

Phi 449 prospectus: Will Hohmeister

Pleasure is the bridge between moral goods and aesthetic goods. When we sense the beauty that rises from a specific type of order we are drawn to it. And, if we are reasoning, intelligent human beings, we are capable of at least attempting to understand the order from which the beauty arises. This special type of order is, in the BPW, harmony, or the perfection ratio, which is the richness of phenomena: complexity of the laws that govern the world. God, in creating the BPW, created a rich variety of phenomena that we can observe, and simple laws to govern what was created.

Pleasure that rests in reason is “good”, while pleasure based purely in the senses is “bad”. When we apply reason to our pleasure (to the facts of the world that we sense), joy is the result. Permanent joy, or happiness, comes through the continuing search into the harmony of the world. When we are sated, happiness does not last. This brings me to my first question for my final paper: since God is perfect, is God bored? Is he unhappy? After all, he *is* perfection, according to Leibniz, so how can he inquire into what perfection is?

Assuming God is unhappy, can there be such a thing as permanent joy if humans can never be satisfied? If we do ever become sated in our desire to understand, are our spirits stunted, doomed to the same unhappiness that plagues God? And, supposing, we can be happy with a never-ending desire to understand perfection, is it possible for humans to reject the divine source from which the perfection/harmony supposedly originates?

I like the idea that Brown brings up, that humans are only truly happy when we are attempting to understand the harmony of the world that exists behind the beauty we perceive. However, I do not agree with either Brown or Leibniz on the subject of God – or any other

absolute. Leibniz asserts that God is not simply a dictator, but that things like “justice” exist outside of him as universal constants to which God is the most perfect example. But, I do not think God can be happy if he is the most perfect thing. And I do not think that universal constants like justice or perfection can exist without something to embody them at their peak.

So, in my madness, I am going to try to show that human beings cannot exist in a world created by a perfect, reasoning God. I think reason defies perfection, and that, if we want to keep the concept of God – of some creator being, in this case, vastly more powerful than humans – we need to accept either that God is not perfect, or God is not good, or throw God out the window altogether and try to progress in knowledge and power ourselves without recourse to a higher authority other than our own limitations. To do this, I am going to draw on the secondary source I presented in class, *Leibniz’s Theodicy and the Confluence of Worldly Goods*, as I did in my second paper, and use it to expose the belief that God is completely good and completely ordered, or fully perfect, and yet happiness depends on inquiry into perfection. I will also be using the *Discourse on Metaphysics* for direct quotes from Leibniz.