

JOSHUA L. WATSON

CONTACT INFORMATION	801 McClung Tower University of Tennessee Knoxville, TN 37996-0480 <i>Email:</i> jwatso56@utk.edu <i>Phone:</i> (317) 373-3097
EDUCATION	Purdue University , West Lafayette, Indiana <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ph.D. in Philosophy, August 2012 Dissertation Title: <i>Form, Harmony, and Mechanism in Leibniz's Philosophy of Laws</i> Dissertation Committee: Jan Cover (director), Martin Curd, Michael Jacovides Examination Test Area: History of Philosophy (Ancient, Medieval, Modern) Taylor University , Upland, Indiana <ul style="list-style-type: none">• B.A. in Philosophy, Summer 2007
AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION	History of Early Modern Philosophy Metaphysics
AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Ethics Epistemology Philosophy of Religion
PUBLISHED ARTICLES	“Leibniz on the Laws of Nature and the Best Deductive System” <i>Studies in History and Philosophy of Science</i> 43 (2012), 577-584 “The Mystery of Foreknoweldge” Co-authored with David J. Anderson <i>Philo</i> 13 (2010), 136-150
WORKS IN PROGRESS	“Leibniz and Bayle on the Problem of Evil” “Leibniz on the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Primitive Gravitational Force”
ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS	“Leibniz’s Theory of Simplicity” Presented to the <i>Alabama Philosophical Society</i> annual conference Pensacola, FL. Sep., 2011 “Appreciating the Mystery of Divine Foreknowledge” Co-authored with David J. Anderson Presented to the <i>Alabama Philosophical Society</i> annual conference Pensacola, FL. Oct., 2010 “On Virtue and Flourishing” Presented at Taylor University (invited lecture) Upland, IN. Apr. 2010

TEACHING
EXPERIENCE

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

Full Instructor

- Spring 2013 - *Contemporary Moral Problems* (three sections)
- Spring 2013 - *Philosophy of Religion*

Walters State, Morristown, TN

Full Instructor

- Fall 2012 - *Life and Human Nature*
- Fall 2012 - *Self and Values*
- Fall 2012 - *Introduction to Ethics* (two sections)

Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

Full Instructor

- Spring 2011 - *Introduction to Philosophy*
- Fall 2010 - *Critical Thinking*
- Summer 2010 - *Religions of the West*
- Spring 2010 - *Introduction to Ethical Theory*
- Fall 2009 - *Introduction to Ethical Theory*
- Summer 2009 - *Religions of the West*
- Spring 2009 - *Introduction to Philosophy*
- Fall 2008 - *Introduction to Philosophy*

Teaching Assistant

- Spring 2008 - *Introduction to Philosophy* (Jan Cover)
- Fall 2007 - *Introduction to Philosophy* (Mark Bernstein)

HONORS AND
AWARDS

- *Bilsland Dissertation Fellowship* (2011-2012)
- *Purdue Research Foundation Dissertation Research Grant* (2011-2012; declined)
- *Graduate School Summer Research Grant* (2011)

LANGUAGE

Latin

REFERENCES

- Dr. Jan Cover, Purdue University
- Dr. Michael Jacovides, Purdue University
- Dr. Martin Curd, Purdue University
- Dr. Daniel Kelly, Purdue University (*teaching letter*)

ATTACHMENTS

- List of Graduate Courses
- Dissertation Abstract

List of Graduate Courses

Early Modern

Continental Rationalism (Leibniz's Metaphysics)	Jan Cover
Studies in Modern Philosophy (Descartes)	Michael Jacovides

Metaphysics

Studies in Free Will and Modality	Michael Bergmann
-----------------------------------	------------------

Epistemology

Studies in the Theory of Knowledge	Michael Bergmann
------------------------------------	------------------

Logic

Advanced Symbolic Logic	Christopher Pincock
-------------------------	---------------------

Early Analytic Philosophy

21st Century Analytic Philosophy I	Christopher Pincock
21st Century Analytic Philosophy II	Christopher Pincock

Philosophy of Mind

Studies in Philosophy of Mind	Daniel Kelly
-------------------------------	--------------

Ethics

Contemporary Ethical Theory	Patrick Kain
-----------------------------	--------------

Philosophy of Religion

The Problem of Evil	Paul Draper
---------------------	-------------

Ancient Philosophy

Plato on the Metaphysics of Soul	Patricia Curd
----------------------------------	---------------

Joshua L. Watson

In my dissertation I develop a sustained treatment of a topic that is neither well-understood nor much discussed, Leibniz's philosophy of laws of nature. Although all suspect that Leibniz endorses a causal powers account of laws, no one has succeeded in explaining his theory in great detail. While all recognize that the laws are closely related to his theory of nature's perfection, no one has clearly shown how Leibniz moves from his general analysis of perfection to his specific claims about the simplicity and explanatory strength of nature's laws. By explaining Leibniz's metaphysics of laws and his account of their relationship to perfection and scientific practice, I make progress toward better understanding a neglected region of Leibniz's philosophy.

I begin by situating Leibniz's project against the background of the Copernican Revolution. I argue that the Copernican Revolution brought about the decline of Aristotelian natural philosophy and the emergence of the mechanical philosophy. It was in this context that Leibniz developed a theory of laws that was designed to be at once Aristotelian and mechanistic. With the Aristotelians, Leibniz believed that any adequate philosophy of nature must include substantial form. With the moderns, however, Leibniz insisted that particular physical occurrences be explained mechanically, not by way of forms.

Having provided the historical context to Leibniz's project, I dedicate my third and fourth chapters to outlining Leibniz's causal powers account of laws and explaining his motivations for endorsing that theory. I argue that Leibniz analyzes the laws of nature as propositions expressing the ways bodies behave in virtue of their powers when operating with God's ordinary concurrence. I establish this claim by showing that this causal powers account is entailed by Leibniz's philosophy of force and that no other analysis is consistent with Leibniz's belief that the laws could be perpetually violated.

In my fifth chapter I investigate the relationship between the laws and nature's perfection. I argue that Leibniz's account of nature's perfection entails that the laws are coextensive with the axioms and theorems of the best deductive system true of nature. My argument begins by explaining Leibniz's harmony theory of perfection, according to which harmony consists in unity in variety. I show that the variety of a system is determined by the degree of change characterizing the system and that the unity of a system is determined by the number of primitive concepts required to comprehend the system. Applying this theory of perfection to nature, I show that the perfection of nature is determined by the extent to which it is explicable in terms of a deductive system that is both empirically adequate and simple. Leibniz regards a theory as simpler than another if fewer primitive concepts are required for its comprehension than is required for the comprehension of its rival. Because nature's perfection is determined by the degree to which a greater amount of its phenomena are comprehensible by fewer primitive concepts, Leibniz is able to justify simplicity as a theoretical virtue on the grounds that in the best possible world nature is as perfect as it

In my final chapter I argue that once the role of primitive concepts in Leibniz's theory of nature's perfection is clarified, it becomes clear why Leibniz regarded all non-mechanistic explanations of natural phenomena as both unintelligible and inconsistent with the perfection of the physical world. I argue that what Leibniz found so objectionable about primitive gravitational power is that it resists full reduction to distinct primitive concepts. Leibniz's insistence that all explanations be reducible to distinct primitive concepts also explains his peculiar views about the proper role of substantial form in natural philosophy. The reason that substantial form can directly explain the laws themselves but not particular physical occurrences is because the former but not the latter admits of full reduction to distinct primitive concepts.