

and sufficient conditions for truth and falsehood in fiction; I mean only to indicate a promising line of approach.) But surely there will be sentences such as

(17) Hamlet wore size 13 shoes

that are neither true nor false. The appropriate Story Line does not entail the existence of someone named Hamlet who wore size 13 shoes; but neither does it entail the existence of someone named Hamlet who did not wear size 13 shoes. So (17) is neither true nor false. Of course a careless critic writing a book on literary characters with large feet might write "Hamlet, furthermore, wore size 13 shoes, as did . . .". Such a critic would probably be saying what is false; for very likely he would be asserting something that entails that (17) is true; and *that* is false.

¹ *Apology for Poetry*. Quoted in N. Wolterstorff, "A Theory of Fiction", unpublished.

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As I said, this account requires much by way of development and supplementation and qualification. Here I am less interested in filling out the account than in simply sketching its basic features, thus pointing to an understanding of fiction according to which stories are about nothing at all and the names they contain denote neither actual nor possible objects.

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IX God, Evil, and the Metaphysics of Freedom

Abstract: Chapter 9 is the first of two chapters that apply the findings of the previous eight chapters of *The Nature of Necessity* to some traditional problems in natural theology. The Problem of Evil is the objection to theism that holds that the conjunction of the propositions, *God is omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good* and *There is evil in the world*, is necessarily false. The Free Will Defense is an effort to show the two propositions are compatible, and in the process of the defence, I use the concept of transworld depravity. I then prove that the possibility that every essence suffers from such depravity entails that it is possible both that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good and that there is evil in the world. I conclude by addressing special problems caused by natural evil and by arguing that the Probabilistic Problem of Evil is unsuccessful.

Keywords: **essence, free will, God, natural evil, Problem of Evil, transworld depravity**

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1. The Problem

In this and the following chapter I wish to apply some of the foregoing ideas to two traditional topics in the philosophy of religion: the Problem of Evil (which will occupy this chapter) and the Ontological Argument. Perhaps the former constitutes the most formidable objection to theistic belief—or so, at any rate, it has seemed to many. A multitude of philosophers have held that the existence of evil is at the least an embarrassment for those who accept belief in God.¹ And most contemporary philosophers who hold that evil constitutes a difficulty for theistic belief claim to detect *logical inconsistency* in beliefs a theist typically accepts. So, for example, according to H. J. McCloskey:

Evil is a problem for the theist in that a *contradiction* is involved in the fact of evil, on the one hand, and the belief in the omnipotence and perfection of God on the other.²

J. L. Mackie urges the same charge:

I think, however, that a more telling criticism can be made by way of the traditional problem of evil. Here it can be shown, not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are *inconsistent* with one another.³

And Henry David Aiken substantially repeats this allegation.⁴

Now the alleged contradiction arises, of course, when we consider the fact that evil exists together with the belief that God

¹ Epicurus, for example, as well as David Hume, some of the French Encyclopedists, F. H. Bradley, J. McTaggart, J. S. Mill, and many others.

² "God and Evil", *Philosophical Quarterly*, 10 (1960), 97.

³ "Evil and Omnipotence", *Mind*, 64 (1955), 200.

⁴ "God and Evil", *Ethics*, 68 (1957-8), 79.

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exists and is omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good or morally perfect. Obviously these propositions are not *formally* inconsistent; the resources of logic alone do not enable us to deduce an explicit contradiction from their conjunction. But then presumably the atheologian—he who offers arguments against the existence of God—never meant to hold that there was a formal contradiction here; he meant instead that the conjunction of these two propositions is necessarily false, false in every possible world. To show that he is right, therefore, he must produce a proposition that is at least plausibly thought to be necessary and whose conjunction with our original two formally yields a contradiction.

I have argued elsewhere¹ that it is extremely difficult to find any such proposition. I have also argued² that the *Free Will Defence* can be used to show that in fact these propositions are not inconsistent. In what follows I wish to look again at the issues involved in the *Free Will Defence*—this time from the vantage point of the foregoing ideas about *possible worlds*.

2. The Free Will Defence

The Free Will Defence is an effort to show that

- (1) God is omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good
(which I shall take to entail that God exists) is not inconsistent with
- (2) There is evil in the world.

That is, the Free Will Defender aims to show that there is a possible world in which (1) and (2) are both true. Now one way to show that a proposition *p* is consistent with a proposition *q* is to produce a third proposition *r* whose conjunction with *p* is consistent and entails *q*. *r*, of course, need not be true or known to be true; it need not be so much as plausible. All that is required of it is that it be consistent with *p*, and in conjunction with the latter entail *q*. What the Free Will Defender must do, therefore, is find such a proposition.

But first, some preliminary definitions and distinctions. What does the Free Will Defender mean when he says that people are or may be *free*? If a person *S* is free with respect to a given

¹ *God and Other Minds*, Chapter 5.

² *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.

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action, then he is free to perform that action and free to refrain; no causal laws and antecedent conditions determine either that he will perform the action, or that he will not. It is within his power, at the time in question, to perform the action, and within his power to refrain. Consider the state *U* of the universe up to the time he takes or decides to take the action in question. If *S* is free with respect to that action, then it is causally or naturally possible both that *U* hold and *S* take (or decide to take) the action, and that *U* hold and *S* refrain from it.¹ Further, let us say that an action is *morally significant*, for a given person at a given time, if it would be wrong for him to perform the action then but right to refrain, or vice versa. Keeping a promise, for example, would typically be morally significant, as would refusing induction into the army; having an apple for lunch (instead of an orange) would not. And, a person *goes wrong with respect to a morally significant action* if it is wrong for him to perform it and he does, or wrong for him not to and he does not. Still further, suppose we say that a person is *significantly free*, on a given occasion, if he is then free with respect to an action that is morally significant for him. And finally, we must distinguish between *moral* evil and *natural* evil. The former is evil that results from some human being's going wrong with respect to an action that is morally significant for him; any other evil is natural evil.² Suffering due to human cruelty—Hitler's treatment of the Jews, for example—would be an example of the former; suffering resulting from an earthquake or tidal wave, an example of the latter. An analogous distinction is made between moral and natural good.

Given these definitions and distinctions, we can make a preliminary statement of the Free Will Defence as follows. A world containing creatures who are sometimes significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but he cannot *cause* or *determine* them to do only what is right. For if he does so, then they are not significantly free after all; they do not

¹ Of course it does not follow that if *S* is free with respect to some of his actions, then what he will do is in principle unpredictable or unknowable.

² This distinction is not very precise (how, exactly, are we to construe 'results from'?); but perhaps it will serve our present purposes.

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do what is right *freely*. To create creatures capable of *moral good*, therefore, he must create creatures capable of moral evil; and he cannot leave these creatures *free* to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. God did in fact create significantly free creatures; but some of them went wrong in the exercise of their freedom: this is the source of moral evil. The fact that these free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against his goodness; for he could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by excising the possibility of moral good.

I said earlier that the Free Will Defender tries to find a proposition that is consistent with

- (1) God is omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good

and together with (1) entails that there is evil. According to the Free Will Defence, we must find this proposition somewhere in the above story. The heart of the Free Will Defence is the claim that it is *possible* that God could not have created a universe containing moral good (or as much moral good as this one contains) without creating one containing moral evil.

3. The Objection

A formidable objection goes like this. Surely it is logically possible that there be a world containing significantly free creatures who always do what is right. There is certainly no contradiction or inconsistency in this idea. If so, however,

there are possible worlds containing moral good but no moral evil. Now the theist says that God is omnipotent—which means, roughly, that there are no non-logical limits to his power. Accordingly, he could have created just any possible world he chose, including those containing moral good but no moral evil. If it is possible that there be a world containing significantly free creatures who never do what is wrong, then it follows that an omnipotent God could have created such a world. If so, however, the Free Will Defence must be mistaken in its insistence upon the possibility that God, though omnipotent, could not have created a world containing moral good without permitting moral evil. As Mackie puts it:

If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes

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prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? If there is no logical impossibility in a man's freely choosing the good on one, or on several occasions, there cannot be a logical impossibility in his freely choosing the good on every occasion. God was not, then, faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong; there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right. Clearly, his failure to avail himself of this possibility is inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and wholly good.¹

Was it within the power of an omnipotent God to create just any logically possible world? This is the important question for the Free Will Defence, and a subtle question it is. Leibniz, as you recall, insisted that *this* world, the actual world, must be the best of all possible worlds. His reasoning is as follows. Before God created anything at all, he was confronted with an enormous range of choices; he could have created or actualized any of the myriads of different possible worlds. Being perfectly good, he must have chosen to create the best world he could; being omnipotent, he was able to create just any possible world he pleased. He must, therefore, have chosen the best of all possible worlds; and hence *this* world, the one he did create, must be (despite appearances) the best possible. Now Mackie agrees with Leibniz that God, if omnipotent, could have created just any world he pleased and would have created the best world he could. But while Leibniz draws the conclusion that *this* world must be the best possible, Mackie concludes instead that there is no omnipotent, wholly good God. For, he says, it is obvious enough that this actual world is not the best possible.

The Free Will Defender disagrees with both Leibniz and Mackie. First, we have the question whether *there is* such a thing as the best of all possible worlds, or even *a* best. Perhaps for any world you pick, there is a better. But what is really characteristic and central to the Free Will Defence is the claim that God, though omnipotent, could not have created just any possible world he pleased; and this is the claim we must investigate.

¹ Op. cit., p. 209.

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4. Which Worlds Could God Have Created?

We speak of God as *creating* the world; yet if it is α of which we speak, what we say is false. For a thing is created only if there is a time before which it does not exist; and this is patently false of α , as it is of any state of affairs. What God has created are the heavens and the earth and all that they contain; he has not created himself, or numbers, propositions, properties, or states of affairs: these

have no beginnings. We can say, however, that God *actualizes* states of affairs; his creative activity results in their being or becoming actual. God has *created* Socrates, but *actualized* the state of affairs consisting in the latter's existence. And God is actualizing but not creating α .

Furthermore, while we may properly say that God actualizes α , it does not follow that he actualizes every state of affairs the latter includes. He does not, as previously mentioned, actualize his own existence; that is to say, he does not create himself. Nor does he create his own properties; hence he does not actualize the state of affairs consisting in the existence of such properties as omniscience, omnipotence, moral excellence, and *being the creator of the heavens and the earth*. But the same is really true of other properties too; God no more creates the property of being red than that of omnipotence. Properties are not creatable: to suppose that they have been created is to suppose that although they exist now, there was a time at which they did not; and this seems clearly false. Again, since God did not create numbers, propositions, pure sets, and the like, he did not actualize the states of affairs consisting in the existence of these things. Nor does he actualize such other necessary states of affairs as *7+5's equalling 12*. Necessary states of affairs do not owe their actuality to the creative activity of God. So if we speak of God as actualizing α , we should not think of him as actualizing every state of affairs α includes. But perhaps we may say that he actualizes every *contingent* state of affairs included in α ; and perhaps we may say that God *can* actualize a given possible world W only if he can actualize every contingent state of affairs W includes. And now we can put our question: can an omnipotent being actualize just any possible world he pleases—that is, is every possible world such that an omnipotent being can actualize it?

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Here more distinctions are needed. Although there are any number of possible worlds in which Abraham never met Melchizedek, God can actualize none of them. That is, he can no longer actualize any of them; for Abraham in fact *did* meet Melchizedek (let us suppose) and not even an omnipotent being can bring it about that Abraham did *not* meet Melchizedek; it is too late for that. Take any time t ; at t there will be any number of worlds God cannot actualize; for there will be any number of worlds in which things go differently before t . So God cannot actualize any world in which Abraham did not meet Melchizedek; but perhaps God *could have* actualized such worlds. Perhaps we should say that God could have actualized a world W if and only if for every contingent state of affairs S included by W , there is a time at which it is (timelessly) within his power to actualize S .¹ And now perhaps the atheologian's claim may be put as follows:

- (3) If God is omnipotent, then God could have actualized just any possible world.

But this will not be entirely accurate either—not, at any rate, if God himself is a contingent being. For if he is a contingent being, then there are worlds in which he does not exist; and clearly he could not have actualized any of *these* worlds. Clearly the only worlds within God's power to actualize are those that include his existence. So suppose we restrict our attention to these worlds. (In Chapter X I shall argue that this is no real restriction.) Is it true that

- (4) If God is omnipotent, then he could have actualized just any world that includes his existence?

Still more distinctions are needed. In particular, we must look more closely at the idea of *freedom*. According to the Free Will Defender, God thought it good to create free persons. And a person is free with respect to an action A at a time t only if no causal laws and antecedent conditions determine either that he

¹ To say that God could have actualized W suggests that there is some time—some past time—such that God could have performed the action of actualizing W at that time. Thus it suggests that actualizing a possible world

requires but a moment or at any rate a limited stretch of time. This suggestion must be resisted; perhaps God's actualizing a possible world requires an unlimited span of time; perhaps it requires his action at *every* time, past, present, and future.

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performs *A* at *t* or that he refrains from so doing. This is not a comment upon the ordinary use of the word 'free'; that use may or may not coincide with the Free Will Defender's. What God thought good, on this view, was the existence of creatures whose activity is not causally determined—who, like he himself, are centres of creative activity. The freedom of such creatures will no doubt be *limited* by causal laws and antecedent conditions. They will not be free to do just anything; even if I am free, I am not free to run a mile in two minutes. Of course my freedom is also *enhanced* by causal laws; it is only by virtue of such laws that I am free to build a house or walk on the surface of the earth. But if I am free with respect to an action *A*, then causal laws and antecedent conditions determine neither that I take *A* nor that I refrain.

More broadly, if I am free with respect to an action *A*, then God does not *bring it about* or *cause it to be the case* either that I take or that I refrain from this action; he neither causes this to be so through the laws he establishes, nor by direct intervention, nor in any other way. For if he *brings it about* or *causes it to be the case* that I take *A*, then I am not free to *refrain* from *A*, in which case I am not free with respect to *A*. Although of course God may cause it to be the case that I *am* free with respect to *A*, he cannot cause it to be the case either that I freely take or that I freely refrain from this action—and this though he is omnipotent.¹ But then it follows that there are plenty of contingent states of affairs such that it is not within the power of God to bring about their actuality, or cause them to be actual. He cannot cause it to be the case that I freely refrain from an action *A*; for if he does so, he causes it to be the case that I refrain from *A*, in which case I do not do so *freely*.

Now I have been using 'brings it about that' as a rough synonym for 'causes it to be the case that'. Suppose we take the term 'actualize' the same way. Then God can actualize a given state of affairs *S* only if he can cause it to be the case that *S*, cause *S* to be actual. And then there will be many contingent states of affairs *S* such that there is no time at which God can actualize *S*. But we said a page back that

(5) God could have actualized a given possible world *W* if and

¹ Just to simplify matters I shall henceforth take it for granted that *if God exists, he is omnipotent* is a necessary truth.

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only if for every contingent state of affairs *S* that *W* includes, there is a time at which God can actualize *S*.

Given just the possibility that there are created free agents, it follows that there are any number of possible worlds including God's existence and *also* including a contingent state of affairs *S* such that there is no time at which God can actualize *S*. Hence (contrary to (4) and to the atheologian's claim) there are any number of possible worlds that God could not have actualized, even though they include his existence: all those containing a state of affairs consisting in some creature's freely taking or refraining from some action. Since a world containing moral good is such a world, it follows that God could not have actualized any world containing moral good; *a fortiori* he could not have actualized a world containing moral good but no moral evil.

The atheologian's proper retort, I think, is as follows. Suppose we concede that not even God can cause it to be the case that I freely refrain from *A*. Even so, he *can* cause me to be free with respect to *A*, and to be in some set *S* of circumstances including appropriate laws and antecedent conditions. He may also know, furthermore, that *if* he creates me and causes me to be free in these

circumstances, I will refrain from *A*. If so, there is a state of affairs he can actualize, cause to be actual, such that if he does so, then I will freely refrain from *A*. In a broader sense of 'bring about', therefore, he *can* bring it about that I freely refrain from *A*. In the narrower sense there are many contingent state of affairs he cannot bring about; what is relevant to the Free Will Defence, however, is not this narrow sense, but the broader one. For what is really at issue is whether for each possible world there are some actions God could have taken such that if he *had*, then a morally perfect world (one including moral good but no moral evil) would have been actual.

Perhaps we can sharpen this point. The narrow sense of 'bring about' is such that the sentence

- (6) If God brings it about that I refrain from *A*, then I do not freely refrain from *A*

expresses a necessary truth. You are free with respect to an action *A* only if God does not bring it about or cause it to be the case that you refrain from *A*. But now suppose God knows that

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if he creates you free with respect to *A* in some set *S* of circumstances, you will refrain from *A*; suppose further that he brings it about (narrow sense) that you *are* free with respect to *A* in *S*; and suppose finally that you do in fact freely refrain from *A*. Then in a broader sense of 'bring about' we could properly say that God has brought it about that you freely refrain from *A*. We must make a corresponding distinction, then, between a stronger and a weaker sense of 'actualize'. In the strong sense, God can actualize only what he can *cause* to be actual; in that sense he cannot actualize any state of affairs including the existence of creatures who freely take some action or other. But so far we have no reason for supposing that the same holds for *weak* actualization. And what the atheologian requires for his argument, presumably, is not that every possible world (including the existence of God) is one God could have actualized in the *strong* sense; weak actualization is enough for his purposes. What is at issue is not the question whether each world is such that God could have actualized it in the *strong* sense, but (roughly) whether for each world *W* there is something he could have done—some series of actions he could have taken—such that if he had, *W* would have been actual. For if God is wholly good and it *was* within his power thus to secure the actuality of a perfect world, then presumably he would have done so. Accordingly the Free Will Defender's claim—that God could not have actualized a world containing moral good without actualizing one containing moral evil—is either irrelevant or unsubstantiated: irrelevant if 'actualize' is taken in the strong sense and unsubstantiated otherwise.

Since it is weak actualization that is relevant, let us henceforth use 'actualize' to mean 'weakly actualize'. And so our question is this: could God have actualized just any possible world that includes his existence?

Perhaps we can best proceed by way of an example. Curley Smith, the mayor of Boston, is opposed to the proposed freeway route. From the Highway Department's point of view, his objection is frivolous; he complains that the route would require destruction of the Old North Church along with some other antiquated and structurally unsound buildings. The Director of Highways offers him a bribe of \$35,000 to drop his opposition. Unwilling to break with the fine old traditions of Bay State

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politics, Curley accepts; whereupon the Director spends a sleepless night wondering whether he could have had Curley for \$20,000. That is to say, he wonders which of

- (7) If Curley had been offered \$20,000, he would have accepted the bribe

or

- (8) If Curley had been offered \$20,000, he would have rejected the bribe

is true.

5. Counterfactuals

But here an objection arises. (7) and (8), of course, are *counterfactual conditionals*. Subject to all the difficulty and obscurity of that peculiar breed, they contain traps for the unwary. Here, for example, we seem to be assuming that either (7) or (8) must be true. But what is the justification for that? How do we know that at least one of them is true? What leads us to suppose that there is an answer to the question what Curley would have done, had he been offered a bribe of \$20,000?

This question can be amplified. According to an interesting proposal¹ a counterfactual conditional such as (7) can be explained as follows. Consider those possible worlds that include its antecedent; and then of these consider that one *W* that is *most similar* to the actual world. (7) is true if and only if its consequent—that is,

(9) Curley took the bribe

is true in *W*. A counterfactual is true if and only if its antecedent is impossible, or its consequent is true in the world most similar to the actual in which its antecedent is.

This intriguing proposal provokes questions. In the first place, the required notion of similarity is in many respects problematic. What does it mean to say that one possible world is more similar to α than another? In this context, is there such a thing as similarity *uberhaupt*, or should we speak only of similarity in given respects? These are good questions; we have no time to linger over them, but let us pause just long enough to note that we do seem to have an intuitive grasp of this notion—the notion

¹ See Robert Stalnaker, "A Theory of Conditionals", in N. Rescher, *Studies in Logical Theory* (American Philosophical Quarterly, supplementary monograph, 1968), p. 98.

end p.174

of similarity between states of affairs. Secondly, the proposal presumes that for each contingently false proposition *p* there is a possible world including *p* that is uniquely closest (i.e. most similar) to the actual world. So take any such proposition and any proposition *q*: on the proposal in question, either *if p then q* or *if p then ¬q* will be true. This may seem a bit strong: *if I had red hair, Napoleon would not have lost the Battle of Waterloo* is obviously false, but *if I had red hair Napoleon would have won the Battle of Waterloo* does not seem much better. (*Even if*, perhaps, but not *if*.) Indeed, take any such proposition *p*: on this view there is some entire possible world *W* such that the counterfactual *if p had been true, W would have obtained* holds. But is it not unduly extravagant to claim that there is some possible world *W* such that if I had red hair, *W* would have been actual? Is there a possible world *W** such that if α had not been actual, *W** would have been? Is there reason to believe that there is a world including the antecedent of (7) and (8) (call it 'A') that is *uniquely closest* to α ? Perhaps several worlds include it, each such that none including it is closer.¹ And this leads directly to our question. Perhaps there is a family of closest worlds in which A is true; and perhaps in some of these

(9) Curley accepted the bribe

is true, while in others it is

(10) Curley rejected the bribe

that enjoys that distinction. If so, then perhaps we must conclude that neither (7) nor (8) is true; there is then no such thing as *what Curley would have done* under the envisaged circumstances.

Indeed, perhaps the objector need not rest content with the idle suspicion that

there may be such a family of worlds; perhaps he can go further. There are possible worlds W and W^* that include A and are *exactly alike* up to 10.00 a.m., 10 November

¹ More radically, perhaps there are no such closest worlds at all; perhaps for any world including A , there is a closer that also includes it. See David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Blackwell, 1973), Chapter 1, Section 1.3. According to Lewis, a counterfactual $A \rightarrow B$ is true if and only if either A is impossible or some world W in which A and C hold is more similar to the actual world than any world in which A and \bar{C} hold. In writing this section I have benefited from Lewis's analysis; I am grateful to him for a criticism that triggered substantial improvement in the argument of this chapter.

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1973, the time at which Curley makes his response to the bribe offer; in W Curley accepts the bribe and in W^* he does not. If $t = 10.00$ a.m., 10 November 1973, let us say that W and W^* share an initial segment up to t . We could call the t -initial segment of S_W^{-t} , the subscript ' W ' indicating that S is a segment of W , and the superscript ' $-t$ ' indicating that this segment terminates at t . (S_W^{+t} would be the unending segment of W that begins at t .) And of course $S_W^{-t} = S_{W^*}^{-t}$.

It is not entirely easy to give a rigorous characterization of this notion of an initial segment. It is clear that if W and W^* share an initial segment terminating at t , then for any object x and for any time t^* earlier than t , x exists in W at t^* if and only if x exists in W^* at t^* . But we cannot say that if a thing x has a property P in W at t^* , then x has P in W^* at t^* . For one property Curley has at t^* in W is that of being such at t he will take the bribe; and of course he does not have *that* property in W^* at t^* . Perhaps there is an intuitive notion of a *non-temporal* property under which we could say that if at t^* has a nontemporal property P in W then x also has P in W^* at t^* . The problem of course is to say just what this notion of a non-temporal property amounts to; and that is by no means easy. Still the idea of a pair of worlds W and W^* sharing an initial segment is fairly clear; roughly, it amounts to saying that the two worlds are the same up to a certain time t . And if there is no time t^* later

than t such that $S_W^{-t^*} = S_{W^*}^{-t^*}$, then at t W and W^* branch. Of course there will be a large class of worlds sharing S_W^{-t} with W and W^* ; and if e is an event that takes place in W but not in W^* , there will be a class of worlds including S_W^{-t} in which e occurs and another class including it in which e does not.

Suppose we concede (or pretend) that we have this notion of an initial segment well in hand. It may then appear that we can construct a convincing argument for the conclusion that neither (7) nor (8) is true. For each of W and W^* are as similar to α , in the relevant respects, as any world including A . But if they share S_W^{-t} , then are they not *equally* similar, in the appropriate ways, to α ? Up to t things are just alike in these two worlds. What happens after t seems scarcely relevant to the question of what Curley would have done if offered the bribe. We should conclude, therefore, that W and W^* are equally similar to α ; but these two worlds resemble α as much as any others;

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hence the closest worlds in which A is true do not speak with a single voice; hence neither (7) nor (8) is true.¹

What about this argument? In the first place, it proves too much. It gains a specious plausibility from the case we are considering. We do not know, after all, whether Curley would have accepted the bribe—it is a fairly small one and perhaps his pride would have been injured. Let us ask instead whether he would have accepted a bribe of \$36,000, everything else being as much as possible like the actual world. Here the answer seems fairly clear: indeed he

would have. And this despite the fact that for any possible world W as close as you please to α in which Curley takes the bribe, there is a world W^* that shares the appropriate initial segment with W in which he manfully refuses it.

The argument suffers from another defect, however—one which is more instructive. Suppose we approach it by way of another example. Royal Robbins is climbing the Dihedral Wall of El Capitan. The usual method involving ropes and belays has lost its appeal; he is soloing the Wall unprotected. Just as he reaches Thanksgiving Ledge, some 2500 feet above the Valley floor, one of his hand holds breaks out. He teeters precariously on one foot, regains his balance, and leaps lightly on to the ledge, where he bivouacs; the next day he continues triumphantly to the top. Now suppose we consider

- (11) If Robbins had slipped and fallen at Thanksgiving Ledge, he would have been killed.

No doubt we are initially inclined to accept this proposition. But should we? In the actual world Robbins did not fall at Thanksgiving Ledge; instead he nimbly climbed onto it and spent a comfortable night there. Now what happens in the closest worlds in which he falls? Well, there is at least one of these—call it W' —in which he falls at t just as he is reaching the Ledge; at the next moment $t+1$ (as close as you please to t) he shows up exactly where he is in α at $t+1$; and everything else goes just as it does in α . Would W' not be more similar to the actual world than any in which he hurtles down to the Valley floor, thus depriving American rockclimbing of its most eloquent spokesman? And if so, should we not rate (11) false?

¹ This argument surfaced in discussion with David Kaplan.

The answer, of course, is that we are neglecting causal or natural *laws*. Our world α contains a number of these, and they are among its more impressive constituents. In particular, there are some implying (together with the relevant antecedent conditions) that anyone who falls unroped and unprotected from a ledge 2500 feet up a vertical cliff, moves with increasing rapidity towards the centre of the earth, finally arriving with considerable impact at its surface. Evidently not all of these laws are present in W' , for the latter shares the relevant initial conditions with α but in it Robbins does not fall to the Valley floor—instead, after a brief feint in that direction, he reappears on the cliff. And once we note that these laws do not hold in W' , so the claim goes, we shall no longer be tempted to think it very similar to α , where they do hold.

No doubt there is truth in this reply. But the relationship between causal laws and counterfactuals, like that between Guinevere and Sir Lancelot, is both intimate and notorious. A salient feature of the former, indeed, is that (unlike accidental generalizations) they are said to support or entail counterfactuals. So instead of denigrating W' on the grounds that its laws differ from α 's, we might as well have complained, in view of the above connection, that W' lacks some of α 's counterfactuals. One measure of similarity between worlds involves the question whether they share their counterfactuals.

We should be unduly hasty, I think, if we drew the conclusion that the possible worlds explanation of counter-factuals is viciously circular or of no theoretical interest or importance. But it does follow that we cannot as a rule *discover* the truth value of a counter-factual by asking whether its consequent holds in those worlds most similar to the actual in which its antecedent holds. For one feature determining the similarity of worlds is whether they share their counterfactuals.

And of course this is relevant to the argument we have been examining. As you recall, it went like this. There are worlds W and W^* that share $S \text{ } W \text{ } \neg t$; these worlds, therefore, are equally similar to α in the relevant respects. In W , however, Curley takes the bribe; in W^* he refuses. Accordingly, neither (7) nor (8) is such that its consequent is true in the closest worlds to α in which its antecedent is; hence neither (7) nor (8) is true. But now we see that this

argument does not settle the matter. For

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from the fact that W and W^* share the appropriate initial segment, it does not follow that they are equally similar to α . Suppose that (7) is true; then W^* does not share that counter-factual with α , and is to that extent less similar to it than W . Here we have a relevant dissimilarity between the two worlds in virtue of which the one may indeed be more similar to the actual world than the other. Accordingly, the argument fails.

A second argument is sometimes given for the conclusion that we have no right to the assumption that either (7) or (8) is true: perhaps the fact is that

- (12) If Curley had been offered a bribe of \$20,000 and had believed that his decision would be headlined in the *Boston Globe*, he would have rejected the bribe.

If so, then (7) is false. But perhaps it is also true that

- (13) If Curley had been offered a bribe of \$20,000 and had believed that his venality would remain undetected, he would have accepted the bribe;

in which case (8) would be false. So if (12) and (13) are both true (as they might well be) then neither (7) nor (8) is.

This argument is in error. If we let ' \rightarrow ' represent the counter-factual connective, we see that the crucial inference here is of the form

$$\frac{A \rightarrow C}{\therefore A \& B \rightarrow C}$$

which is clearly fallacious (and invalid on both the Stalnaker and Lewis semantics for counterfactuals). No doubt it is true that

- (14) If the Pope were a Protestant, he would be a dissembler;

it does not follow that

- (15) If the Pope were a Protestant, had been born in Friesland and been a lifelong member of the Gereformeerde Kerk, he would be a dissembler.

Nor does it follow from (7) that, if Curley had been offered the bribe and had believed his decision would be headlined in the *Globe*, he would have accepted it.

Now of course the failure of these arguments does not guarantee that either (7) or (8) must be true. But suppose we think about a state of affairs that includes Curley's having been

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offered \$20,000, all relevant conditions—Curley's financial situation, his general acquisitive tendencies, his venality—being the same as in fact, in the actual world. Our question is really whether there is something Curley would have done had this state of affairs been actual. Would an omniscient being know what Curley would have done—would he know, that is, either that Curley would have taken the bribe or that he would have rejected it?

The answer, I should think, is obvious and affirmative. There is something Curley would have done, had that state of affairs obtained. But I do not know how to produce a conclusive argument for this supposition, in case you are inclined to dispute it. I do think it is the natural view, the one we take in reflecting on our own moral failures and triumphs. Suppose I have applied for a National Science Foundation Fellowship and have asked you to write me a recommendation. I am eager to get the fellowship, but eminently unqualified to carry out the project I have proposed. Realizing that you know this, I act upon the maxim that every man has his price and offer you \$500 to write a

glowing, if inaccurate, report. You indignantly refuse, and add moral turpitude to my other disqualifications. Later we reflectively discuss what you would have done had you been offered a bribe of \$50,000. One thing we would take for granted, I should think, is that there is a right answer here. We may not know what that answer is; but we would reject out of hand, I should think, the suggestion that there simply is none. Accordingly, I shall temporarily take it for granted, in what follows, that either (7) or (8) is true; as we shall see in Section 6 this assumption, harmless as it no doubt is, can be dispensed with.

6. Leibniz's Lapse

Thus armed, let us return to the question that provoked this digression. Was it within God's power, supposing him omnipotent, to actualize just any possible world that includes his existence? No. In a nutshell, the reason is this. There is a possible world W where God strongly actualizes a totality T of states of affairs including Curley's being free with respect to taking the bribe, and where Curley takes the bribe. But there is another possible world W^* where God actualizes the very same states of affairs and where Curley *rejects* the bribe. Now

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suppose it is true as a matter of fact that if God had actualized T , Curley would have accepted the bribe: then God could not have actualized W^* . And if, on the other hand, Curley would have rejected the bribe, had God actualized T , then God could not have actualized W . So either way there are worlds God could not have actualized.

We can put this argument more fully as follows. Let C be the state of affairs consisting in Curley's being offered a bribe of \$20,000 and being free to accept or reject it; let A be Curley's accepting the bribe; and let GC be God's strongly actualizing C . Then by our assumption either

$$(16) GC \rightarrow A$$

or

$$(17) GC \rightarrow \bar{A}$$

is true. Suppose, first, that (16) is true. If so, then on the Stalnaker and Lewis semantics there is a possible world W such that GC and A hold in W , and such that A holds in any world as close where GC holds. No doubt in W God strongly actualizes many states of affairs in addition to C ; let T be the state of affairs that includes each of these. That is, T is a state of affairs that God strongly actualizes in W ; and T includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W . It is evident that if God had strongly actualized T , then Curley would have accepted the bribe, i.e.,

$$(18) GT \rightarrow A.$$

For GT and A hold in W ; by (16), in any world as close as W where GC holds, A holds; but GT includes GC ; so, in any world as close as W where GT holds, A holds. Now there is no possible world in which God strongly actualizes A ; for A is Curley's *freely* accepting the bribe. But then GT does not include A ; for, if it did, any world where God actualizes T would be one where he actualizes A ; there are no worlds where he actualizes A ; and there are worlds—e.g.

W —where he actualizes GT . So there is another possible world W^* where God actualizes the very same states of affairs as he does in W , and in which Curley rejects the bribe. W^* therefore includes GT and \bar{A} . That is, in W^* God strongly actualizes T but no state of affairs properly including T ; and in W^* \bar{A} holds. And now it is easy to see that God could not have actualized this world W^* .

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For suppose he could have. Then there is a state of affairs C^* such that God could have strongly actualized C^* and such that, if he had, W^* would be actual. That is,

$$(19) GC^* \rightarrow W^*.$$

But W^* includes GT ; so
 (20) $GC^* \rightarrow GT$.

Now W^* either includes or precludes GC^* ; if the latter, GC^* precludes W^* . But in view of (19) GC^* does not preclude W^* unless, contrary to our hypothesis, GC^* is impossible. So W^* includes GC^* . T , furthermore, is the largest state of affairs God actualizes in W^* ; T , therefore, includes C^* and GT includes GC^* . Hence the state of affairs $GT \& GC^*$ is or is equivalent to GT . By (18), $GT \rightarrow A$; hence

(21) $GC^* \& GT \rightarrow A$.

But from (20) and (21) it follows that

(22) $GC^* \rightarrow A$.¹

But A precludes W^* and hence includes $\overline{W^*}$; so

(23) $GC^* \rightarrow \overline{W^*}$.

(19) and (23), however, are both true only if GC^* is impossible, in which case God could not have actualized C^* . Accordingly, there is no state of affairs C^* such that God could have strongly actualized C^* and such that if he had, W^* would have been actual. If (16) is true, therefore, there are possible worlds including his existence that God could not have actualized: those worlds, namely, where God actualizes T and Curley rejects the bribe. On the other hand, if

(17) $GC \rightarrow \bar{A}$

is true, then by a precisely similar argument there are other possible worlds God could not have actualized. As I have assumed, either (16) or (17) is true; so despite God's omnipotence there are worlds including his existence he could not have actualized.

Now the assumption that either (16) or (17) is true is fairly innocent; but it is also dispensable. For let W be a world

¹ The argument form involved here is

$$\frac{\begin{array}{l} A \rightarrow B \\ A \& B \rightarrow C \end{array}}{\therefore A \rightarrow C}.$$

This form is intuitively valid and valid on both Stalnaker and Lewis semantics.

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where God exists, where Curley is free with respect to the action of taking a \$20,000 bribe, and where he accepts it; and as before, let T be the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W . God's actualizing T (GT) includes neither Curley's accepting the bribe (A) nor his rejecting it (\bar{A}); so there is a world W^* where God strongly actualizes T and in which Curley rejects the bribe. Now

(24) $GT \rightarrow A$

is either true or false. If (24) is true, then by the previous argument God could not have actualized W^* .

On the other hand, if (24) is false, then God could not have actualized W . For suppose he could have; then (as before) there would be a state of affairs C such that God could have strongly actualized C and such that, if he had, W would have been actual. That is

(25) $GC \rightarrow W$.

Now if (25) is true, then so is either

(26) $GC \& GT \rightarrow W$

or

(27) $GC \ \& \ \overline{GT} \rightarrow W$.¹

Both (26) and (27), however, are false if (24) is. Consider (26): if (25) is true, then W includes GC (unless GC is impossible, in which case, contrary to the assumption, God could not have actualized it); but T is the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W ; hence GT includes GC . If so, however, $GC \ \& \ \overline{GT}$ is equivalent to GT . And, since (24) is false, the same goes for (26).

And now consider (27). Either GC includes GT or it does not. Suppose it does. As we have seen, if GC is possible and (25) is true, then W includes GC ; but T includes C ; so GT includes GC . So if GC includes GT , then GC and GT are equivalent. But (24) is false; hence so is (25), if GC includes GT . So GC does not include GT ; hence $GC \ \& \ \overline{GT}$ is a possible state of affairs. But W includes GT ; hence \overline{GT} includes \overline{W} ; hence $GC \ \& \ \overline{GT}$ includes \overline{W} ; hence (since $GC \ \& \ \overline{GT}$ is possible) (27) is false.

¹ The form of argument involved here, namely

$$\frac{A \rightarrow B}{\therefore (A \ \& \ \overline{C} \rightarrow B) \vee (A \ \& \ \overline{C} \rightarrow B)}$$

is intuitively valid and valid on both Stalnaker and Lewis semantics.

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(24), therefore, is either true or false. And either way there are possible worlds including his existence that God could not have actualized. So there are possible worlds including his existence that God could not have actualized.

If we consider a world in which GT obtains and in which Curley freely rejects the bribe, we see that whether it was within God's power to actualize it depends in part upon what Curley would have done if God had strongly actualized T . Accordingly, there are possible worlds such that it is partly up to Curley whether or not God can actualize them. It is of course up to God whether or not to create Curley, and also up to God whether or not to make him free with respect to the action of taking the bribe at t . But if he creates him, and creates him free with respect to this action, then whether or not he takes it is up to Curley—not God.

Now we can return to the Free Will Defence and the problem of evil. The Free Will Defender, you recall, insists on the possibility that it is not within God's power to create a world containing moral good without creating one containing moral evil. His atheological opponent agrees with Leibniz in claiming that *if* (as the theist holds) God is omnipotent, then *it follows* that he could have created just any possible world (or any such world including his existence) he pleased. We now see that this contention—call it *Leibniz's Lapse*—is a mistake. The atheologian is right in holding that there are many possible worlds containing moral good but no moral evil; his mistake lies in endorsing Leibniz's Lapse. So one of his central contentions—that God, if omnipotent, could have actualized just any world he pleased—is false.

7. Transworld Depravity

Now suppose we recapitulate the logic of the situation. The Free Will Defender claims that

(28) God is omnipotent and it was not within his power to create a world containing moral good but no moral evil

is possible. By way of retort the atheologian insists that there are possible worlds containing moral good but no moral evil. He adds that an omnipotent being could have actualized just any possible world he chose. So if God is omnipotent, it follows that he could have actualized a world containing moral good but no

moral evil; hence (28) is not possible. What we have seen so far is that his second premiss—Leibniz's Lapse—is false.

Of course this does not settle the issue in the Free Will Defender's favour. Leibniz's Lapse (appropriately enough for a lapse) is false; but this does not show that (28) is possible. To show this latter, we must demonstrate the possibility that among the worlds God could not have actualized are all the worlds containing moral good but no moral evil. How can we approach this question?

Let us return to Curley and his venality. The latter is unbounded; Curley's bribability is utter and absolute. We could put this more exactly as follows. Take any positive integer n . If (1) at t Curley had been offered n dollars by way of a bribe, and (2) he had been free with respect to the action of taking the bribe, and (3) conditions had otherwise been as much as possible like those that did in fact obtain, Curley would have accepted the bribe. But there is worse to come. Significant freedom, obviously, does not *entail* wrongdoing; so there are possible worlds in which God and Curley both exist and in which the latter is significantly free but never goes wrong. But consider W , any one of these worlds. There is a state of affairs T such that God strongly actualizes T in W and T includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W . Furthermore, since Curley is significantly free in W , there are some actions that are morally significant for him in W and with respect to which he is free in W . The sad truth, however, may be this: among these actions there is one—call it A —such that if God had actualized T , Curley would have gone wrong with respect to A . But then it follows (by the argument of Section 6) that God could not have actualized W . Now W was just any of the worlds in which Curley is significantly free but always does only what is right. It therefore follows that it was not within God's power to actualize a world in which Curley produces moral good but no moral evil. Every world God could have actualized is such that if Curley is significantly free in it, he takes at least one wrong action.

The intuitive idea underlying this argument can be put as follows. Of course God can create Curley in various states of affairs that include his being significantly free with respect to some action A . Furthermore, God knows in advance what

Curley would do if created and placed in these states of affairs. Now take any one of these states of affairs S . Perhaps what God knows is that if he creates Curley, causes him to be free with respect to A , and brings it about that S is actual, then Curley will go wrong with respect to A . But perhaps the same is true for *any other* state of affairs in which God might create Curley and give him significant freedom; that is, perhaps what God knows in advance is that no matter *what* circumstances he places Curley in, so long as he leaves him significantly free, he will take at least one wrong action. And the present claim is not, of course, that Curley or anyone else *is in fact* like this, but only that this story about Curley is *possibly* true.

If it is true, however, Curley suffers from what I shall call *transworld depravity*.¹ By way of explicit definition:

- (29) A person P suffers from *transworld depravity* if and only if for every world W such that P is significantly free in W and P does only what is right in W , there is a state of affairs T and an action A such that
- (1) God strongly actualizes T in W and T includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W ,
 - (2) A is morally significant for P in W ,
- and
- (3) if God had strongly actualized T , P would have gone wrong with respect to A .

What is important about the idea of transworld depravity is that if a person suffers from it, then it was not within God's power to actualize any world in which that person is significantly free but does no wrong—that is, a world in which he produces moral good but no moral evil. But clearly it is possible that everybody suffers from transworld depravity. If this possibility were actual, then God could not have created any of the possible worlds that include the existence and significant freedom of just the persons who do in fact exist, and also contain moral good but no moral evil. For to do so he would have had to create persons who were significantly free but suffered from transworld depravity. And the price for creating a world in

¹ I leave as homework the problem of comparing transworld depravity with what Calvinists call "total depravity".

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which such persons produce moral good is creating one in which they also produce moral evil.

Now we might think this settles the question in favour of the Free Will Defender. But the fact is it does not. For suppose all the people that exist in α suffer from transworld depravity; it does not follow that God could not have created a world containing moral good without creating one containing moral evil. God could have create *other people*. Instead of creating us, he could have created a world containing people all right, but not containing any of us. And perhaps if he had done that, he could have created a world containing moral good but no moral evil.

Perhaps. But then again, perhaps not. Return to the notion of *essence* or *individual concept* as developed in Chapter V: an essence of Curley is a property he has in every world in which he exists and that is not exemplified in any world by any object distinct from Curley. An essence *simpliciter* is a property P such that there is a world W in which there exists an object x that has P essentially and is such that in no world W^* is there an object that has P and is distinct from x . More briefly, an essence is an encaptic property that is essentially exemplified in some world, where an encaptic property entails either P or \bar{P} , for every world-indexed property P .

And now recall that Curley suffers from transworld depravity. This fact implies something interesting about Curleyhood, Curley's essence. Take those worlds W such that *is significantly free in W and never does what is wrong in W* is entailed by Curley's essence. Each of these worlds has an important property, if Curley suffers from transworld depravity; each is such that God could not have actualized it. We can see this as follows. Suppose W^* is some world such that Curley's essence entails the property *is significantly free but never does what is wrong in W^** . That is, W^* is a world in which Curley is significantly free but always does what is right. But of course Curley suffers from transworld depravity. This means (as we have already seen) that God could not have actualized W^* . So if Curley suffers from transworld depravity, then Curley's essence has this property: God could not have actualized any world W such that Curleyhood contains the properties *is significantly free in W* and *always does what is right in W* .

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We can use this connection between Curley's transworld depravity and his essence as the basis for a definition of transworld depravity as applied to essences rather than persons. We should note first that if E is a person's essence, then he is the instantiation of E ; he is the thing that has (or exemplifies) every property in E . To instantiate an essence, God creates a person who has that essence; and in creating a person he instantiates an essence. Now we can say that

- (30) An essence E *suffers from transworld depravity* if and only if for every world W such that E entails the properties *is significantly free in W* and *always does what is right in W* , there is a state of affairs T

and an action A such that

- (1) T is the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W ,
- (2) A is morally significant for E 's instantiation in W , and
- (3) if God had strongly actualized T , E 's instantiation would have gone wrong with respect to A .

Note that transworld depravity is an accidental property of those essences and persons it afflicts. For suppose Curley suffers from transworld depravity: then so does his essence. There is a world, however, in which Curley is significantly free but always does what is right. If *that* world had been actual, then of course neither Curley nor his essence would have suffered from transworld depravity. So the latter is essential neither to those persons nor to those essences that exemplify it. But by now it is evident, I take it, that if an essence E *does* suffer from transworld depravity, then it was not within God's power to actualize a possible world W such that E contains the properties *is significantly free in W* and *always does what is right in W* . Hence it was not within God's power to create a world in which E 's instantiation is significantly free but always does what is right.

Now the interesting fact here is this: it is possible that every creaturely essence¹ suffers from transworld depravity. But suppose this is true. God can create a world containing moral good only by creating significantly free persons. And, since every person is the instantiation of an essence, he can create significantly free persons only by instantiating some creaturely

¹ i.e. every essence entailing *is created by God*.

essences. But if every such essence suffers from transworld depravity, then no matter which essences God instantiated, the resulting persons, if free with respect to morally significant actions, would always perform at least some wrong actions. If every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity, then it was beyond the power of God himself to create a world containing moral good but no more evil. He might have been able to create worlds in which moral evil is very considerably outweighed by moral good; but it was not within the power of omnipotence to create worlds containing moral good but no moral evil. Under these conditions God could have created a world containing no moral evil only by creating one without significantly free persons. But it is possible that every essence suffers from transworld depravity; so it is possible that God could not have created a world containing moral good but no moral evil.

8. The Free Will Defence Triumphant

Put formally, you remember, the Free Will Defender's project was to show that

- (1) God is omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good

is consistent with

- (2) There is evil

by employing the truth that a pair of propositions p and q are jointly consistent if there is a proposition r whose conjunction with p is consistent and entails q . What we have just seen is that

- (31) Every essence suffers from transworld depravity

is consistent with God's omnipotence. But then it is clearly consistent with (1).

So we can use it to show that (1) is consistent with (2). For consider the conjunction of (1), (31), and

- (32) God actualizes a world containing moral good.

This conjunction is evidently consistent. But it entails

(2) There is evil.

Accordingly (1) is consistent with (2); the Free Will Defence is successful.

Of course the conjunction of (31) with (32) is not the only proposition that can play the role of r in the Free Will Defence.

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Perhaps, for example, it was within the power of God to actualize a world including moral good but no moral evil, but not within his power to actualize one including no moral evil and including as much moral good as the actual world contains. So

(33) For any world W , if W contains no moral evil and W includes as much moral good as α contains, then God could not have actualized W

(which is weaker than (31)) could be used in conjunction with

(34) God actualizes a world containing as much moral good as α contains

to show that (1) and (2) are consistent. The essential point of the Free Will Defence is that the creation of a world containing moral good is a co-operative venture; it requires the uncoerced concurrence of significantly free creatures. But then the actualization of a world W containing moral good is not up to God alone; it also depends upon what the significantly free creatures of W would do if God created them and placed them in the situations W contains. Of course it is up to God whether to create free creatures at all; but if he aims to produce moral good, then he must create significantly free creatures upon whose co-operation he must depend. Thus is the power of an omnipotent God limited by the freedom he confers upon his creatures.¹

9. God's Existence and The Amount of Moral Evil

The world, after all, contains a *great deal* of moral evil; and what we have seen so far is only the God's existence is compatible with *some* evil. Perhaps the atheologian can regroup, arguing that at any rate God's existence is not consistent with the vast amount and variety of evil the universe actually contains. Of course we cannot measure moral evil—that is, we do not have units like volts or pounds or kilowatts so that we could say "this situation contains about 35 turps of moral evil". Still we can compare situations in terms of evil; we can see that some contain more moral evil than others. And perhaps the atheologian means to maintain that it is at any rate obvious that God, if omnipotent, could have created a *morally better* world—one

¹ See William Wainwright, "Freedom and Omnipotence", *Nous*, 2 (1968), 293-301.

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containing a better mixture of moral good and evil than α —one, let us say, that contained as much moral good but less moral evil.

But is this really obvious? I do not think so. Possibly this was *not* within God's power, which is all the Free Will Defender needs. We can see this as follows. Of course there are many possible worlds containing as much moral good as α , but less moral evil. Let W^* be any such world. If W^* had been actual, there would have been as much moral good (past, present, and future) as in fact there was, is, and will be; and there would have been less moral evil in all. Now in W^* a certain set of S of essences is instantiated. So to actualize W^* , God would have had to create persons who were the instantiations of these essences. But perhaps one of these essences would have had an unco-operative instantiation. That is, possibly

(35) There is a member E of S , a state of affairs T , and an action A such that

- (1) *E*'s instantiation freely performs *A* in *W*^{*},
- (2) *T* is the largest state of affairs God actualizes in *W*^{*}, and
- (3) if God had strongly actualized *T*, *E*'s instantiation would not have performed *A*.

I say it is possible that (35) is true; but clearly *if* it is, then for reasons by now familiar God could not have actualized *W*^{*}. And the fact is it is possible that every morally better world is like *W* in that God could not have actualized it. For it is possible that for every morally better world there is a member *E* of *S*, an action *A*, and a state of affairs *T* that meet the conditions laid down in (35). But if so, then (1) is compatible with the existence of as much evil as α does in fact contain.

10. God's Existence and Natural Evil

But perhaps the atheologian can regroup once more. What about *natural* evil? Evil that cannot be ascribed to the free actions of human beings? Suffering due to earthquakes, disease, and the like? Is the existence of evil of *this sort* compatible with (1)? Here two lines of thought present themselves. Some people deal creatively with certain kinds of hardship or suffering, so acting that on balance the whole state of affairs is valuable.

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Perhaps their responses would have been less impressive and the total situations less valuable without the evil. Perhaps some natural evils and some persons are so related that the persons would have produced less moral good if the evils had been absent.¹ But another and more traditional line of thought is pursued by St. Augustine, who attributes much of the evil we find to *Satan*, or to Satan and his cohorts.² Satan, so the traditional doctrine goes, is a mighty non-human spirit who, along with many other angels, was created long before God created man. Unlike most of his colleagues, Satan rebelled against God and has since been wreaking whatever havoc he can. The result is natural evil. So the natural evil we find is due to free actions of non-human spirits.

This is a *theodicy*, as opposed to a *defence*.³ St. Augustine believes that natural evil (except for what can be attributed to God's punishment) is *in fact* to be ascribed to the activity of beings that are free and rational but non-human. The Free Will Defender, on the other hand, need not assert that this is *true*; he says only that it is *possible* (and consistent with (1)). He points to the possibility that natural evil is due to the actions of significantly free but non-human persons. We have noted the possibility that God could not have actualized a world with a better balance of moral good over moral evil than this one displays. Something similar holds here; possibly natural evil is due to the free activity of a set of non-human persons, and perhaps it was not within God's power to create a set of such persons whose free actions produced a greater balance of good over evil. That is to say, it is possible that

- (36) All natural evil is due to the free activity of non-human persons; there is a balance of good over evil with respect to the actions of these non-human persons; and there is no world God could have created which contains a more favourable balance of good over evil with respect to the free activity of the non-human persons it contains.

Again, it must be emphasized that (36) is not required to be

¹ As in John Hick's *Soul-making* theodicy; see his *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan), 1966.

² See "The Problem of Free Choice", in *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 22 (New York: Paulist / Newman Press), pp. 71 ff.; and *Confessions and Enchiridion*, tr. and ed. by Albert C. Outler (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), pp. 341-6.

true for the success of the Free Will Defence; it need only be compatible with (1). And it certainly looks as if it is. If (36) is true, furthermore, then *natural* evil significantly resembles *moral* evil in that, like the latter, it is the result of the activity of significantly free persons. In fact both moral and natural evil would then be special cases of what we might call *broadly moral evil*—evil resulting from the free actions of personal beings, whether human or not. (Of course there is a correlative notion of broadly moral good.) To facilitate discussion, furthermore, let us stipulate that the *turp* is the basic unit of evil and that there are 10^{13} turps of evil in the actual world; the total amount of evil (past, present, and future) contained by α is 10^{13} turps. Given these ideas, we can combine (35) and (36) into one compendious statement:

- (37) All the evil in the actual world is broadly moral evil; and every world that God could have actualized, and that contains as much broadly moral good as the actual world displays, contains at least 10^{13} turps of evil.

Now (37) appears to be consistent with (1) and

- (38) God actualizes a world containing as much broadly moral good as the actual world contains.

But (1), (37), and (38) together entail that there is as much evil as α contains; so (1) is consistent with the proposition that there is as much evil as α contains. I therefore conclude that the Free Will Defence successfully rebuts the charge of inconsistency brought against the theist. If evil is a problem for the believer, it is not that the existence of evil—moral or natural—is inconsistent with the existence of God.

11. The Probabilistic Argument from Evil

Not all atheologians who argue that one cannot rationally accept the existence of both God and evil, maintain that there is *inconsistency* here. Another possibility is that the existence of evil, or of the amount of it we find (perhaps coupled with other things we know) makes it *unlikely* or *improbable* that God exists. And of course this could be true even if the existence of God is consistent with that of evil. But is it true? Suppose we briefly investigate the matter. Let us say that a proposition *p* *confirms*

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a proposition *q* if *q* is more probable than not on *p* alone: if, that is, *q* would be more probable than not-*q*, with respect to what we know, if *p* were the only thing we knew that was relevant to *q*. And let us say that *p* *disconfirms* *q* if *p* confirms the denial of *q*. Now recall

- (37) All the evil in the world is broadly moral evil; and every world that God could have actualized and that contains as much moral good as the actual world displays, contains at least 10^{13} turps of evil;

or consider (39), which allows for the possibility that not all natural evil is broadly moral:

- (39) Every world that God could have actualized and that contains less than 10^{13} turps of evil, contains less broadly moral good and a less favourable over-all balance of good and evil than the actual world contains.

It is evident that

- (40) There are 10^{13} turps of evil

disconfirms neither (37) nor (39). Nor, then, does it disconfirm either

- (41) God is the omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect creator of the world; all the evil in the world is broadly moral evil; and every world

that God could have actualized and that contains as much moral good as the actual world displays, contains at least 10^{13} turps of evil;

or

- (42) God is the omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect creator of the world; and every world that God could have actualized and that contains less than 10^{13} turps of evil, contains less broadly moral good and a less favourable over-all balance of good and evil than the actual world contains.

Now if a proposition p confirms a proposition q , then it confirms every proposition q entails. But then it follows that if p *disconfirms* q , p disconfirms every proposition that entails q . (40) does not disconfirm (41) or (42); (41) and (42) each entail (1); therefore, the existence of the amount of evil actually displayed in the world does not render improbable the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent, and wholly good God. So far as this argument goes, of course, there may be *other* things we know such that (41) and/or (42) is improbable with respect to the

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conjunction of (40) with *them*. It may be that (41) and (42) are improbable with respect to our *total evidence*, the totality of what we know. (41), for example, involves the idea that the evil that is not due to free human agency, is due to the free agency of *other* rational and significantly free creatures. Do we have evidence against this idea? Many people find it preposterous; but that is scarcely evidence against it. Theologians sometimes tell us that this idea is repugnant to "man come of age" or to "modern habits of thought". I am not convinced that this is so; in any case it does not come to much as evidence. The mere fact that a belief is unpopular at present (or at some other time) is interesting, no doubt, from a sociological point of view; it is evidentially irrelevant. Perhaps we do have evidence against this belief; but if we do, I do not know what it is.

At any rate, I cannot see that our total evidence disconfirms the idea that natural evil results from the activity of rational and significantly free creatures. Of course our total evidence is vast and amorphous; its bearing on the idea in question is not easy to assess. So I conclude, not that our total evidence does not disconfirm (41), but that I have no reason to suppose it does. And the same holds for (42); here too I can see no reason for supposing that our total evidence disconfirms it. So I see no reason to think that the existence of the amount of evil the world contains, taken either by itself or in connection with other things we know, makes God's existence improbable.

The upshot, I believe, is that there is no good atheological argument from evil. The existence of God is neither precluded nor rendered improbable by the existence of evil. Of course suffering and misfortune may none the less constitute a *problem* for one who believes in God; but the problem is not that presented by holding beliefs that are logically or probabilistically incompatible. He may find a *religious* problem in evil; in the presence of his own suffering or that of someone near to him, he may fail to maintain a right attitude towards God. Faced with great personal suffering or misfortune, he may be tempted to rebel against God, to shake his fist in God's face, to curse God. He may despair of God's goodness, or even give up belief in God altogether. But this is a problem of a different dimension. Such a problem calls for pastoral rather than philosophical counsel.

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X God and Necessity

Abstract: In Ch.10, I apply the previous chapters' account of modality to the