Paul Rateau (ed.), *L'Idée de théodicée de Leibniz à Kant: héritage, transformations, critiques*, *Studia Leibnitiana* **Sonderheft 36, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2009, 222 p.**

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The volume is a collection of fifteen articles mainly written in French (two articles are written in German) devoted to the reception of the *Theodicy* from Leibniz to Kant. Most articles were first presented at an international conference at the University Marc Bloch in Strasbourg in 2007. The volume is divided into three roughly equal main sections plus an appendix containing only one article. The first main section, entitled "The Leibnizian Elaboration," is devoted to the study of key aspects of Leibniz's own conception of the theodicy. The second section, entitled "Reception and Criticism," is concerned with the reception of the Leibnizian theodicy in the period up to Kant, including Wolff and Voltaire, but also less well-known, but indisputably important figures such as Buddeus and Bilfinger. The third section deals specifically with "The Kantian Approach" and contains contributions on both the critical and the pre-critical reception of Leibniz's *Theodicy* in Kant. Finally, in appendix, we find an article by Yves-Jean Herder proposing a sort of meta-theoretical reflection on the relation between theodicy and the history of philosophy in general, taking departure in Hegel's *Vorlesungen* on the history of philosophy.

The volume is very rigorously edited. It has a clear overall thematic unity and the sections and articles follow each other in a simple and natural order (namely a chronological one, from Leibniz to Kant.) The volume has nothing of the random collection of miscellaneous papers that edited volumes based on conferences often turn into. The individual contributions to the volume are of a very high quality. Among the contributions that this reviewer took particular pleasure in was Antonio Lamarra's paper on the difficult relations between monadology and theodicy, Roberto C. Ballanti's lucid paper on historical theodicy and historiographical thought in Leibniz, Stefan Lorenz's very erudite panorama of theological critique and metaphysical optimism from Buddeus to Schleiermacher, Frédéric de Buzon's article on Bilfinger and the origins of evil, and Michel Fichant's take on the young Kant's notion of negative quantities and the principle of theodicy. I will leave it to the reader to explore the specific contents of this generally excellent volume further herself: there is much to learn from it.

Books devoted to the history of reception of a given philosopher or a given philosophical work are not as frequent as they could be (and should be, in my view.) Many recent "companions" to past philosophers simply omit having sections on the history of reception (in fairness, it should be noted that this is neither the case in Nicolas Jolley's classic *Cambridge Companion* to Leibniz, which contains an excellent article by Catherine Wilson on the topic, nor in Brandon Look's more recent *Continuum Companion*, which contains an important contribution by Anja Jauernig on the German reception.) I suspect this is mainly because of a still predominant contention among historians of philosophy that their job consists in figuring out what the philosophers "had in mind" when writing this or that statement. An almost exclusive privilege is still often given to the reconstruction of authorial intentions and the single "true" meaning of past philosophical texts that such reconstructions lay claim to. This represents a serious obstacle to the study of the history of reception which, under those conditions, hardly can amount to anything but a long series of either repetitions or misunderstandings. However, as Paul Rateau notes in his short presentation of the volume, devoting a volume to the aftermath and heritage of Leibniz's work implies granting intrinsic importance to the question of "what the theodicy can be and become, once it is detached from the conceptual framework within which it was originally set" (p. 7). Studying the history of reception of some work then implies resituating the text in the actual conditions under which it was read, reconstructing its meaning as a function of the intended meanings that were actually attributed to it by the agents moving within those specific contexts, and without measuring the historical importance of those attributed intentions by the degree in which they correspond to the original, authorial intention. It is somewhat of a truism within the history of philosophy that the most productive interpretations of a given philosophy often run counter to what were in fact the certifiable views of the philosopher who originally wrote it. Undoubtedly, Leibniz would be at pains to recognize his own notion of theodicy in Kant's account of it (indeed, Paul Rateau shows very clearly that this is the case in his contribution to the volume.) While being in many ways verifiably at odds with Leibniz's own conception, Kant's perspective on Leibniz's *Theodicy* nonetheless generated meanings of the theodicy project that had a measurable and undeniable impact on the understanding of that project. The same can be said about the perspectives on Leibniz's text proposed by Kants's predecessors, including Wolff, Buddeus, Voltaire etc.

Paul Rateau's volume does considerable work in bringing to light the intrinsic historical truth value of all these eighteenth century receptions of Leibniz's theodicy project, from the time Leibniz himself wrote his work to the time when Kant wrote his dismissive *On the Failure of All Philosophical Attempts of Theodicy* in order to built the practical part of the critical project on the ruins of Leibniz's work.

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