

## The Best Possible World

### Topic

A significant portion of Leibniz's arguments concerning God and free will are grounded in his belief that we live in the Best Possible World. I want to analyze the possibility and probability that we live in such a world (a BPW). In this vein, I will draw from the theory of Monadology, from Blumenfeld, and from the Discourse on Metaphysics, primarily.

### Prospectus

Leibniz believed that God, being infinitely good, would have created the Best Possible World, given that His infinite analysis allowed him to know which was truly best. Consequently, the world in which we live can be considered the best possible. When he was challenged, based mostly on the imperfection apparent in our world, his theory of the BPW shifted to include the possibility the BPW is not necessarily a world in which every individual component is as perfect as possible. Quite the contrary, a simple unifying law is more perfect, but it often leads to ills (i.e. monstrous children). In this essay, I want to examine Leibniz's views on free will and God, relating them to his belief that the BPW exists. Ultimately, I want to prove that the best possible world is inconsistent with Leibnizian notions of God and free will.

To begin our analysis, it is pertinent to note Leibniz's belief that only one world can possibly exist. This theory is advanced in the Monadology (#53, A&G pg. 220). This is not to say that the existence of any world other than our own is impossible *in itself*, merely that God's infinite goodness led him to choose the world in which we live (hence it being the BPW). This is primarily because "he [God] cannot prefer the less perfect to the more perfect" (A&G 166). With this in mind, let us focus our attention on a preliminary discussion of the possibility of a BPW.

Several critics of Leibniz have argued that, for any world one considers (or God picks), there will always be another possible that is more perfect. Blumenfeld defends the Leibnizian view on this by arguing that, if no BPW were possible, God would have refrained from even creating one (“Is the Best...?”, pg. 166).

But if God cannot prefer the less perfect to the more perfect, the only way for Leibniz to maintain that God has free will seems to be to say that, although God’s preferences are out of his control, he can prefer the more perfect (and does) but can choose the less perfect. However, this seems like a contradiction, and in the same way that a being with infinite analysis will always *prefer* something he knows is better, he will always choose it. The result of this is that the possibility of a BPW does not hinge on free will. Instead, we must ask ourselves exactly how perfect our world is.

My final paper, ideally, will focus on arguments concerning the apparent imperfections inherent in our world. Again, Leibniz would maintain that these little flaws ultimately make the whole world more perfect, as compared to every other possible world. I would like to examine the possibility that a slightly different world than ours could have one fewer imperfection without being inherently impossible. Insofar as this change could be identified, we could prove that we do not live in the BPW, and the Leibnizian arguments grounded in our existence in the BPW would fall.