

***The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy.* Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer (editors). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001, pp. 179.**

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In recent years historians of modern philosophy have begun to pay much more attention to the theological thought of both major and minor figures in the period. These theological views are interesting and important in their own right, but they also provide substantial insights into the interconnections between, and the motivations for, many philosophical positions these figures advocate. This volume continues this recent tradition by providing an engaging look at the ways in which key figures in the modern period addressed facets of the problem of evil. The nine essays included in this volume, originally presented at a conference at the University of Toronto in 1999, cover a range of figures and topics, though British figures are somewhat surprisingly excluded altogether.

The volume begins with an essay by Alfred Freddoso on the topic of Suarez's account of the nature of divine concurrence with sinful human acts. Freddoso explains the difficulties faced by those who maintain God's causal involvement with creaturely acts, while also seeking a buffer between God and moral evil. Freddoso shows that Suarez maintains both via a two-part strategy. First, God's concurrence is only efficacious on the condition of creaturely cooperation (insuring that God is not the cause of the creature's sin). Second, when creatures sin, God also provides concurrence sufficient for the creature to perform a non-sinful act.

Michael Latzer's essay is the sole contribution to focus on Descartes. Here he treats Descartes' theodicy of error in the *Fourth Meditation*. Latzer argues that the underlying view of freedom employed by Descartes in making out the theodicy permits compatibility with divine determination in some texts while denying it in others. Rather than arguing for development or duplicitousness, Latzer holds that Descartes can have it both ways. Since God's absolute omnipotence allows Him to make contradictions true, God can both determine creaturely acts *and* leave them wholly free. Some might find the interpretation uncharitable since Descartes does not defend such a reconciliation explicitly. In light of this, one wonders how one is supposed to decide between this sort of interpretation and others which impute development, duplicitousness, or outright contradiction to Descartes. If we adopt Latzer's strategy, are we supposed to say that Descartes never contra-

dicts himself since apparent contradictions can always be swallowed by appeal to divine absolute omnipotence?

Graeme Hunter and Steven Nadler provide entries focusing on Spinoza. Hunter's essay examines those passages in Spinoza's corpus where he appears to endorse distinctively Christian doctrines. Hunter defends the surprising thesis that these are not mere accommodations or stray remarks, but rather reflect the fact that Spinoza is a radical, if heterodox, Protestant. Nadler speaks more directly to the issue of theodicy in Spinoza, arguing that Spinoza attempts to present a *reductio* of certain influential theodicean views defended by medieval Jewish thinkers, specifically Maimonides and Gersonides. Unlike these figures who argue that virtue in this life is rewarded in an afterlife, Spinoza argues that true virtue is rewarded with an earthly life that is as good and meaningful as possible.

Denis Moreau presents an engaging discussion of the theodicy offered by Malebranche. Moreau argues that Malebranche's theodicy is unique in that it defends the claim that even the existence of gratuitous evils (i.e., evils which fail to bring about a greater good or prevent a greater evil) is compatible with the existence of the theistic God. The uniqueness derives from the fact that divine goodness is standardly taken to disallow gratuitous evil. But for Malebranche, divine goodness is not measured merely by the created product. Rather, goodness is determined primarily by the *manner* of creation. For Malebranche, it is most worthy of God's goodness to create via general volitions. But doing so carries the consequence that certain evils will result, evils which will not be remedied by supplemental particular volitions since creating via such particular volitions detracts from the overall perfection of the world.

Moreau then makes two claims about the Malebranchian theodicy. First, he claims, it uniquely allows Malebranche to admit the existence of "real evil." Second, the evils in the Malebranchean world are real *because* they serve to secure no greater good. It is not clear, however, that these claims are right. Moreau seems committed to the claim that if a state of affairs serves as a necessary condition for securing a greater good, then the state of affairs is not really evil. But surely that view would not be widely shared. Violations of God's commands can be really evil, even if God's permission of these violations ultimately serves to bring about some greater good. Further, it is not clear that the evils in question here serve no greater good on Malebranche's scheme. After all, if the elimination of the evils can only be secured by particular volitions, and creating via particular volitions detracts from the overall sum of the goodness of the created product *and* mode of creation, then those defects in the product *do* seem to serve as a necessary condi-

REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

tion for an overall greater world.

D. Larivière and Thomas Lennon provide an overview of Bayle's position on the problem of evil. Larivière and Lennon show that, like others of an extreme Reformed persuasion, Bayle was convinced that the problem of evil was not soluble by the canons of human reason. Christians must rest content to trust the deliverances of divine revelation alone. For those who insist on reasoned solutions, Bayle argued that the Socinian solution was the only coherent one. Of course, this pseudo-solution could be purchased only at the price of denying genuine divine foreknowledge and providence.

The final three essays in the volume focus on Leibniz. Elmar Kremer examines Leibniz's rejection of the Augustinian position that unbaptized infants would be eternally damned. Like other critics of the Augustinian and Reformed views, Leibniz argued that original sin produces only a disposition to sin in Adam's progeny, rather than genuine guilt. As a result, infants are innocent and thus not justly subject to exclusion from the divine presence eternally. Donald Rutherford provides a subtle analysis of the relationship between Leibniz's *fatum christianum* and the *fatum stoicum* which he repeatedly rejects. Rutherford argues that, for Leibniz, while both views provide consolation grounded in the reality of divine providence, the *fatum christianum* alone provides for genuine contentment since, in addition to providence, Christians can also affirm ultimate and final divine *justice*. Finally, Robert Sleigh provides a brief yet wide-ranging discussion of Leibniz's understanding of the variety of problems evil presents, and of Leibniz's main strategies in replying to these problems. After discussing the main theodicean strategies Leibniz rejects, Sleigh discusses some of the strategies he endorses. Specifically, Sleigh shows that Leibniz ultimately regards the greater good theodicy as in need of supplementation from an account which explains the nature of God's concurrence with sinful acts of creatures. This supplemental account relies essentially on the claim that all creatures are combinations of perfection and limitation, the former issuing from God and the latter from creatures. There are, as Sleigh notes, a number of distinctive difficulties that such a view presents for someone with Leibniz's commitments, and further investigation will be needed to assess the coherence of such a view within the Leibnizian metaphysic.

It should be clear that the selection of topics addressed in the volume is wide ranging and important. Unfortunately, the volume lacks a bibliography and an index, a potentially useful addition for scholars interested in the topics treated here. Nonetheless, those interested in the theological commitments of the canonical modern figures, or in the connection between philosophy and theology in the

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period will find these essays provocative and engaging.

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