Rateau's book, we now have available a systematic study of this central part of Leibniz's doctrine and of the intellectual development that lead to the conception of the *Gottrechtslehre* presented to the public in the *Essais*. Rateau's book is organized into three parts: (1) A study of Leibniz's various "justifications of God" anterior to the theodicy, providing detailed analyses of texts and projects such as the *Confessio naturae contra atheistas*, the *Demonstrationes catholicae*, the *Von der Allmacht*, the *Confessio philosophi*, etc. (2) A study of the systemic and polemical background for the elaboration of theodicy-project in the years around 1700, from the time when the term first appeared in Leibniz's texts

in the mid-1690s to the conversations with Sophie Charlotte that prompted Leibniz to write the *Essais*.⁴ (3) A study of the doctrine contained in the *Essais*.⁵

Rateau's study is governed by an operative distinction between, on the one hand, the theodicy as a broad *project* (the "Theodicy" with a capital "T") which comprises a set of interrelated problems that preoccupied Leibniz with from very early on, and, on the other hand, the theodicy considered more narrowly as a *book* (the *Essais*) which was published in 1710. Rateau's ambition is to understand how the project developed into the book without simply reducing the project to the book. On this point, he chastises mainly Gaston Grua for having ignored the genuine developmental aspects of Leibniz's doctrine and for having interpreted all early attempts to justify God simply as unfinished sketches leading up to the final, published result.⁶ In order to avoid such "flattening" of the developmental story, Rateau attempts to show that, even though the origins of the *Essais* can be traced back to the early texts, the elaboration of the project throughout Leibniz's career involves ruptures, discontinuities and doctrinal hiatuses. For example, Rateau shows how, in the program for a Theodicy announced in the mid-1690s, in the actual *Essais* from 1710, and in Leibniz's discussions of the *Essais* in later correspondence, the term "theodicy" does not mean exactly the same,⁷ sometimes being the mere title of a book or a subject-matter, sometimes referring to a complex philosophical problem, and sometimes designating a sort of science.⁸

As Fichant explains, Rateau's book elucidates "both the internal evolution and the logical structure" of Leibniz's theodicy.⁹ From a methodological point of view, it represents a sort of hybrid between a *structural* approach similar to Martial Gueroult's combined with the *genetic* sensibility of developmental interpretations such as those found in Michel Fichant's own recent studies of the *Discours de métaphysique* and *La Monadologie*.¹⁰ Such a hybrid methodology is not easily formulated and even less easily implemented. The difficulties involved can be easily illustrated by means of the two following statements drawn from the book:

[1] Under its different names and different forms [...] the project of a Theodicy is old and constant, since Leibniz connects it to questions that he was already preoccupied by when he was a student at the University of Leipzig.¹¹

[2] [...] to speak of an old project of a Theodicy is ambiguous and misleading. In fact, it is to go in the direction of an invariable "system" whose tenets, discovered very early on, had simply been developed according to the subject under consideration, and presented in different ways according to the circumstances and the different correspondents the author wanted to

REVIEW OF RATEAU

please.¹²

On the face of it, these two statements appear blatantly contradictory. Rateau is of course completely aware of this. Indeed, his entire methodological project consists in trying to overcome that contradiction. I am not convinced that he succeeds entirely. The question is: Should he be blamed for this? I think not. For one should ask, on the one hand, whether *anybody* really has overcome this methodological obstacle yet and, on the other hand, whether it is methodologically responsible to continue to simply *ignore* it. I believe the answer to both questions is “no”, and regardless of whether Rateau completely resolves these problems, he has the merit of looking right at them. At any rate, his methodological awareness is one of the main strengths of his work and, to my mind, his attempt to bridge the gap between these two types of approach—the structural and the genetic, which are normally seen as irreconcilable if not directly opposed—constitutes one of the most innovative and stimulating aspects of his study.

* * *

Let us first consider the structural dimension. Leibniz’s motto was, as everyone knows, *theoria cum praxis*. This motto applies very well to the Theodicy, since the project as a whole serves two purposes, a theoretical and a practical one.¹³

From the practical point of view it includes “a doctrine of human liberty and an ethics for action” (p. 28) as indicated by the subtitle of Leibniz’s book (*sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l’homme et l’origine du mal*). Leibniz’s goal was to formulate a meaningful ethics of human action within the framework of a strict providential determinism while avoiding the pitfalls of quietism (the *logon aergon*, or “lazy reason”) and fatalism in its various forms (the *fatum stoicum*, *fatum mahometatum*, and *fatum spinozanum*). The practical attitude fostered by this Christian ethics of action is what Leibniz in the preface to the *Essais* terms the *fatum christianum*. It involves, on the one hand, not to rebel but to live content with the place one has been assigned in the best of all possible worlds. On the other hand, it involves actively seeking to execute the presumptive will of God.¹⁴

Theoretically, the theodicy-project eventually develops into what Leibniz speaks of as a “certain kind of science” (*quasi scientiae genus*), namely a “doctrine of the justice (that is the wisdom together with the goodness) of God.”¹⁵ Rateau stresses the importance of the term *quasi* in this characterization, and on the ambiguity it expresses concerning the demonstrative value of the arguments included in the *Essais*. Thus, if “the Theodicy undeniably retains the apologetic ambition of the *Demonstrationes catholicae*,”¹⁶ the certitude of the demonstrations included in the

Essais is moral rather than absolute.¹⁷

The theodicean “quasi-science” aims at unveiling the rational principles that govern divine providence and at providing a theologically tenable justification of the fact that God permits the existence of evil. This doctrine *pro justitia Dei* comprises a type of hermeneutics, a veritable *ars interpretandi*, in the sense that it elaborates a rationalist interpretation of what evil *means*, or what evil events are *signs of*. Leibniz attempts to show that evil is a sign of God’s *wisdom* without being a sign of his *will*, and thus to defend the apparently paradoxical notion that evil does not exist *in spite* of God’s perfection but *because* God is all-perfect, since its absence *would be a sign of divine imperfection*.¹⁸ This does not mean that Leibniz wishes to *cancel* the existence of evil. Since Voltaire, Leibniz’s Theodicy has been depicted as the *summum* of theologico-philosophical “optimism.” This is quite mistaken, Rameau argues: “The Theodicy is not an exhortation to optimism. It is a treatise about God.”¹⁹ The theodicy is in certain sense everything *except* optimistic since it does *not* state that evil does *not* exist and does *not* occur (all things considered, in this the best of all possible worlds...). Quite to the contrary, the Theodicy explains the fact that evil *does* occur. It is a book written with the lucid pessimism of philosopher with a Lutheran background: “[...] it cannot be denied that in the world there is physical evil (i.e. suffering) and moral evil (i.e. crime),” as Leibniz writes in the *Discours préliminaire*.²⁰ Hence, the Theodicy does not so much justify the existence of *evil* (by explaining that it is in fact good), but justifies the fact that *God* permits the existence of evil (which remains something bad). Nonetheless, it was important for Leibniz to argue against Luther that God is the *author* of evil,²¹ since such a theology seems to turn the existence of evil into some inexplicable theological scandal. For Leibniz, Rameau writes, “evil does not represent the unjustifiable, the irrational, the scandal which will make theology and philosophy fail definitively.”²² Instead, Leibniz undertakes the conception of a “rational jurisprudence” capable of accounting for the divine reasons behind the existence of evil but without making God responsible for them.²³ The basic theoretical problem around which Leibniz’s theodicy-project turns can thus be formulated as follows: How can the fact that evil does exist be rationally justified within Christian theology? Leibniz himself puts it more succinctly in the § 20 of the *Essais*: “*Si Deus est, unde malum?*”²⁴

The Theodicy-project is elaborated under two basic systemic conditions.²⁵ The first is *the conformity of faith and reason*. Leibniz argues for this point in the “Discours préliminaire” which precedes the *Essais de theodicée* proper. In order to rationally

explain divine action without submitting theology to philosophy or *vice versa*, Leibniz needs to steer in between the fideist trap of denying human reason access to the council of God (like, for example, in Pierre-Daniel Huet or Pierre Bayle) and the rationalist temptation to reduce faith to philosophical certainty (like in Lodewijk Meyer and other “rational theologians”), while still avoiding the heretical option of the “theory of double truth” defended by the Padouan Averroists (such as Contarini, Pomponazzi, etc.).²⁶ In order to attain that goal, Leibniz develops a theological epistemology designed to account for both the non-contradiction and the irreducibility of the domains of faith and reason, while still allowing for them to be mutually elucidating.²⁷ Rateau studies in detail important elements of this complex epistemology, including Leibniz’s various argumentative strategies for defending the Christian mysteries, aspects of his logic of presumptions and probabilities, and the importance of analogical reasoning.²⁸

The second systemic condition of the Theodicy is the *strict univocity of the concepts of human and divine justice*. For Leibniz, it is through the consideration of the principles of human law that we can deduce the principles of divine justice. The divine principles of action are only accessible to reason to the extent that there is conceptual continuity from the (human) juridical law to the (divine) metaphysical law.²⁹ This continuity is ascertained through the concept of justice, more precisely through Leibniz’s contention that “the just” is always said in the same sense, whether we attribute it to God or to man. As Leibniz puts it: “natural jurisprudence (to the extent that it is demonstrable) and every other truth is the same in heaven and on earth.”³⁰ In this connection, Rateau also stresses the importance of Leibniz’s conception of justice as a form of love—a conception which goes back to the *Elementa juris naturalis* from the early 1670s—for the elaboration of the theodicean argument.³¹ This should not come as surprise to anyone familiar with the work of Patrick Riley and the emphasis that he has put on the notion of *caritas sapientis* for Leibniz’s universal jurisprudence.³² However, as Rateau shows, it is not simply that justice is a form of informed brotherly love. In fact, Leibniz develops a complex system comprising several levels and forms of justice all of which corresponds to different types of love.

* * *

Let us now turn to the second dimension of Rateau’s methodology, i.e. what I called above his *genetic sensibility*. It involves, among other things, the following: First, that Rateau is very suspicious about Leibniz’s own retrospective dramatizations of his philosophical career.³³ For example, Leibniz very often presents his own

intellectual evolution as the continuous unfolding of a single system, whereas an accurate reconstruction of this evolution unveils important shifts and discontinuities. Second, it involves awareness of how treacherous it can be to isolate some idea in Leibniz and pronounce it constant, basic or fundamental, without considering the fact that transformations of the systemic context within which this idea is made operative can completely overturn the signification of it and bestow on this seemingly “old” idea an entirely different meaning than the original one.³⁴

A good example of Rateau’s genetic methodology can be found in his interpretation of the *Confessio philosophi*. This text is frequently described as Leibniz’s “first theodicy,” as a “proto-theodicy,” etc.³⁵ To be sure, the text from 1672-73 deals with issues similar to ones treated in the *Essais*. Nonetheless, the systemic context of the *Confessio philosophi* is substantially different from that of the book written some forty years later.³⁶ So how does Rateau approach this text?

First, he turns to the relevant texts written before the *Confessio*, in particular the *Nova methodus discendae docendaeque Jurisprudentiae*,³⁷ the *Elementa juris naturalis*,³⁸ and the *Von der Allmacht*.³⁹ Rateau criticizes the interpretation given by André Robinet in *Le Meilleur des mondes par la balance de l’Europe*. According to Robinet, the early development of Leibniz’s theory of universal jurisprudence can be reconstructed according to three distinct “architectonics” each governed by a particular conception of the order of priority among the divine faculties: First, an “archaic” voluntarist conception of divine law (1663-1670), where the exercise of divine power determines the divine understanding. Second, a period of crisis (around 1671-73). Third, a decidedly anti-voluntarist mature position, where the divine understanding determines the exercise of divine power (firmly established after 1680).⁴⁰ Rateau objects decisively to the idea that the young Leibniz for a period subscribed to a voluntarist conception of divine action similar to the one defended by Plato’s Thrasymachos in the *Republic* and later revived by Hobbes, according to whom *justus est potentiori utile*). This does not imply however, that Rateau attributes anything like the mature anti-voluntarist position to the young Leibniz. Quite to the contrary, Rateau argues that Leibniz, in the early 1670s, was not inclining towards voluntarism but rather towards a type of necessitarianism: “Not voluntarism, but Spinozist or Stratonian determinism.”⁴¹

This thesis concerning the young Leibniz’s necessitarianism forms the background for Rateau’s close reading of the *Confessio philosophi*. The distinction between a God that *chooses* good but *permits* evil that governs the argument in the *Confessio*, is inseparable from the question concerning the order of priority among the divine

faculties. Thus, evil is something whose origin is only in God's intellect, and not in God's will. It occurs because God exists, not because he wills it.⁴² This argument allows Leibniz to deny God's authorship of sin, since, as he writes, "*to be the author* is by one's will to be the ground of something."⁴³ Moreover, it allows him to maintain that if sins did not exist, neither would God: "[...] it follows that were this series of things, sins included, taken away or changed, God would be taken away or changed [...]."⁴⁴ This is already an important result for Leibniz, since it provides an explanation of why God should not be held responsible for the existence of evil.

However, the mature thesis where God's willing the best world is a genuine *choice* of the best—a choice which requires a strong notion of contingency grounded in God's conception of all possible worlds—is not yet clearly formulated. According to Rateau, this implies that, in the *Confessio*, Leibniz does not succeed in avoiding necessitarianism, but embraces a position that he later deemed too close to Spinozism.⁴⁵ In the mature Leibniz, the epistemological problem concerning the hierarchy of the divine faculties will be recast as a question of modal ontology: "[...] two considerations will lead Leibniz to move away from the necessitarian thesis: the increasingly important role granted to the concept of the possible, and above all the concern to avoid a justification of God that makes sin necessary."⁴⁶ Thus, in the text where we find the very first occurrence of the term "theodicy," namely in a letter to Étienne Chauvin in mid-1696, Leibniz speaks of "my theodicies on the source of evil and *the difference between the necessary and the contingent*."⁴⁷

Rateau's analysis of the two existing versions of the *Confessio philosophi* provides a very concise genetic analysis of exactly how and when this shift in Leibniz's thinking about possibility and divine choice took place. As is well known, there exist two versions of this text: one original manuscript, written around 1672-1673, which was presented to Arnauld in Paris; and a second manuscript from around 1677-1678, which contains a set of comments by Nicolas Steno as well as Leibniz's replies to these comments. As Rateau points out "it would be incorrect however, to think that the opinions that Leibniz endorses here remain unchanged until the beginning of 1678. On the contrary, the study of the texts from the time of the *De summa rerum* (1676) shows incontestable evolutions."⁴⁸ Rateau convincingly shows how, in his replies to Steno, Leibniz recasts his original account from 1672-73 to make it fit a newly developed modal philosophy, where the notion of possibility has acquired a more robust ontological status. Thus, in the primitive version of the *Confessio*, Rateau argues, we find a "weak" or "logical" notion of possibility "which serves

to designate everything which has not been chosen and which could not have been (since it is less perfect and less reasonable) rather than to show the contingency of the world (as it will be in the “strong” conception).⁴⁹ The later, strong conception of possibility, on the contrary, involves more emphasis on the ontological status of possibility as something that “really exists in the understanding.”⁵⁰ This strong conception of possible can be observed in Leibniz’s explanations to Steno in the second manuscript of the *Confessio* from 1678.⁵¹

* * *

Rateau’s structural-genetic way of reconstructing the Theodicy is very efficient. It does, however, come with a price. Above all, it obliges the author to tone down the polemical and dialogical aspects of the *Essais*’ elaboration and of Leibniz’s philosophy as a whole (much stressed by Marcelo Dascal in recent years⁵²). As Rateau points out, the immediate polemical context of the *Theodicy* is double. The first is Leibniz’s exchanges with John Toland around 1701-1702, in particular Leibniz’s reflections on Toland’s *Christianity not Mysterious* (1697).⁵³ The second and more explicit polemical context is Leibniz’s discussions with Pierre Bayle concerning the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697, 1702²).⁵⁴ Many commentators have seen this last dialogue as the focal point of the *Essais de theodicée*, in the same way as the *Nouveaux essais sur l’entendement humain* constitute a sort of dialogue with Locke. According to Rateau however, it is reductive to read the *Essais* only within its polemical context:

Leibniz seems to have tried deliberately to tone down the reference (albeit it is clearly assumed) to this author [i.e. Bayle] as his work progresses. What is at stake goes beyond the particular controversy, and the theoretical exposition tends to overtake the polemical response.⁵⁵

For that reason, “the controversy provoked by Bayle’s writings cannot be taken as the cause (not even “occasional”) of the writing of the *Essais*.”⁵⁶ In fact, as Rateau points out, at the time when the term “theodicy” first occurred in Leibniz’s vocabulary, it corresponded to the ambition of writing an apology for God according to the mathematical method. Hence a fragment from 1695-97 published by Grua, which has the following title: “Par Guillaume Pacidius. THEODICY or Catholic demonstrations in favor of divine justice, according to the certitude of mathematical form [*ad Mathematicam certitudinem formam*].”⁵⁷ It is not sure that Leibniz ever abandoned that ambition even though the *Essais* hardly look like a mathematical treatise.⁵⁸ For, as Leibniz writes, “I write nothing in philosophy that I do not treat by means of definitions and axioms, although I do not always give it this mathematical

look which puts people off, for one must speak in familiar ways in order to be read by ordinary people.”⁵⁹ From this view point, it is possible to argue that the “dialogical” form in which Leibniz finally chose to present his theodicean argument was simply a rhetorically more efficient and popular way to get the message through than a treatise explicitly organized in the form of demonstration. This however, is not exactly what Rateau maintains. As already mentioned above, he is careful not to overstate the demonstrative, i.e. “scientific”, value of the theodicean argument. Ever since the conception of the *Demonstrationes catholicae*, Leibniz ambioned an apologetic work containing demonstrations equaling those of mathematics. It is clear however, that, in spite of Leibniz’s original ambitions for the project, the *Essais* do not correspond to the fulfillment of this task. Most of the argumentative strategies developed in the *Discours préliminaire* rely on an “art of controversies” rather than on forms of reasoning comparable to mathematical “calculation”. Rateau clearly recognizes this.⁶⁰ But regardless of his sensibility to Leibniz’s meta-theoretical reflections on the controversialist nature of his apologetics, Rateau is still leaning towards an interpretation of the *Essais* as a whole where the actual dialogical aspects are toned down and the demonstrative element is given a more prominent position. On this point, he is trying to counterbalance a prevalent reading according to which the *Essais* are *only* a response to Pierre Bayle.⁶¹ I agree that one should not diminish the scope of Leibniz’s project and see the controversy with Bayle as the sole background for the *Essais*. Still, I do not think that the importance of the actual polemical context can be reduced to such an extent. Refuting Pierre Bayle and the particular form of moderate skepticism that the philosopher from Rotterdam represents may not be the sole objective of Leibniz’s book, but it still constitutes at least an important aspect of it. Indeed, Leibniz himself describes his book as a *dissertatio Antibayliana*⁶² and as an *opusculum contra Baylium*.⁶³ Moreover, central parts of Leibniz’s discussions of other authors than Bayle in the *Essais* (such as, for example, Leibniz’s critique of Spinoza and the *fatum spinozanum*) are to a large extent governed by Leibniz’s efforts to improve or correct Bayle’s readings and objections to these same authors.⁶⁴

* * *

The *Essais de théodicée* are a philosophical and theological masterpiece that had enormous impact on seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophy and on the Enlightenment as a whole. It made of Leibniz one of the most important *apologista divinae veritatis* of early modern rationalism, surpassed only by Malebranche.⁶⁵ It also made of him one of the most important representatives of what Jonathan Israel

calls the “moderate Enlightenment,” equaled maybe only by Locke. It is thus not only because of the upcoming 300 year anniversary of the *Essais*’ publication that there was need for renewed, comprehensive study of this book, taking into account the most recent developments of the *Leibniz Edition*. Paul Rateau’s *La Question du mal. Fondements et élaboration de la Théodicée* provides exactly this.

Mogens Lærke
University of Aberdeen
Philosophy department
Old Brewery
High Street
Aberdeen AB24 3UB
Scotland, United Kingdom
Email: mogenslaerke@hotmail.com

Notes

¹ M. Fichant, “Préface”, in Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 13.

² P. Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 43.

³ See G. Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et théodicée selon Leibniz*, Paris: PUF 1953; *La Justice humaine selon Leibniz*, Paris: PUF 1956.

⁴ See Leibniz to Hugony, 1710, GP III, p. 680. On the biographical context of the *Essais*, see also M.R. Antognazza, *Leibniz. An Intellectual Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 479-486.

⁵ P. Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 44.

⁶ See in particular the remarks about Grua’s *Jurisprudence universelle et théodicée selon Leibniz*, in *ibid.*, p. 43: “The texts anterior to the *Essais* are not considered for themselves, but simply read as sketches of the future synthesis. The account of [Gaston Grua], by giving the impression of a practically invariable theory of evil, at the same time flattens the difficulties it involves, its internal tensions, and can only come to [a] disappointing conclusion.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 395-98.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 396-97.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁰ See M. Fichant, “L’invention philosophique,” in G. W. Leibniz, *Discours de métaphysique. Monadologie*, ed. M. Fichant, Paris: Gallimard 2004, p. 7-140.

REVIEW OF RATEAU

- ¹¹ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 32.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-38.
- ¹⁴ See in particular Leibniz, *Discours de métaphysique*, § 4, A VI, iv, p. 1535-36, trans. AG, p. 37-38. For Rateau's account, see *La Question du mal*, p. 649-700.
- ¹⁵ Leibniz to Des Bosses, 15 February 1712, GP II, p. 437, trans. in G.W. Leibniz, *The Leibniz-Des Bosses Correspondence*, trans. B. Look and D. Rutherford, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 229.
- ¹⁶ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 332.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 510-516.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 526.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ²⁰ Leibniz, "Discours préliminaire de la conformité de la foy avec la raison," § 43, in GP VI, p. 75. For Rateau, see *La Question du mal*, p. 21.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54-55.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.
- ²⁴ Leibniz, *Essais de théodicée*, § 20, GP VI, p. 114. On the origin of this question in Boethius' phrase "*Si Deus justus, unde malum?*," see Fichant, "Preface," p. 11.
- ²⁵ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 399.
- ²⁶ Rateau does not explicitly deal with Leibniz's critique of the Padouans. On this, see M. Lærke, "Les sept foyers du libertinage selon G.W. Leibniz," in *La Lettre clandestine* 15 (2007), 274-77, and "Leibniz et le libertinage: quatre fonctions théoriques," in A. McKenna and P.F. Moreau (eds.), *Libertinage et philosophie au XVIIe siècle*, vol. 11, Presses Universitaires de St. Étienne: Saint Étienne, 2009, p. 267-285.
- ²⁷ I borrow the notion of a "theological epistemology" from Annick Latour-Derrien's unpublished doctoral thesis, titled *Logique du probable et de l'aspistémologie théologique dans les Essais de théodicée de Leibniz*, defended in 2004 at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne and the University of Montréal.
- ²⁸ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 449-92.
- ²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 393.
- ³⁰ Grua, p. 238-39. See also Rateau, *La Question du mal*, 373-79.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82-92, 339-50. Other recent accounts stress the importance of Leibniz's conception of love in relation to the early texts on universal jurisprudence. See U. Goldenbaum, "It's Love! Leibniz's Foundation of Natural Law as the Outcome of

His Struggle with Hobbes' and Spinoza's Naturalism," in M. Kulstad, M. Lærke and D. Snyder (eds.), *The Philosophy of the Young Leibniz*, Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft 35, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2009, p. 189-202; M. Lærke, *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza. La genèse d'une opposition complexe*, Paris: Honoré Champion 2008, p. 240-46; G. Brown, "Disinterested love: Understanding Leibniz's reconciliation of self- and other-regarding motives," in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, [forthcoming].

³² See in particular P. Riley, *Leibniz's Universal Jurisprudence. Justice as the Charity of the Wise*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1996.

³³ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 41-42.

³⁴ See for example *ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁵ For the expression "first theodicy," see for example Y. Belaval, "Présentation," in G.W. Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi*, Paris: Vrin 1970. For the notion of a "proto-theodicy," see M.R. Antognazza, *Leibniz. An Intellectual Biography*, p. 480.

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 183-84.

³⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 68-77.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 77-82.

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 102-119.

⁴⁰ Cf. A. Robinet, *Le Meilleur des mondes par la balance de l'Europe*, Paris: PUF 1994. I fully agree with Rateau that Robinet's position is untenable. On this point, see also my *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza*, p. 213-218.

⁴¹ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 37. I am very sympathetic to the idea of a necessitarian tendency in the young Leibniz. However, speaking of a "Spinozist or Stratonian" strand in Leibniz's texts from the late 1660s and early 1670s remains problematic for simple chronological reasons. There is no evidence that Leibniz had any clear idea about Spinoza's necessitarianism before he read the Oldenburg letters around October 1676. Moreover, the recurrent assimilation of Spinoza and Strato in the *Essais* comes from Bayle, who as the first compared Spinoza to Strato in the *Dictionnaire* from 1697 (I have consulted the 1820 edition, P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Paris: Desoer 1820, vol. XIII, art. "SPINOZA (Benoit de)," p. 422-23.)

⁴² Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi*, 1672-73, A VI, iii, p. 131, trans. in G.W. Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi. Papers Concerning the Problem of Evil, 1671-1678*, trans. R. Sleight, Jr., New Haven: Yale University Press 2005, p. 65.

⁴³ Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi*, A VI, iii, p. 127, trans. Sleight, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Leibniz, *Confessio philosophi*, A VI, iii, p. 124, trans. Sleight, p. 47.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 185. On this, see also P. Rateau, “La nécessité de l’*optimum* dans la *Confessio Philosophi*: un nécessitarisme leibnizien?,” in P.F. Moreau, M. Lærke, and R. Andrault (eds.), *Spinoza/Leibniz*, Lyon: ENS Editions, [forthcoming].

⁴⁶ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 137.

⁴⁷ A I, xii, p. 625; my emphasis. For Rateau, see *La Question du mal*, p. 317-18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153. See also p. 165, 187-88.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁵¹ I perfectly agree with Rateau that there are substantial changes in Leibniz’s thinking about possibility between the two manuscripts of the *Confessio*. Indeed, in recent issues of *The Leibniz Review*, I have argued along very similar lines (cf. M. Lærke, “*Quod non omnia possibilis ad existentiam perveniant*. Leibniz’s ontology of possibility, 1668-1678,” in *The Leibniz Review* 17 (2007), p 1-30; see also my debate with O. Nachtomy about this article in *The Leibniz Review* 18 (2008), p. 249-66; see finally my *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza*, p. 379-84, 546-49, 796-99). Moreover, Rateau argues, much like I have done also, that since he “maybe was aware of a certain proximity to Spinozism, Leibniz tries to avoid, in the texts which follows the *Confessio philosophi*, the risk of reducing God to destiny or necessity” (*La Question du mal*, p. 203). The fact that we have independently reached very similar results concerning Leibniz’s conception of possibility in the 1670s provides some support for our common thesis. There is however, some slight disagreement concerning how exactly the developmental story should be told. Rateau believes that the shift in Leibniz’s thinking about possibility takes place around 1675 and that it can be observed in Leibniz’s 1675 correspondence with Simon Foucher (*ibid.*, p. 196). I, for my part, have argued that the shift only takes place a couple of years later, around mid-1677.

⁵² See, among other texts, M. Dascal (ed.), *G.W. Leibniz. The Art of Controversies*, Dordrecht: Springer 2006; M. Dascal (ed.), *Leibniz: What Kind of Rationalist*, Dordrecht: Springer 2008. Incidentally, Rateau’s otherwise very helpful discussion of Leibniz’s *ars disputandi* and its importance for the project of the theodicy (cf. *La Question du mal*, p. 431-48) does not really take into account Dascal’s work on these issues (to Rateau’s defense, it should be noticed however, that important parts of this work has only been published *after* the PhD thesis which forms the basis for Rateau’s book was completed.) The same objection could be made against the chapter on “The Theodicy as a Defense” (*ibid.*, p. 449-92), which contains an elaborate discussion of Leibniz’s “balance of reason” and “weak” forms of

reasoning, also studied in detail by Dascal (cf. M. Dascal, “La Balanza de la razon,” in O. Nudler (ed.), *La Racionalidad : Su Poder y sus Limites*, Paidos, Buenos Aires : Paidos 1996, p. 363-381 (English version available on: <http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/philos/dascal/papers>, p. 1-21); “Nihil sine Ratione? Blandior ratio,” in *VII. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress. Nihil sine Ratione*, Berlin, 276-280; “*Ex pluribus unum ?* Patterns in 522+ Texts of Leibniz’s *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* VI, 4,” in *The Leibniz Review* 13 (2003), p. 105-154; “*Alter et Etiam*: Rejoinder to Schepers,” in *The Leibniz Review* 14 (2004), p. 137-151, etc.) Nonetheless, Rateau refers only once to Dascal’s work (cf. *La Question du mal*, p. 514) and instead prefers discussing an unpublished PhD thesis defended by Annick Latour-Derrien in 2004 (for the full reference, see note 27 above). Sometimes, this proves somewhat frustrating for the reader who does not have access to the other side of the argument except through the quotes provided by Rateau.

⁵³ Cf. Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 402-406. Among the texts related to this, see in particular Leibniz’s *Annotatiunculæ subitaneæ ad Tolandi librum* from 1701. The only existing edition of the original Latin text is in Dutens V, p. 142-49. This central text has only recently received the attention it deserves. See M.R. Antognazza, “Natural and Supernatural Mysteries: Leibniz’s *Annotatiunculæ subitaneæ* on Toland’s *Christianity not Mysterious*,” in *VII. Internationaler Leibniz-Kongress. Nihil sine Ratione*, Berlin 2001, p. 17-24; *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation. Reason and Revelation the Seventeenth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 126-32; T. Dagron, “Introduction,” in J. Toland, *Le Christianisme sans mystères*, éd. T. Dagron, Paris: Honoré Champion 2005, p. 13-107. For a new, and excellent study of the relations between Leibniz and Toland, see also T. Dagron, *Toland and Leibniz. L’invention du néo-spinozisme*, Paris: Vrin 2009. A review of this book is planned for the 2010 issue of *The Leibniz Review*.

⁵⁴ Cf. Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 407-20.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 704.

⁵⁷ Grua, p. 370.

⁵⁸ Cf. Leibniz to Burnett, 30 October 1710, GP III, p. 321.

⁵⁹ Leibniz to Burnett, 10 December 1705, GP III, p. 302.

⁶⁰ Rateau, *La Question du mal*, p. 498.

⁶¹ See for example J. Brunschwig’s preface to the *Essais*: “If the *New Essays* are a confrontation with Locke, the *Theodicy* is above all a dialogue with Bayle” (quoted in *ibid.*, p. 418, note 98).

REVIEW OF RATEAU

⁶² Cf. Leibniz to Des Bosses, 24 April 1709, GP II, p. 371, trans. Look/Rutherford, p. 127.

⁶³ Cf. Leibniz to Des Bosses, 31 July 1709, GP II, p. 379, trans. Look/Rutherford, p. 141.

⁶⁴ On this point, see my *Leibniz lecteur de Spinoza*, p. 973-89.

⁶⁵ Cf. Leibniz, *Rationale fidei Catholicae contra omnis generis sectas*, 1685 (?), A VI, iv, p. 2305.