

**Study Questions****Reading for Week 3*****Skepticism, optimism, and deism***

**BAYLE, *Manicheans* (Palmer 177-188); LEIBNIZ, *Theodicy* (Palmer 193-208); VOLTAIRE, "Theist" (Palmer 208-209)**

**BAYLE, *Manicheans* [1697] (Palmer 177-188)**

[You might profitably read Palmer's introductory remarks concerning Bayle and Leibniz on pp. 19-24 and 75-77 too.]

1. Bayle calls Manicheism "this false system" (178). Is it obvious from his subsequent discussion that he actually thinks that it is false?
2. Palmer suggests that Melissus is perhaps a stand-in for the Molinist views of the Jesuits (178, 183). What evidence do you see for this?
3. What arguments for God's permitting sin does Bayle refute on pp. 182-3? How serious do you think he is in saying that one should oppose the Manicheans only through deference to authority, as St. Augustine urges?
4. Does Bayle's claim that the "weakness" of philosophy "ought to lead us to the light of revelation" (185) remind you of anything you read in d'Alembert? Are you convinced by the appeal to faith at the end?

**LEIBNIZ, *Theodicy* [1710] (Palmer 193-208)**

1. What did the Socinians believe (193, 99)? How does Leibniz respond to their views? What difficulties does Leibniz list for the doctrine of divine salvation (195)?
2. What does "absolute necessity" consist in according to Leibniz (196)? What is "physical necessity", and why does Leibniz say it depends on "moral necessity"?
3. What answer does Leibniz give to Bayle's doubts about the goodness of a God who creates the conditions in which he foresees that sin will be committed? Is the idea that we must presume that God has his reasons, even if we cannot articulate them?

4. Why grounds does Leibniz give for claiming that the “future is certain and determinate”? How would this “undermine the morality of actions” (200)? Why is there still a problem of evil even if it is granted that people have free will?
5. In his reply to these objections, what arguments does Leibniz give for the belief that God is a first cause that is “absolutely perfect in *power*, in *wisdom* and in *goodness*” (203)? Why could such a God not have failed to choose the best?
6. What is Leibniz’s distinction between God’s “antecedent” and “consequent” will, and how is that supposed to bear on God’s permitting evil to exist in the world (205-207)?
7. Do Leibniz’s arguments constitute a satisfactory response to Bayle’s skepticism?

**VOLTAIRE, "Theist" [1764] (Palmer 208-209)**

1. A “deist” is defined as someone who believes in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. How does Voltaire’s definition and account of a “theist” differ from this?
2. Does his “theist” believe in holy scriptures or the necessity of a priesthood? How do we know that God does indeed punish and reward?