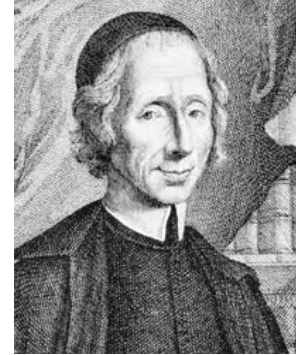


Nicolas Malebranche



- Things are going to get weird. Why are we doing this again?
- How does God choose which world to make?
- 1. A world which expresses his excellent qualities
 - “As God esteems and loves himself invincibly, he finds his glory and takes gratification in a work which in some way expresses his excellent qualities.”
- 2. A world with something divine
 - “It was necessary that God create the universe for the Church, the Church for Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in order to find in him a victim and a sovereign priest worthy of the divine majesty.”
 - Christ makes the world an appropriate object for divine creation. The fall makes the world better (*felix culpa*) because it is because of the fall that Jesus enters the world. Malebranche builds the Christian salvation drama into his theodicy.
- 3. Simplicity of ways (i.e., efficiency)
 - When God decides what to create, he isn’t just looking out at all the possible worlds he could create, but he’s instead looking at (1) all the possible sets of laws he could create, (2) all the initial states of creation that could go with them, and (3) the worlds that would result from these two things.
 - “An excellent workman should proportion his action to his work; he does not accomplish by quite complex means that which he can execute by simpler ones, he does not act without an end, and never makes useless efforts.”
 - God doesn’t just care about the final outcome, but also about the way of bringing it about.
 - God only does one thing.
- Evil in Nature
 - God brings about a natural world with great fecundity while still having relatively few, very simple general laws (general wills/volitions).
 - Rain in the ocean
 - Monstrous births
 - Natural disasters
 - “If, for example, one drops rocks on the heads of passers-by, the rocks will always fall at an equal speed, without discerning the piety, or the condition, or the good or bad dispositions of those who pass by.” (LVII)
 - Can we really say that God should have sacrificed the simplicity of his laws to correct these evils?
- Human Evil and God’s General Will: The System of Occasional Causes (Occasionalism)
 - Cartesian dualist = soul and body are entirely different. How can they interact?
 - God is the only thing with power to change the world.

- God has established general laws according to which *his power* changes the world (in and through my body) on the occasion of my willing it. Sometimes we will badly.
- Distribution of Grace
 - God avoids particular volitions. Even in the case of miracles, God sets up general volitions which take effect *on the occasion* of the particular volition of the angels.
 - What about the distribution of grace? Did God want so many to be damned? And what about special divine helps?
 - The distribution of grace is miraculous.
 - Grace is distributed especially through the particular volitions of the human nature of Christ who prays for individual people one at a time. The prayers being the occasional cause of God's power.
 - Grace is also distributed through the church.
 - Grace is distributed regularly to all (rain in the sea again).
 - Prepare the ground of your soul, for though you now require four units of grace, the general laws may only bring you three.
 - We can truly say that God intends for all to be saved.
- Noteworthy Aspects
 - A most Christian theodicy in many respects.
 - Explains a great variety of evils, not just pain and suffering, but natural defects, sin, the fall, refusal of grace ...
 - Similar in parts to Hick's soul-making theodicy, emphasizing the development of saints and the unfolding story built into the world.
- Objections
 - Spinozism?
 - Shares with Hick a view of God as distant in a way.
 - "Nothing costs God anything." Should God really sacrifice the ends in favor of the means?

