

Final Paper Prospectus  
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Perhaps our most recurrent discussion topic has been about free will. The general problem arises from the nature of monads. If everything that a monad ever does is determined by the notion of it held by God and our souls are monads, it appears that we cannot have free will. Said another way, if we had perfect knowledge of the initial state of a monad and “unfold all its folds”, and we could “know the beauty of the universe in each soul,” (Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace*, 211). In this case it appears that if we had perfect knowledge of a thing we could know everything that it will ever do or will happen to it and that every event is pre-determined for the thing, hence precluding its free will.

A similar, and I think worse, problem arises for God. We have seen that freedom is one of the perfections, and “that God possesses all of them [perfections] together, and that each of them belongs to him in the highest degree,” (Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 35). Since freedom is a perfection, and hence God must be perfectly free, it seems that we run into problems when considering the creation of the best possible world. The creation of the best possible world is a problem because it seems to be something that God could not fail to do – that is God *must* create the best possible world. Leibniz does not say this directly, likely because it would contradict God’s perfect freedom, but Leibniz gets close: “It follows from the supreme perfection of God that he chose the best possible plan in producing the universe,” and that “the result of all these claims must be the most perfect actual world possible,” (Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace*, 210).

If it is the case that God could not have done otherwise than created the best possible world, it appears that God is not free, which is a contradiction of Leibniz’s conception of God. This is problematic, and is recognized in the article by David Blumenfeld that Grant chose.

Blumenfeld comments extensively on the matter, citing several places where Leibniz responds to this objection. Leibniz says the problem of God having freedom is a misinterpretation of his arguments:

[Although God's] will is always indefectible and always tends towards the best, the evil or the lesser good which he rejects will still be possible in itself. Otherwise the necessity of good would be geometrical (so to speak) or meta-physical, and altogether absolute; the contingency of things would be destroyed, and there would be no choice.

(Blumenfeld, 87)

Leibniz's response is that less perfect worlds are hypothetically possible, and that it is the case that God uses his infinite reason to choose the best.

In my paper I will probably look at sections one through five from the beginning of *Discourse on Metaphysics*, or perhaps take a look that quotes Blumenfeld uses from the *Theodicy* in context and try to extract exactly what Leibniz says about God's freedom. I will compare these passages with those in which Leibniz appears to talk about the necessity of the creation of the best possible world. For my secondary sources I will refer to Blumenfeld and to some Robert Adams, who is cited by Blumenfeld. I currently intend to argue that Leibniz's conception of God is inconsistent and that God must either be free or that it was not necessary for God to create the best possible world. Other potential passages to look at include the *Principles of Grace and Nature*, and *The Monadology*. I would prefer to use *The Monadology* since it seems to be Leibniz's seminal work, but it does not deal directly with the problem of God's freedom.