

Bringing about Perfect Worlds

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Introduction

According to libertarianism a moral agent is free with respect to an action A at a time t only if there are at least two possible futures causally open to the agent at t.¹ In one of those futures the agent performs A at t and in the other future the agent performs $\sim A$ at t. Libertarians sometimes say that a moral agent is free at t only if it is *up to the agent* whether she performs A or performs $\sim A$ at t.² According to libertarianism, the free action of moral agents is not a causal consequence of the laws of nature or a causal consequence of our psychology or our sociology or our culture or historical period. Not even God can cause moral agents to act freely.

Libertarianism is a very popular view among theists. It is a position that many believe is necessary to any adequate solution to the well-known logical problem of evil.³ The logical problem of evil presents a fundamental challenge to theism. It advances the strong modal thesis that, necessarily, God does not coexist with evil. There is no possible world in which an essentially omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect, and necessarily existing being coexists with a single instance of evil.⁴ Since instances of evil are possible—indeed, evidently actual—there is no God.

¹ There is perhaps an exception for cases of self-binding, though I'm uncertain that cases of self-binding are consistent with indeterminism.

² Compare van Inwagen 2011. Van Inwagen defines libertarianism as entailing the Free Will thesis and the Incompatibilism thesis. The Free Will thesis claims, roughly, that agents are free with respect to A at t only if it is up to them whether they do A at t or $\sim A$ at t.

³ In the well-known essay, 'Evil and Omnipotence', John Mackie reformulated a familiar challenge to theistic belief that has come to be known as the logical problem of evil. Mackie argued that (1)–(3) form an inconsistent triad: (1) God is omnipotent, (2) God is wholly good, and (3) Evil exists. Any two of the propositions entails the falsity of the third. See Mackie 2012.

⁴ The argument is straightforward, even if not always presented in a straightforward way. There exists a possible world w that is morally perfect and naturally perfect. Since all agree that, necessarily, an omniscient being can do anything that is metaphysically possible, necessarily, an omniscient being can actualize w. So, necessarily, an essentially omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect, and necessarily existing being actualizes w. Therefore, necessarily, there are no instances of evil. But of course there are, indisputably, instances of evil. Therefore, God does not exist.

The most well-received response to the logical problem of evil is Alvin Plantinga's free will defense. According to the free will defense, it is possible that God is *unable* to do something that is *metaphysically possible*.⁵ The free will defense aims to show that, necessarily, it is metaphysically possible that God actualizes a morally perfect world, but, possibly, God is unable to actualize a morally perfect world. The free will defense explains that, if we assume libertarianism, it is possible that every group of creatable and free agents would simply fail to cooperate in the actualization of any morally perfect world. These creatable agents are free, but would be intransigent; they would do something wrong no matter what circumstances they were created in. These free agents suffer from the contingent property of *transworld depravity*. The free will defense concludes that, possibly, God is unable to actualize a world with moral good and no moral evil. But then God can coexist with evil after all, contrary to the logical problem of evil.⁶

I show in what follows that libertarianism is not necessary to a successful response to the logical problem of evil. I argue first that, for all the resilience of the free will defense, the thesis of universal transworld depravity is necessarily false. The thesis of universal transworld depravity entails that, possibly, no matter what morally perfect world God aims to actualize, he will fail. I aim to show that, necessarily, God is able to actualize a morally perfect world. God is able to actualize a morally perfect world since God can unrestrictedly actualize worlds: necessarily, God can bring it about that a morally perfect world obtains without causing any moral agent to act rightly. Since, necessarily, God can bring about a perfect world, the widely lauded solution to the logical problem of evil fails. I then consider a weak essentialist objection to unrestricted actualization and consider a Molinism objection to unrestricted actualization. Each of these objections is easily resisted.

I argue second that a successful response to the logical problem of evil does not require demonstrating that, possibly, God is unable to actualize a morally perfect world. Contrary to the free will defense, I argue that, necessarily, God is able to actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. But, I argue, it is *impossible* that, necessarily, God *does* actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. Call that the *Impossibility Argument*.⁷ I show further that the impossibility argument is valid on any concept of free will. It is valid on the assumption of libertarianism, weak compatibilism, and strong compatibilism. I conclude that theists have available to them a

⁵ Plantinga presents the argument in several places. See Plantinga 1974a, 165ff. and Plantinga 1974b, 29ff. The version with the fewest controversial assumptions is Tomberlin and van Inwagen 1985, 36ff.

⁶ Actually, Plantinga takes the position that God might actualize a world that includes rational and free agents that he knows will do something wrong if he knows that it is not possible to actualize a world with moral good without actualizing one with moral evil. See Plantinga 1974a, 167. The condition is too weak, since it might be the case that every world with moral good is on balance bad. A better condition is that it be possible that there is some world with moral good and moral evil that is at least as good (or better) than any world with neither moral good nor moral evil. See Almeida 2012, 50ff.

⁷ There is a series of impossibility arguments in Almeida 2012, ch. 5. But I do not expand the argument there to show its validity on various forms of compatibilism.

successful argument against the logical problem of evil. If God can actualize a naturally perfect world, then God can coexist with evil. The logical problem of evil is solved.

World Making

It is a basic assumption in the free will defense that God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action. If God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action, then God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of an agent S performing A. If God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of an agent S performing A, then God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of an agent S performing A.

According to Plantinga's libertarian view, if God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of an agent S performing A, then S does not cause S to perform A by direct intervention. If God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of an agent S performing A, then S does not cause S to perform A by direct intervention. In a deterministic universe where the laws of nature are deterministic, S is not free to perform A. Presumably God could also cause S to perform A by direct intervention or by installing a manipulator every time S has decided to perform A.

It is also true that, possibly, God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of an agent S performing A. If God creates S and weakly actualizes S to perform A, then S freely performs A. Again, paradigmatically, S is in an indeterministic world W, where S can strongly actualize the maximal state of affairs of S performing A.

But there is another sense in which God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action A. God can strongly actualize S to perform A. If God can strongly actualize S to perform A, then God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of God's having *predicted* that S performs A, then it is true that S performs A *without causing* S to perform A. If God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of God's having predicted that S performs A, S can do otherwise. So God's bringing it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of God's having predicted that S performs A, does not ensure that God can strongly actualize S to perform A. Call that *unrestricted actualization*. If God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of God's having predicted that S performs A, then it's evident that the thesis of unrestricted actualization is false. There is no world in which it is true that God aims to actualize, he will fail.

⁸ David Lewis suggests along similar lines that God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action in a state of affairs of selective significant freedom. See Lewis 2000.

logical problem of evil is Alvin Plantinga's free will defense, it is possible that God is *unable* to actualize a morally perfect world.⁵ The free will defense aims to show that, if God actualizes a morally perfect world, then God actualizes a morally perfect world. The free will defense claims that, it is possible that every group of creatable worlds that would be created in these free will worlds, but would be intransigent; they would do so in circumstances they were created in. These free will worlds are *transworld depravity*. The free will defense aims to show that, necessarily, God is able to actualize a morally perfect world since, necessarily, God can bring it about that a moral agent acts right. Since, in the best of worlds, the widely lauded solution to the free will problem is a weak essentialist objection to unrestricted actualization.

It is not necessary to a successful response to the logical problem of evil that, for all the resilience of the free will defense, the thesis of *transworld depravity* is necessarily false. The thesis of *transworld depravity*, possibly, no matter what morally perfect world God actualizes, necessarily, God is able to actualize a morally perfect world since, necessarily, God can bring it about that a moral agent acts right. Since, in the best of worlds, the widely lauded solution to the free will problem is a weak essentialist objection to unrestricted actualization.

It is not necessary to a successful response to the logical problem of evil that God is unable to actualize a morally perfect world. But, I argue, it is *impossible* that, necessarily, God is able to actualize a morally perfect world. Call that the *impossibility argument* is valid on the assumption of libertarianism, weak compatibilism. I conclude that theists have available to them a

See Plantinga 1974a, 165ff. and Plantinga 1974b, 167. The condition is too weak, moral good is on balance bad. A better condition is that it is possible to actualize a world with more moral good than moral evil that is at least as good (or better) than the best of worlds. See Almeida 2012, 50ff.

Almeida 2012, ch. 5. But I do not expand the argument to include compatibilism.

successful argument against the logical problem of evil that does not depend on any particular concept of free will. If God is permitted to actualize a morally and naturally perfect world, then God can coexist with evil. And the logical problem of evil is solved.

World Making

It is a basic assumption in the free will defense that there are two senses in which God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action. God can *strongly actualize* the state of affairs of an agent S performing A. And God can *weakly actualize* the state of affairs of S performing A.

According to Plantinga's libertarian views, if God strongly actualizes the state of affairs of S performing A, then S does not freely perform A. Paradigmatically God can cause S to perform A by direct intervention or God can cause S to perform A by putting S in a deterministic universe where the laws and history cause S to perform A. In either case, according to Plantinga, S is not free to do other than what he does, and so S is not free. Presumably God could also cause S to perform A by having other moral agents coerce or force S to perform A or by installing a Frankfurt-style device in S that notifies a manipulator every time S has decided to act wrongly.⁸

It is also true that, possibly, God can weakly actualize the state of affairs of S performing A. If God creates S and weakly actualizes the state of affairs of S performing A, then S freely performs A. Again, paradigmatically God can create a significantly free being S in an indeterministic world W, where S would freely perform A were God to strongly actualize the maximal state of affairs T in W. S performs A in W, but S might have failed to perform A.

But there is another sense in which God can bring it about that a moral agent performs an action A. God can strongly actualize the state of affairs T that includes the state of affairs of God's having *predicted* that S will perform A. But if, necessarily, God can predict that S performs A, then it is true in every world that God can bring it about that S performs A *without causing* S to perform A. In worlds where God predicts that S performs A, S can do otherwise. So God's predicting that S does A does not preclude S from freely doing A. Call that *unrestricted actualization*. Unrestricted actualization ensures that God can strongly actualize a maximal state of affairs T such that, necessarily, T only if God actualizes a morally perfect world. And God can actualize T in every possible world unrestrictedly. If God can unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world, then it's evident that the thesis of universal transworld depravity is necessarily false. There is no world in which it is true that, no matter what morally perfect world God aims to actualize, he will fail.

⁸ David Lewis suggests along similar lines that God may prevent every immoral action by a process of selective significant freedom. See Lewis 2000.

Predicting Perfect Worlds

Among the states of affairs that God can strongly actualize is the state of affairs of *predicting* that every moral agent will always go right. God can also issue the fiat, *let it be that every moral agent will always go right*. But, necessarily, God predicts or issues the fiat that every moral agent will always go right only if every moral agent always goes right. God is necessarily a perfect predictor. Consider, then, the following possible worlds.

Let W_0 be a morally perfect world and let T be the largest state of affairs that God strongly actualizes in W_0 . It is possible that, before God creates any moral agents in T, he issues the fiat: let it be that every moral agent I create will always go right. Suppose God then creates moral agents in T. Since, necessarily, God's fiats are always observed, it follows that, necessarily, every created agent in T will always go right.

Now, of course, it is necessary that God can strongly actualize the state of affairs of having issued the fiat that it shall be that all moral agents will always go right. So it is necessarily possible that every moral agent will always go right. But, if God strongly actualizes the state of affairs of having issued the fiat that it shall be that all moral agents will always go right, and libertarian accounts of free will are right, then it seems that none of the moral agents will be significantly free. When God issues a fiat such as *let there be light*, it does seem that God thereby causes there to be light. But libertarians urge that it is impossible to cause significantly free actions.⁹ We should conclude that necessarily God can strongly actualize the state of affairs of having issued the fiat, let it be that every moral agent always goes right, and therefore it is necessarily possible that no moral agent goes wrong. But should we also conclude that none of those instantiated essences would be significantly free?

When God issues the fiat, let it be that every moral agent always goes right, there exist no moral agents that stand in any causal relation to the event of God's issuing the fiat. And the fiat does not bring into existence any moral agents. God does cause every moral agent to exemplify the contingent property of being such that each agent will go right. But no moral agent has the contingent property of being such that each agent is caused to go right. So it is not obvious that if God issues the fiat, let it be that every moral agent always goes right, then no moral agents would be significantly free.

Compare possible world W_1 . Suppose W_1 is a morally perfect world and T is the largest state of affairs that God strongly actualizes in W_1 . It is possible that, before God creates any moral agents in T, he makes the following prediction: I predict that every moral agent I create in T will always go right. Since W_1 is a morally perfect world, surely the prediction is correct. The prediction God makes is a strongly actualized state of affairs in T. Now of course, God could utter the prediction and decide not to create any moral agents in T. It is difficult to see how that is not possible. But suppose God makes that prediction and then creates significantly free moral agents in T. Since, W_1 is

⁹ That's controversial. It is possible for the agent of an action to cause a free action, assuming there is agent causation. It is perhaps possible that an event causes a free action so long as the causation is probabilistic.

a morally perfect world, it follows that does seem to be a morally perfect world created agents will always go right and a

Now consider some arbitrarily chosen actualized morally perfect world W_1 ? H prediction that moral agents will all go right difficult to resist the conclusion that W_1

God strongly actualizes the state of affairs will always go right only if all moral agents prediction that some state of affairs will of affairs to obtain. It is possible to predict as God does in some morally perfect world as God does in some morally perfect world go right. This is just to reiterate that the makes such a prediction. God's predictably free moral agents.

Creating Perfect Predictors

God can also actualize morally perfect world moral agent always goes right. Let a perfect predictions.¹⁰ Perfect predictors are familiar Paradox. Perfect predictors need not be predict with perfect accuracy in every world

Consider the morally perfect world W_2 , the maximally strongly actualizable state of affairs moral agent that God creates will always go right. The agent God creates will always go right. The world is compatible with P_2 being a perfect predictor which

- (1) were P_2 to predict that every moral agent will go right; and
- (2) were P_2 to predict that not every moral agent will always go right.

Necessarily, if there are perfect moral predictors independent of what the predictor predicts.¹¹

- (3) were P_2 to predict that every moral agent will go right; and

¹⁰ See Hubin and Ross 1985; but see also Nozick

¹¹ The failure of independence is contrary to what follows directly from the assumption that the predictor

a morally perfect world, it follows that every moral agent always goes right. So, there does seem to be a morally perfect world W_1 in which God makes the prediction that all created agents will always go right and all created agents always go right.

Now consider some arbitrarily chosen world W_n . Is it true at W_n that God could have actualized morally perfect world W_1 ? Had God actualized T of W_1 , including the prediction that moral agents will all go right and the creation of moral agents in T , then it is difficult to resist the conclusion that W_1 would have been actual.

God strongly actualizes the state of affairs of having predicted that all moral agents will always go right only if all moral agents always go right. Further, when God makes a prediction that some state of affairs will obtain, God does not thereby cause that state of affairs to obtain. It is possible to predict that every moral agent will always go right, as God does in some morally perfect worlds, and have every moral agent always *freely* go right. This is just to reiterate that there are morally perfect worlds in which God makes such a prediction. God's prediction does not prevent him from creating significantly free moral agents.

Creating Perfect Predictors

God can also actualize morally perfect worlds in which he does not predict that every moral agent always goes right. Let a perfect predictor be 100 percent accurate in his predictions.¹⁰ Perfect predictors are familiar from certain formulations of the Newcomb Paradox. Perfect predictors need not be essentially perfect predictors. They need not predict with perfect accuracy in every world in which they exist.

Consider the morally perfect world W_2 in which God creates a perfect predictor P_2 in the maximally strongly actualizable state of affairs T_2 . P_2 can freely predict that every moral agent that God creates will always go right and P_2 does freely predict that every moral agent God creates will always go right. There is only one state of affairs that is compatible with P_2 being a perfect predictor which ensures that two counterfactuals are true:

- (1) were P_2 to predict that every moral agent will always go right, then every moral agent will go right; and
- (2) were P_2 to predict that not every moral agent will always go right, then not every moral agent will always go right.

Necessarily, if there are perfect moral predictors then what moral agents do is not independent of what the predictor predicts.¹¹ The counterfactuals in (3) and (4) are false:

- (3) were P_2 to predict that every moral agent will always go right, then not every moral agent will go right; and

¹⁰ See Hubin and Ross 1985; but see also Nozick 1985 and Horgan 1985.

¹¹ The failure of independence is contrary to standard assumptions on Newcomb Problems, but it follows directly from the assumption that the predictor is perfect.

- (4) were P_2 to predict that not every moral agent will always go right, then every moral agent will always go right.

The assumption of independence entails that either (1) and (4) are true or (2) and (3) are true, but neither conjunction is true.

Since the behavior of moral agents is not independent of the predictions of perfect predictors, and God can create a perfect predictor in any world, there is no possible world in which every moral agent is transworld depraved. Let S be an arbitrarily chosen moral agent. A moral agent S is transworld depraved D if and only if for every maximal state of affairs T , were S created in T , S would freely go wrong with respect to some action A . S has the property D only if S 's going wrong with respect to some action A is independent of the predictions of a perfect predictor. In particular, S has the property D only if the counterfactuals in (2) and (3) are true. If (2) and (3) are true, then no matter what is predicted in T , the moral agents created in T sometimes freely go wrong. But independence is false under the assumption of a perfect predictor. Whether S always freely goes right, or sometimes freely goes wrong, depends on what is predicted by the perfect predictor. God can actualize a morally perfect world then, if he creates a perfect predictor in T that he knows will predict that all moral agents created in T will always go right. It follows that there is no world in which S is transworld depraved. Since the argument arbitrarily selects S , it follows that there is no world in which any agent S is transworld depraved.

We should conclude that, necessarily, God can strongly actualize a world in which no moral agent is transworld depraved and every moral agent is significantly free. But there are some interesting arguments against the conclusion that, necessarily, God can strongly actualize the state of affairs of having predicted that every moral agent will always goes right.¹²

A Weak Essentialist Objection to Unrestricted Actualization

We have observed that there is another sense in which God can bring it about that an instantiated essence E performs an action A . Unrestricted actualization is described in B.

- B: Necessarily God can strongly actualize a state of affairs T including the creation of E such that (i) necessarily, God strongly actualizes T only if E performs action A , and (ii) God does not cause the state of affairs of E performing A .

¹² In some useful correspondence Plantinga denies that, necessarily, God can strongly actualize the state of affairs of having predicted that every moral agent always goes right. Plantinga's argument, as I understand it, assumes that possibly universal transworld depravity is true. It concludes that it is not necessary that God can strongly actualize the state of affairs of having predicted that every moral agent always goes right. As far as I can tell, the argument mistakenly assumes that, possibly, the actions of moral agents satisfy the conditions of counterfactual independence from God's predictions.

God can strongly actualize the state of affairs of having predicted that E will perform A . If God predicts that E performs A , then it is true in every world in which E performs A without causing E to perform A . Unrestricted actualization ensures that God can strongly actualize a state of affairs T such that, necessarily, T only if God actually actualize T in every possible world unless God actually actualize a morally perfect world if a

UA: God can unrestrictedly actualize a world in which, necessarily, for some morally perfect world T , God strongly actualizes a state of affairs T such that:

- (1) T is the largest state of affairs that God can strongly actualize.
- (2) necessarily, God strongly actualizes T only if God can strongly actualize T .
- (3) God can strongly actualize T .

So, God cannot unrestrictedly actualize a world in which (2) is false just in case, possibly, for some morally perfect world T , God strongly actualizes a state of affairs T such that (2) is false just in case, possibly, for some morally perfect world T , God cannot strongly actualize T of W .

Clause (2) in UA seems to follow directly from the assumption of an essentially perfect predictor. Clause (3) in UA seems to follow from the assumption that God can predict that every moral agent will always go right. Clause (1) in UA seems to follow from the assumption that God can predict that every moral agent will always go right. Clause (3) in UA seems to follow from the assumption that God can predict that every moral agent will always go right.

Weak essentialism is the view that the essential properties of an object or being determine the existence of S :

For instance, the supposition that Descartes is essentially material both are entertainable. Presumably, one can suppose that Descartes is essentially material and that Descartes is not essentially material. Yet it makes sense to reason hypothetically about the possibility that Descartes is essentially material, and the reasoning need not entertain the supposition that Descartes is not essentially material. If all creatures were material, Descartes would be material. If material things couldn't think, Descartes would not be material. Presumably one consequent or the other is conceivable. Both actuals seem non-vacuously true, and neither is vacuously true.

¹³ See LeVine.

God can strongly actualize the state of affairs T that includes the state of affairs of God's having predicted that E will perform A. But if it is true that, necessarily, God can predict that E performs A, then it is true in every world that God can bring it about that E performs A without causing E to perform A. We called that unrestricted actualization. Unrestricted actualization ensures that God can strongly actualize a state of affairs T such that, necessarily, T only if God actualizes a morally perfect world. And God can actualize T in every possible world unrestrictedly. More precisely, God can unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world if and only if UA is true.

UA: God can unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world if and only if necessarily, for some morally perfect world W and for every moral agent E in W, there is a state of affairs T such that:

- (1) T is the largest state of affairs that God strongly actualizes in W;
- (2) necessarily, God strongly actualizes T of W only if E always freely goes right; and
- (3) God can strongly actualize T.

So, God cannot unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world only if (2) or (3) is false. (2) is false just in case, possibly, for every morally perfect world W and some moral agent E God strongly actualizes the state of affairs T of W and E does not always freely go right. (3) is false just in case, possibly, for every morally perfect world W, God cannot strongly actualize T of W.

Clause (2) in UA seems to follow directly from clause (3) and the fact that God is an essentially perfect predictor. Clause (3) seems uncontroversial: necessarily, God can predict that every moral agent will always go right. There is nothing that might hinder an omnipotent being from making a necessarily accurate prediction. But then (2) follows directly: necessarily, if God predicts that every moral agent always goes right, then every moral agent always goes right.

Weak essentialism is the view that counterfactual suppositions impossible with the essential properties of an object or being S are not in general impossible with the existence of S:

For instance, the supposition that Descartes is material and the supposition that he is immaterial both are entertainable. Presumably, one supposition or the other is contrary to Descartes' essence. Yet it makes sense to reason hypothetically about what would be the case under either supposition, and the reasoning need not end in contradiction. Further, even when an entertainable supposition is not itself contrary to essence, still it may happen that what would be the case given that supposition is contrary to essence. . . .

If all creatures were material, Descartes would be material.

If material things couldn't think, Descartes would be immaterial.

Presumably one consequent or the other is contrary to Descartes' essence; yet both counterfactuals seem non-vacuously true, and neither antecedent is contrary to essence.¹³

¹³ See Lewis 2000, 123–4.

According to (2) it is a necessary truth that God strongly actualizes T of W only if E always freely goes right. The reason is that the state of affairs T includes God's predicting that E will go right with respect to every morally significant action. Since God is essentially a perfect predictor, it follows that, necessarily, God predicts E goes right with respect to every morally significant action it faces only if E goes right with respect to every morally significant action.

The weak essentialist denies (2) in UA. The fact that God is essentially a perfect predictor does not entail that there are no worlds in which he makes an inaccurate prediction. Suppositions contrary to essence are entertainable because essence is itself a flexible matter. On weak essentialism God might, for instance, suffer one lapse from omniscience without ceasing to be God. Compare: it is not essentially mistaken to assert that a glass is empty though it contains one remaining drop of beer or that a table is flat though every table is bumpy. Only a strong form of essentialism—some might say an overly rigid form—makes it impossible to assert without contradiction that a glass containing one drop of beer is nonetheless empty.

The evidence for weak essentialism is found in the apparent inconstancy of representation *de re*. There seem to be no right answers, independent of context, for many questions about modality *de re*.

Your problem is that the right way of representing is determined... by context... That is how it is in general with dependence on complex features of context. There is a rule of accommodation: what you say makes itself true, if at all possible, by creating a context that selects the relevant features so as to make it true. Say that France is hexagonal, and you thereby set the standards of precision low, and you speak the truth; say that France is not hexagonal (preferably on some other occasion) and you set the standards high, and again you speak the truth.¹⁴

But most theists reject the notion that God is world-bound. All possible worlds overlap with respect to God, so the very same God exists in every possible world. Since there is no flexibility with respect to which beings might count as counterparts of God—the salient features of similarity are not a contextual matter—there is no possibility of inconstancy in representing God. God represents God in every world. And since there is no possibility of inconstancy in representing God, there is no flexibility in God's essential properties. Of course, the lack of flexibility does not entail a lack of indecision about which properties are essential or a lack of knowledge about which properties are essential.

Strong essentialism is the view that counterfactual suppositions impossible with the essential properties of an object or being S are in general impossible with the existence of S. But strong essentialists can accommodate the intuition that counterfactual suppositions impossible with the essential properties of God are not in general impossible with the existence of that God.

It is not always possible to know a priori which modal suppositions are metaphysically entertainable and which are merely *epistemically entertainable*. Counterfactual

suppositions that are epistemically entertainable. The supposition, for instance, *priori* impossible, so there is at least one world that lacks that essential property. The *priori* impossibility invites the conclusion that supposition is not entertainable. It invites the generous distinction that the difference between essence and existence might be loosely speaking God's distinction. It is a *priori* possibility, but that provides no more than a genuine possibility. Anything that might obtain is included in God's nature. Included in God's nature is omniscient and therefore, inflexibly, ar-

A Molinist Objection to

According to traditional Molinism, each possible world contains a complete set of prevolitional, counterfactuals of creation (CCFs) that would obtain if God freely actualize T. The antecedent of a CCF (or a maximally large) state of affairs obtain. The consequent of a CCF describes a state of affairs that would obtain if God actualize T.

Included in T of course are all the possible worlds that obtain. The states of affairs in T depend on what God freely actualize, such as angels, demons, supernovas, flora, fauna, and so on. The states of affairs in T also depend on what God freely actualize those objects and the properties he causes to obtain. These states of affairs are undetermined. On traditional Molinism, states of affairs are not included in T.

On traditional Molinism, CCFs are possible worlds that obtain if God freely actualize T. The states of affairs in T depend on what God freely actualize, such as angels, demons, supernovas, flora, fauna, and so on. The states of affairs in T also depend on what God freely actualize those objects and the properties he causes to obtain. These states of affairs are undetermined. On traditional Molinism, states of affairs are not included in T.

There are prevolitional contingent states of affairs that obtain in course worlds in which God has created. These states of affairs are not included in the set of true CCFs. The set of true CCFs

¹⁴ See Lewis 1986, p. 256.

that God strongly actualizes T of W only if E. If the state of affairs T includes God's predictably morally significant action. Since God is that, necessarily, God predicts E goes right. The action it faces only if E goes right with respect

A. The fact that God is essentially a perfect being in all possible worlds in which he makes an inaccurate prediction are entertainable because essence is itself God might, for instance, suffer one lapse from omniscience. Compare: it is not essentially mistaken to think one remaining drop of beer or that a table is not a strong form of essentialism—some might think it possible to assert without contradiction that a table is essentially empty.

is found in the apparent inconstancy of responses to the question, independent of context, for many

... is determined... by context... That is how it varies with the features of context. There is a rule of accommodation, by creating a context that selects the relevant state of affairs. France is hexagonal, and you thereby set the truth; say that France is not hexagonal (preference standards high, and again you speak the truth.¹⁴

is world-bound. All possible worlds overlap. God exists in every possible world. Since there is no other being that might count as counterparts of God—the salient matter—there is no possibility of inconstancy in God's nature in every world. And since there is no possibility of inconstancy in every world, there is no flexibility in God's essential properties. The fact that God's essential properties do not entail a lack of indecision about which properties are essential. Counterfactual suppositions impossible with respect to God are in general impossible with the fact that God's essential properties of God are not in general possible.

... which modal suppositions are metaphysically possible. Counterfactual

1986, p. 256.

suppositions that are epistemically entertainable might not be metaphysically entertainable. The supposition, for instance, that God might be less than omniscient is not a priori impossible, so there is at least an epistemically possible world in which God lacks that essential property. The a priori possibility that God is less than omniscient invites the conclusion that suppositions contrary to essence are metaphysically entertainable. It invites the generous distinction that a being who suffers a lapse in omniscience might be loosely speaking God though not strictly speaking God. But the distinction is mistaken. It is a priori possible that God might suffer a lapse in omniscience, but that provides no more than the illusion that a less than omniscient God is a genuine possibility. Anything that might be identical to God must meet the inflexible standards in God's nature. Included in God's nature is that he is, inflexibly, essentially omniscient and therefore, inflexibly, an essentially perfect predictor.

A Molinist Objection to Unrestricted Actualization

According to traditional Molinism, each possible world includes a set of contingent, prevolitional, counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. Counterfactuals of creaturely freedom (CCFs) have a specific form which includes an antecedent describing a *complete* state of affairs. The antecedent of a CCF is a proposition that describes a largest (or a maximally large) state of affairs T that God can strongly actualize or cause to obtain. The consequent of a CCF describes some or all of the states of affairs F that includes every undetermined state of affairs that would obtain were God to strongly actualize T.

Included in T of course are all the contingent states of affairs that God can cause to obtain. The states of affairs in T depend on God's creation of objects, people, planets, angels, demons, supernovas, flora, fauna, stars, leptons, quarks, photons, light waves, and so on. The states of affairs in T also depend on the circumstances in which he creates those objects and the properties he causes them to have. There are many states of affairs that God cannot cause to obtain. These are states of affairs that are essentially causally undetermined. On traditional Molinism, essentially causally undetermined states of affairs are not included in T.

On traditional Molinism, CCFs are prevolitional in the sense that their truth or falsity does not depend on what God freely does. It is helpful to think of God discovering or coming to learn that certain CCFs are true before he chooses to actualize a world. God knows what free and undetermined events would occur or what undetermined states of affairs would obtain for each possible maximal state of affairs T he might strongly actualize. According to Molinists, the profile of true, contingent CCFs typically constrain or limit the worlds that God can weakly actualize.

There are prevolitional contingent truths in every possible world, including of course worlds in which God has created nothing. Not every contingent truth places any limits on the worlds God might create. The contingent truths in each world include the set of true CCFs. The set of true CCFs is exhaustive in the sense that, for each moral

agent E and each circumstance T, if E is free with respect to A in T, then either $T \square \rightarrow A$ or $T \square \rightarrow \sim A$. This follows from the Molinist assumption of conditional excluded middle for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom.¹⁵

Counterfactuals of conditional freedom extend to non-free, *chancy* events as well, where chances are genuine, objective probabilities. These include chancy micro-events such as the random decay of uranium atoms and chancy macro-events such as rolling sixes with fair die. God knows, for instance, that were a particular atom of radon created yesterday, in a certain set of circumstances, its half-life would be exactly 0.001 seconds. And in some worlds God knows that were a particular plate dropped toward the floor today, in otherwise normal circumstances, it would fly off sideways instead of hitting the floor.

At each world W there are infinitely many maximal states of affairs $T_0, T_1, T_2 \dots T_n$ that God might have strongly actualized. And for each W and T_n pair, $\langle W, T_n \rangle$, there corresponds the state of affairs F_n that includes every undetermined state of affairs F_n that would have obtained, had T_n been strongly actualized at W. Call the set S_C of all true CCFs at a world W the *creaturely world-type* of W. And call the set of all worlds S_{WC} at which all of the members of S_C are true the *galaxy* of S_C .¹⁶

The galaxy S_{WC} is just the set of feasible worlds relative to W as determined by the true CCFs in S_C . Suppose W_0 is in S_{WC} . It is true at W_0 that God can actualize any other world in S_{WC} and that God cannot actualize any world that is not in S_{WC} . God's choice among worlds to actualize is limited to the set of feasible worlds in the galaxy. The set of feasible worlds is not coextensive with the set of all possible worlds, but it is coextensive with the set of all actualizable worlds.¹⁷

To reconsider a familiar example, Plantinga urged that there is a possible world W_1 such that for every world W_n in the galaxy S_{W_1C} in which some moral agent is created, W_n is a morally imperfect world. That is to say that every T that God might have strongly actualized at W_1 is such that had God actualized T then every moral agent created in T would have gone wrong with respect to some morally significant action. Since God can actualize any world in S_{W_1C} and God cannot actualize any world outside of S_{W_1C} , it follows that, as a matter of contingent fact, God actualizes a world with significantly free moral agents only if God actualizes a morally imperfect world.

At each world W, God knows the maximal states of affairs $T_0, T_1, T_2 \dots T_n$ that he might have strongly actualized. And for each maximal state of affairs $T_0, T_1, T_2 \dots T_n$ he knows what possible world in S_{WC} would have obtained had he strongly actualized that maximal state of affairs. He knows, for instance, that W_0 would have obtained had he actualized T_0 and he knows that W_1 would have obtained had he actualized T_1 and so on. Knowledge of these counterfactuals of creaturely freedom form part of God's *middle knowledge*. And it is on the basis of God's middle knowledge that God decides which maximal state of affairs to strongly actualize.

¹⁵ Flint 1998, 49. ¹⁶ These terms were introduced in Flint 1998, 51ff.

¹⁷ The set of actualizable worlds at W, it is worth noting, is not the set of possibly actual worlds. Even worlds that are not in the galaxy of W are possibly actual, though they are not actualizable.

According to traditional Molinism, (1) for every state of affairs T_n and God *weakly* actualizes the state of affairs T_n in every possible world and (2) when God moves from one world to the next the set of true CCFs— S_C —is constant, but the set S_C of true CCFs—the set of worlds S_{CW} varies. The variance in S_C across worlds is a variance in undetermined states of affairs. If in a world where God were to strongly actualize T_1 , the moral agent in world W_1 not included in S_{W_0C} it might be that the moral agent E would perform B. The variance in S_C places limitations on the essentially free moral agent E weakly actualize.

But there are also constraints on the moral agent E to strongly actualize. We noted that in addition to restricted actualization there is also unrestricted actualization. A moral agent can unrestrictedly actualize are states of affairs that God's having predicted, prior to the strong actualization that every moral agent created in T will go right. Every moral agent always going right counterfactuals will always go right, but it does not causal actualization. And God can actualize T.

The intersection of the sets S_C of true CCFs whose corresponding worlds God can actualize in S_U is the set of all counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. If God can actualize T_n in every possible world and CCF, there is no member $T_n \square \rightarrow F_n$ of S_U . Of course, there are lots of other counterfactuals in S_U where the states of affairs in D_n depend on T_n . For instance, D_n depends causally on T_n . In a possible world where D_n depends fatalistically on T_n , the counterfactuals in S_U are CCFs.

We might expect that there is no such world. The best actualizable world varies across possible worlds. The best actualizable world will include states of affairs—the actions of free agents, for instance—that, necessarily, God cannot strongly actualize. The best world God can weakly actualize varies across possible worlds.

But since the set S_U of CCFs whose antecedents are true in every possible world, we know there are states of affairs that are unrestrictedly actualize. There are undetermined states of affairs (F_n) and necessarily God can strongly actualize a state of affairs in which God can strongly actualize a state of affairs in which

free with respect to A in T , then either $T \square \rightarrow A$ or $T \square \rightarrow \neg A$. This is the Molinist assumption of conditional excluded middle.¹⁵

These events extend to non-free, *chancy* events as well, where S_C includes chancy micro-events such as the decay of a particular atom of radon created yesterday, in a world where it would be exactly 0.001 seconds. And in some worlds it would be dropped toward the floor today, in otherwise possible worlds instead of hitting the floor.

For any maximal states of affairs $T_0, T_1, T_2 \dots T_n$ and for each W and T_n pair, $\langle W, T_n \rangle$, there is a world W' that includes every undetermined state of affairs F_n strongly actualized at W . Call the set S_C of all worlds W' the *galaxy* of S_C .¹⁶

For any world W relative to W as determined by the set S_C true at W_0 that God can actualize any other world W' that is not in S_{WC} . God's choice of a set of feasible worlds in the galaxy. The set of possible worlds S_U is a set of all possible worlds, but it is coextensive with S_C .

It is urged that there is a possible world W_1 in S_{WC} in which some moral agent is created, and that God might have actualized T then every moral agent would have performed some morally significant action. But God cannot actualize any world outside S_{WC} . In fact, God actualizes a world with significant moral imperfection.

For any maximal states of affairs $T_0, T_1, T_2 \dots T_n$ that he might have actualized had he strongly actualized that state, that W_0 would have obtained had he strongly actualized T_1 and so on. If creaturely freedom form part of God's middle knowledge that God decides to actualize.

¹⁵ See Flint 1998, 51ff.
 ¹⁶ This set is not the set of possibly actual worlds. Even possible worlds, though they are not actualizable.

According to traditional Molinism, God *strongly* actualizes a maximal state of affairs T_n and God *weakly* actualizes the state of affairs F_n where $T_n + F_n = W_n$. As we move from one world to the next the set of strongly actualizable states of affairs is constant, but the set S_C of true CCFs—the creaturely world-type—and the galaxy of worlds S_{CW} varies. The variance in S_C and S_{WC} across worlds is explained in part by variance in undetermined states of affairs in F_n . At world W_0 it might be true that, were God to strongly actualize T_1 , the moral agent E would perform A . But in some world W_1 not included in S_{WC} it might be true that were God to strongly actualize T_1 , the moral agent E would perform B . The Molinist maintains that the set of true CCFs in S_C places limitations on the essentially uncaused states of affairs in F_n that God can weakly actualize.

But there are also constraints on the maximal states of affairs T that God can strongly actualize. We noted that in addition to strong actualization and weak actualization there is also unrestricted actualization. Among the maximal states of affairs that God can unrestrictedly actualize are states of affairs T that include the state of affairs of God's having predicted, prior to the strong actualization of any other state of affairs, that every moral agent created in T will always go right. The state of affairs of every moral agent always going right counterfactually depends on God's prediction that they will always go right, but it does not causally depend on God's prediction that they will always go right. And God can actualize T in every possible world unrestrictedly.

The intersection of the sets S_C of true CCFs in each possible world is the set S_U of CCFs whose corresponding worlds God can unrestrictedly actualize. The set of CCFs in S_U is the set of all counterfactuals of creaturely freedom $T_n \square \rightarrow F_n$ such that God can actualize T_n in every possible world and $\square(T_n \supset F_n)$. Since every member of S_U is a CCF, there is no member $T_n \square \rightarrow F_n$ of S_U such that F_n causally depends on T_n . Of course, there are lots of other counterfactuals $T_n \square \rightarrow D_n$ that are true in every possible world where the states of affairs in D_n depend causally on T_n . In deterministic worlds, for instance, D_n depends causally on T_n . There are other counterfactuals true in every possible world where D_n depends fatalistically on T_n and so on. But the set of counterfactuals in S_U are CCFs.

We might expect that there is no such thing as the best actualizable world simpliciter. The best actualizable world varies depending upon the CCFs in S_C that are true. The best actualizable world will include certain essentially undetermined states of affairs—the actions of free agents, for instance, and the occurrences of undetermined events—that, necessarily, God cannot strongly actualize. Rather, the best actualizable world is the best world God can weakly actualize and the set of weakly actualizable worlds varies across possible worlds.

But since the set S_U of CCFs whose antecedents God can strongly actualize is true in every possible world, we know there are undetermined states of affairs that God can unrestrictedly actualize. There are undetermined states of affairs F_n such that $\square(T_n \supset F_n)$ and necessarily God can strongly actualize T_n . Most importantly, God can unrestrictedly actualize a state of affairs in which every moral agent always goes right.

Since Molinists maintain that CCFs are prevolitional, it might be objected that this generates a problem for the thesis that God can unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world. God cannot make any counterfactuals of creaturely freedom true, so he cannot make it the case that the counterfactuals in S_U are true. Suppose it is true that Smith will perform a morally wrong action A were Smith placed in circumstances T . It is then *prevolitionally true* that $T \square \rightarrow A$. And suppose it is true that God strongly actualized T . Since the set S_U includes the CCFs whose antecedents God can strongly actualize, we know there are undetermined states of affairs that God can unrestrictedly actualize. In particular, we know that God can unrestrictedly actualize a state of affairs in which Smith always goes right. God simply has to utter the prediction that Smith will always go right. But this entails no genuine problem for the thesis that CCFs are prevolitionally true. It remains prevolitionally true that $T \square \rightarrow A$. That is consistent with the fact that all of the counterfactuals in the set S_U are true in every world. God does not make them true in any world. It is necessarily true that God can actualize a morally perfect world, but that does not entail that it is necessarily true that he does. In fact God actualized T . But God might have actualized T_n and brought about a world in which Smith always goes right.

Consider, on the other hand, a morally ideal world W_n at which it is true that God strongly actualized the state of affairs of God's predicting that every moral agent will always go right. The counterfactual that $T_n \square \rightarrow W_n$ will of course be prevolitional. But suppose that God might not have strongly actualized the state of affairs of his predicting that every moral agent will always go right. The complete creative act God might have performed is T_m and the resulting world is W_m in which we can assume some moral agents go wrong. Clearly $T_m \neq T_n$, since T_n includes God strongly actualizing the state of affairs of his predicting that every moral agent will always go right and T_m does not. It is true that $T_n \square \rightarrow W_n$, but of course that is consistent with it also being true that $T_m \square \rightarrow W_m$. The argument generalizes to any possible world W at which God strongly actualizes some maximal state of affairs T . It is true at W that God did actualize T and it is true there that $T_n \square \rightarrow W_n$. But it is also true at W that God could have performed the complete creative act T_m and $T_m \square \rightarrow W_m$. So the fact that CCFs are prevolitional gives us no reason to believe that it is not necessarily true that God can actualize a morally perfect world. Indeed it gives us no reason to believe that God cannot unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world.

It is true that the set S_U includes counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that are true in every world. The true counterfactuals in S_U ensure that there is a set of worlds S_W such that necessarily God can actualize a world in S_W . And the worlds in S_W include the morally perfect worlds. Since, necessarily, God can actualize a morally perfect world, we know that the thesis of universal transworld depravity is false.

The Impossibility Argument

The aim in this section is to show that a successful response to the logical problem of evil does not require the free will defense. It is in fact necessary that God is able to actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. But I show that it's *impossible* that,

necessarily, God does actualize a morally perfect world. I show further that the concept of free will. It is valid on the assumption of free will and strong compatibilism.

Let w be a causally deterministic world in which a moral agent S in w is free to perform A at t in conditions in (LC) are met:

LC. S freely performed A at t in deterministic world w . If S had performed $\sim A$ at t , then it would be true that L does not obtain in w and S would be unable to perform $\sim A$ at t .¹⁸

Strong compatibilists hold that alternative to free will and that free will is compatible with determinism. In a deterministic world w was able to bring about a state of affairs that would break a law of nature himself or cause any other agent to do so.

Strong compatibilists endorse a version of free will (PSF):

PSF. A moral agent S is significantly free with respect to performing A at t , and (ii) it is right to perform A at t , and (iii) it is right to perform $\sim A$ at t .²⁰

According to causal determinism, when a moral agent is significantly free to perform A at t , they are exactly the same for all possible worlds at t .²¹ So any possible world whose past and laws in the actual world is a world w in which S is significantly free to perform A at t , short, there are no possible (non-actual) deterministic worlds.

Strong compatibilists maintain that a moral agent is significantly free to perform A at t since agents in worlds whose past and laws are such that they are able to actualize alternative futures. Strong compatibilists maintain that a moral agent is significantly free to perform A at t where there are no possible (non-actual) deterministic worlds. A moral agent might be significantly free persons able to perform A at t in a world w of w . These significantly free persons are not significantly free persons originating from the past of w .²² Compare David

¹⁸ Compare Lewis 1986.

¹⁹ For further discussion of strong and weak compatibilism, see Plantinga 1974a. A person is significantly free to perform A at t if and only if it is right to perform A at t and it would be wrong to perform $\sim A$ at t .

²¹ See Lewis 1986, 37. Of course, it is possible to have a world in which a moral agent is significantly free to perform A at t throughout long stretches of time and perhaps all time.

²² I do not say that anyone can change the past. A world is significantly free to perform A at t since the past and future of any world is essentially determined.

prevolitional, it might be objected that this an unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect als of creaturely freedom true, so he cannot S_U are true. Suppose it is true that Smith will ith placed in circumstances T. It is then *pre-*t is true that God strongly actualized T. Since dents God can strongly actualize, we know God can unrestrictedly actualize. In particu-ualize a state of affairs in which Smith always ction that Smith will always go right. But this at CCFs are prevolitionally true. It remains nsistent with the fact that all of the counter-od God does not make them true in any world. e a morally perfect world, but that does not n fact God actualized T. But God might have hich Smith always goes right. ideal world W_n at which it is true that God od's predicting that every moral agent will $\square \rightarrow W_n$ will of course be prevolitional. But ctualized the state of affairs of his predicting . The complete creative act God might have T_m in which we can assume some moral agents God strongly actualizing the state of affairs of ways go right and T_m does not. It is true that T_n it also being true that $T_m \square \rightarrow W_m$. The argu-which God strongly actualizes some maximal ctualize T and it is true there that $T_n \square \rightarrow W_n$, rformed the complete creative act T_m and T_m onal gives us no reason to believe that it is not orally perfect world. Indeed it gives us no rea-ly actualize a morally perfect world. rfectuals of creaturely freedom that are true n S_U ensure that there is a set of worlds S_w orld in S_w . And the worlds in S_w include the , God can actualize a morally perfect world, orld depravity is false.

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uccessful response to the logical problem of e. It is in fact necessary that God is able to orld. But I show that it's *impossible* that,

necessarily, God does actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. I call that the impossibility argument. I show further that the impossibility argument is valid on any concept of free will. It is valid on the assumption of libertarianism, weak compatibilism, and strong compatibilism.

Let w be a causally deterministic world in which the laws of nature are conjoined in L and the history of facts prior to time t are conjoined in H. According to strong compatibilism, a moral agent S in w is free with respect to an action A at t only if the conditions in (LC) are met:

LC. S freely performed A at t in deterministic world w only if (i) had S performed $\sim A$ at t , then it would be true that L does not conjoin the laws of nature, and (ii) S was able to perform $\sim A$ at t .¹⁸

Strong compatibilists hold that alternative possibilities (of action) are necessary for free will and that free will is compatible with causal determinism.¹⁹ The moral agent S in a deterministic world w was able to bring about $\sim A$ at t , though, of course, S could not break a law of nature himself or cause anything else that would break a law of nature.

Strong compatibilists endorse a version of what I will call the principle of significant freedom (PSF):

PSF. A moral agent S is significantly free with respect to A at t only if (i) S could have done other than perform A at t , and (ii) it is right to perform A at t and wrong to perform $\sim A$ at t (or vice versa).²⁰

According to causal determinism, whenever two possible worlds obey the same laws perfectly, they are exactly the same for all time, or they are not the same for any stretch of time.²¹ So any possible world whose past history and laws duplicate the past history and laws in the actual world is a world whose future duplicates the actual future. In short, there are no possible (non-actual) futures that branch from the actual past in deterministic worlds.

Strong compatibilists maintain that causal determinism is compatible with free action since agents in worlds whose futures are causally determined are nonetheless able to actualize alternative futures. Strong compatibilists maintain that in worlds w where there are no possible (non-actual) futures branching from the actual past there might be significantly free persons able to actualize a future divergent from the future of w . These significantly free persons are therefore also able to actualize a past divergent from the past of w .²² Compare David Lewis's strong compatibilism:

¹⁸ Compare Lewis 1986.

¹⁹ For further discussion of strong and weak compatibilism, see Campbell 1997.

²⁰ Compare Plantinga 1974a. A person is significantly free, if he is libertarian free with respect to an action and it would be wrong to perform (and right not to perform) or vice versa.

²¹ See Lewis 1986, 37. Of course, it is possible that two worlds obey different laws and are the same throughout long stretches of time and perhaps all time.

²² I do not say that anyone can change the past or future of any world in which they exist. That's not possible since the past and future of any world is essential to that world.

Had I raised my hand, a law would have been broken beforehand. The course of events would have diverged from the actual course of events a little while before I raised my hand, and at the point of divergence there would have been a law-breaking event—a divergence miracle, as I have called it. But this divergence miracle would not have been caused by my raising my hand... Nor would it have been caused by any other act of mine, earlier or later.²³

In world *w*, I am causally determined not to raise my hand and I do not raise my hand. But I might have done otherwise. Had I raised my hand I would have actualized a world *w'* in which some law of nature in *w* is not a law of nature at all.²⁴ Neither the past in *w'* nor the future in *w'* are exactly the same as the past of *w* and future of *w*. *w'* includes laws that *w* does not include, and the course of events in the past of *w* at the time I raise my hand is not the same as the course of events in *w'*, so the past in *w* does not duplicate the past in *w'*. The past of *w'*, for instance, includes some events that violate the laws of *w* and these of course do not occur in *w*. Since *w* and *w'* do not even share the same laws, they are not exactly the same over any stretch of time.²⁵ But according to strong compatibilism, I freely fail to raise my hand in *w* since it is true in *w* that I am able to actualize the non-branching future in world *w'* in which I do raise my hand.

If strong compatibilism is true, then, necessarily, God can actualize a world in which every significantly free person always goes right. Necessarily, God *can* actualize a morally perfect world. One immediate consequence is that the thesis of universal transworld depravity is false and the free will defense fails. There are no possible worlds where it is not within God's power to actualize a world containing moral good and no moral evil. But a second consequence of strong compatibilism is that it's false that, necessarily, God *does* actualize a morally perfect world.

To see why this is so, consider the following. Let a morally significant action be such that it is morally right to perform it and morally wrong not to perform it, or vice versa.²⁶ According to strong compatibilism, necessarily, God can actualize a world in which every significantly free moral agent goes right with respect to every morally significant action. But these moral agents are strong compatibilist free only if they are able to do otherwise with respect to these morally significant actions. So, they are strong compatibilist free only if they are able to go wrong with respect to these morally significant actions. But then these agents are strong compatibilist free only if, *possibly*, God actualizes a world in which some significantly free moral agents sometimes go wrong. But if God can actualize a world in which every significantly free agent always goes right, and strong compatibilism is true, then there is some world in which God coexists with evil.

²³ See Lewis 1986, 294f.

²⁴ I would have actualized *w'*, but that does not entail that I would have caused it to be the case that *w'* obtains. Had I raised my hand, a law would have been, loosely speaking, 'violated,' but I would not have caused that.

²⁵ This can seem misleading. *w* and *w'* are indiscernible until just prior to the divergence miracle preceding my raising of my hand. But, while events in *w'* behave according to *L* until just prior to my hand-raising, and events in *w* behave according to *L* always, it is true in *w'* that *L* includes quasi-laws, but in *w*, *L* includes only genuine laws. So, there is that difference all the way through the pasts of *w* and *w'*.

²⁶ See Plantinga 1974a, 166ff.

Therefore, if God can actualize a morally free agent is strong compatibilist free, there is some world in which God coexists with evil.

Strong compatibilism is a central premise of the free will defense. It is generally held to be true that God *can* actualize a morally perfect world. According to strong compatibilism, a morally free agent goes right only if they are able to do otherwise. If strong compatibilist free agents that go right with respect to these actions, then there exist possible worlds in which those agents go right; that is, only if there exist possible worlds in which those agents go right. Conversely, if strong compatibilist free agents freely go wrong with respect to these actions, then there exist possible worlds in which those agents go wrong. But of course, if God can actualize a morally perfect world, that precludes him from actualizing a morally perfect world that includes evil.

Consider a parallel argument on the other side of the coin. According to strong compatibilism, let *w* be a causally determined world. Let *L* be the history of facts prior to *w*. According to weak compatibilism, a moral agent *S* is free in *w* if the conditions in (WC) are met:

WC. *S* freely performed *A* at *t* in determination *w*. If *S* had performed $\sim A$ at *t*, then it would be true that *L* does not determine *S* to be unable to perform $\sim A$ at *t*.²⁷

According to weak compatibilism, free will does not require alternative possibilities. Strong compatibilists that in deterministic worlds maintain that significantly free persons are free in a world whose future that diverges from the actual future.

There are many ways to develop weak compatibilism. For instance, a weak compatibilist might

²⁷ We can weaken (WC) by omitting condition (ii). Lewis maintains that no agent can do otherwise in any world. In no credible form of compatibilism according to Lewis, it is metaphysically impossible that *S* fail to perform *A* in a world where *S* performs *A* in any sense. One might worry about whether (i) is true in worlds in which a contradiction is true are closer to *w* than *w*. But such worlds are not among the closest to *w* in which *S* is free. For more on this, see Lewis 1986, 291–8.

broken beforehand. The course of events would be a little while before I raised my hand, and at a law-breaking event—a divergence miracle, as it would not have been caused by my raising my hand or other act of mine, earlier or later.²³

If I raise my hand and I do not raise my hand, then I would have actualized a world with a law of nature at all.²⁴ Neither the past in w nor the past of w and future of w . w' includes some events in the past of w at the time I raise my hand, so the past in w does not duplicate the past in w' , so the past in w does not duplicate the past in w' , so the past in w does not duplicate the past in w' . But according to strong compatibilism, it is true in w that I am able to actualize a world in which I do raise my hand.

Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do not raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do not raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do not raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do raise my hand.

Let a morally significant action be such that it is morally wrong not to perform it, or vice versa.²⁶ Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do not raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do not raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do raise my hand.

tail that I would have caused it to be the case that w' would be the case, loosely speaking, 'violated,' but I would not have

able until just prior to the divergence miracle precede the divergence miracle. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do not raise my hand. Necessarily, God can actualize a world in which I do raise my hand.

Therefore, if God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world in which every free agent is strong compatibilist free, then, contrary to the logical problem of evil, there is some world in which God coexists with evil.

Strong compatibilism is a central premise in an Impossibility Argument. It is necessarily true that God *can* actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. But we have shown that it is *impossible* that, necessarily, God *does* actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. According to strong compatibilism, free moral agents are causally determined to go right only if they are able to do otherwise. So, morally perfect worlds include strong compatibilist free agents that go right with respect to every morally significant action only if there exist possible worlds in which those moral agents freely go wrong with respect to those actions; that is, only if there exist morally imperfect worlds. There simply cannot exist *only* morally perfect worlds. Conversely, if there are no worlds in which those moral agents freely go wrong with respect to those actions, then those agents in morally perfect worlds are not strong compatibilist free. We should conclude that God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world that includes strong compatibilist free agents only if, possibly, God coexists with evil. But of course there is nothing in the nature of God that precludes him from actualizing a morally and naturally perfect world.

Consider a parallel argument on the assumption of weak, rather than strong, compatibilism. Let w be a causally deterministic world in which the laws of nature are conjoined in L and the history of facts prior to a time t are conjoined in H . According to weak compatibilism, a moral agent S in w is free with respect to an action A at t only if the conditions in (WC) are met:

WC. S freely performed A at t in deterministic world w only if (i) had S performed $\sim A$ at t , then it would be true that L does not conjoin the laws of nature and (ii) S was unable to perform $\sim A$ at t .²⁷

According to weak compatibilism, free will is compatible with causal determinism, but free will does not require alternative possible actions. Weak compatibilists agree with strong compatibilists that in deterministic worlds there are no possible (non-actual) futures branching from the actual past. But unlike strong compatibilists they do not maintain that significantly free persons in deterministic worlds are able to actualize a future that diverges from the actual future. So, weak compatibilists reject PSF.

There are many ways to develop weak compatibilism that I will not consider here. For instance, a weak compatibilist might endorse sourcehood conditions on significant

²⁷ We can weaken (WC) by omitting condition (ii) altogether, but I'm assuming that weak compatibilism maintains that no agent can do otherwise in deterministic worlds. I'm assuming further that there is no credible form of compatibilism according to which a moral agent S freely performs A at t and it is metaphysically impossible that S fail to perform A at t . I am assuming, in short, that in necessitarian worlds—Spinozistic worlds where every action and event is metaphysically necessary—no one is free in any sense. One might worry about whether (i) is trivially true. It isn't. (i) is trivially true only if worlds in which a contradiction is true are closer to w than a world in which L does not conjoin the laws of nature. But such worlds are not among the closest to w in which S does $\sim A$ at t . For a slightly more detailed argument see Lewis 1986, 291–8.

freedom that require the agent herself to be, in some sense, the source of her free action. Or, the weak compatibilist might endorse some other control condition that requires free moral agents to have some control other than what is required for alternative possibilities. All further conditions are compatible with the argument that follows.

Condition (i) on weak compatibilism requires only that it is not metaphysically impossible that moral agent S performs $\sim A$ at t in deterministic world w. There is a world w' in which S performs $\sim A$ at t, and L does not conjoin the laws of nature. But it is true in w that S is not able to actualize w'. But condition (i) alone is sufficient to generate another Impossibility Argument.

We have let a morally significant action be such that it is morally right to perform it and morally wrong not to perform it, or vice versa. According to weak compatibilism, necessarily, God can actualize a world in which every significantly free moral agent goes right with respect to every morally significant action. According to (WC), weak compatibilist free agents S in deterministic worlds w are unable to do otherwise with respect to these morally significant actions A at t. But, also according to (WC), a moral agent is weak compatibilist free only if it is metaphysically possible that S goes wrong with respect to A at t. But then moral agents are weak compatibilist free only if, possibly, God actualizes a world in which some significantly free moral agents sometimes go wrong. But if God can actualize a world in which every significantly free agent always goes right, and weak compatibilism is true, then there is some world in which God coexists with evil. Therefore, if God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world in which every free agent is weak compatibilist free, then, contrary to the logical problem of evil, there is some world in which God coexists with evil.

So, weak compatibilism is a central premise in an *Impossibility Argument*. It is necessarily true that God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. But we have shown that it is impossible that, necessarily, God does actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. According to weak compatibilism, free moral agents are causally determined to go right only if it is metaphysically possible for these agents to do otherwise. According to the conditions of weak compatibilism in (WC), S is unable to do $\sim A$ at t in deterministic world w, but it is not metaphysically impossible that S does $\sim A$ at t. Were S to do so, then L would not conjoin the laws, and it is true in w that S is unable to actualize a world in which L does not conjoin the laws. Nonetheless, the closest possible world w' to w in which S does $\sim A$ at t is one in which S does something morally wrong and L does not conjoin the laws of w.²⁸

So, morally perfect worlds include weak compatibilist free agents that go right with respect to every morally significant action only if there exist possible worlds in which those moral agents freely go wrong with respect to those actions; that is, only if there

²⁸ The fact that it is true in w that there is a possible world w' in which S does $\sim A$ at t does not entail that it is true in w that S is able to do $\sim A$ at t. Similarly, the fact it is true in w that there is a possible world in which S flaps his wings and flies around, does not entail that it's true in w that S is able to fly.

exist morally imperfect worlds. On we exist only morally perfect worlds. Com moral agents freely go wrong with respect to morally perfect worlds are not weak compatibilist free agents only if, possibly, God coexists with a world that precludes him from actualizing a morally perfect world.

It should be evident that we can just as easily assume the assumption that libertarianism is true. It is possible that there exist only morally perfect worlds where moral agents are free only if they can go wrong. If God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world available—only if there exist morally imperfect worlds—without including another way. God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world on any conception of free will available—on any conception of free will available—on any conception of free will available.

There are two important consequences of the logical problem of evil entails that God exists only if God exists only if every compatibilist or incompatibilist free on any conception of free will. The logical problem of evil exists only if every compatibilist or incompatibilist free on any conception of free will. These consequences are almost certainly true.

There are two important consequences of the logical problem of evil entails that God exists only if God exists only if every compatibilist or incompatibilist free on any conception of free will. If God exists and some moral agent is free—then God can coexist with evil. If God exists and some moral agent is free—then the logical problem of evil exists only if every compatibilist or incompatibilist free on any conception of free will. There is, then, a solution to the logical problem of evil: some conception or other of free will is coherent.

Concluding Remarks

There is a morally perfect world in which God exists and predicts that every moral agent he creates goes right with respect to every morally significant action. In any morally perfect world in which God creates a morally and naturally perfect world in which every moral agent God creates always goes right with respect to every morally significant action, in which God predicts that every moral agent he creates always goes right with respect to every morally significant action, necessarily, God can bring about a morally and naturally perfect world on the assumption that God exists and predicts that every moral agent he creates always goes right with respect to every morally significant action.

In each world in which God exists it is true that every moral agent he creates will always go right with respect to every morally significant action. If God exists and predicts that every moral agent he creates always goes right with respect to every morally significant action, necessarily, God can bring about a morally and naturally perfect world on the assumption that God exists and predicts that every moral agent he creates always goes right with respect to every morally significant action.

to be, in some sense, the source of her free will. To endorse some other control condition that is not the control other than what is required for her actions are compatible with the argument that

requires only that it is not metaphysically possible that $\sim A$ at t in deterministic world w . There is a world w' in which L does not conjoin the laws of nature. But it is possible that L does not conjoin the laws of nature. But condition (i) alone is sufficient to gener-

ally be such that it is morally right to perform it in w' and vice versa. According to weak compatibilism, there is a world in which every significantly free moral agent performs a morally significant action. According to (WC), weak compatibilist worlds w are unable to do otherwise with respect to A at t . But, also according to (WC), a moral agent S is metaphysically possible that S goes wrong in w if and only if, possibly, *some significantly free moral agents sometimes go wrong*. If every significantly free agent always goes right, then there is some world in which God coexists with a morally and naturally perfect world in which S is free, then, contrary to the logical problem of evil, God coexists with evil.

to arise in an *Impossibility Argument*. It is necessary for a morally and naturally perfect world. But we have seen that God *does* actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. According to compatibilism, free moral agents are causally determined. It is metaphysically possible for these agents to do otherwise. According to compatibilism in (WC), S is unable to do $\sim A$ at t in world w if and only if it is metaphysically impossible that S does $\sim A$ at t in world w . But the laws, and it is true in w that S is unable to do otherwise. Nonetheless, the closest possible world to w is one in which S does something morally wrong.

According to compatibilist free agents that go right with respect to those actions; that is, only if there exist possible worlds in which

the world w' in which S does $\sim A$ at t does not entail that the fact it is true in w that there is a possible world in which S is able to fly.

exist morally imperfect worlds. On weak compatibilism, it is impossible that there exist only morally perfect worlds. Conversely, if there are no worlds in which those moral agents freely go wrong with respect to those actions, then those agents in morally perfect worlds are not weak compatibilist free. We should conclude that God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world that includes weak compatibilist free agents only if, possibly, God coexists with evil. And there is nothing in God's nature that precludes him from actualizing a morally and naturally perfect world.

It should be evident that we can just as easily construct an *Impossibility Argument* on the assumption that libertarianism is true. If libertarianism is true, then it is impossible that there exist only morally perfect worlds. Libertarian agents in morally perfect worlds are free only if they can go wrong. But then we can conclude generally that God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world—under any conception of free will available—only if there exist morally imperfect possible worlds. We can put the conclusion another way. God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world—under any conception of free will available—only if God can coexist with evil.

There are two important consequences of the logical problem of evil. The logical problem of evil entails that God exists only if it is impossible that any moral agent is free on any conception of free will. The logical problem of evil also entails that God exists only if every compatibilist or incompatibilist conception of free will is incoherent. These consequences are almost certainly false.

There are two important consequences of every compatibilist or incompatibilist conception of free will. If God exists and some moral agent is free—on any conception of free will—then God can coexist with evil. If God exists and some moral agent is free—on any conception of free will—then the logical problem of evil is resolved. Finally, if God exists and some moral agent is free—on any conception of free will—the free will defense fails. There is, then, a solution to the logical problem of evil on the simple assumption that some conception or other of free will is coherent and compossible with God.

Concluding Remarks

There is a morally perfect world in which, prior to creating any moral agents, God predicts that every moral agent he creates always goes right. There are also morally perfect worlds in which God creates a perfect predictor who himself predicts that every moral agent God creates always goes right. Since there are morally perfect worlds in which God predicts that every moral agent always goes right, we argued that, necessarily, God can bring about a morally perfect world. Necessarily, God can bring about a morally perfect world on the assumption that libertarianism is true.

In each world in which God exists it is true that God had the power to predict that every moral agent he creates will always go right and God had the power to create a perfect predictor who predicts that every moral agent always goes right. Had God exercised the power to predict that every moral agent he creates will always go right or to create a perfect predictor, God would have actualized a morally perfect world.

Weak essentialists urge that God's essential omniscience does not entail that he is an essentially perfect predictor. There are worlds in which, had God predicted that every moral agent will always go right, it would not be the case that every moral agent always goes right. There is a flexibility in *de re* modality that makes it possible that essentially omniscient beings know less than everything there is to know and possible that essentially omniscient beings are less than perfect predictors. But the objection from weak essentialism is ineffective against the metaphysical commitments of most theists. Most theists maintain that God exists in every possible world—God is not world-bound. Since God exists in every world, the counterpart for God in every world is just God. There is no flexibility in *de re* modality with respect to God's essential properties.

Molinists urge that there is in every possible world a set of true prevolitional counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. God does not have the option to choose which counterfactuals are true in any world in which he exists. But it was shown that God's ability to unrestrictedly actualize a morally perfect world is consistent with Molinist commitments on prevolitionally true counterfactuals.

Finally, I showed that, even if the free will defense is false, theists have a compelling solution to the logical problem of evil. We found that there is an impossibility argument for every conception of free will—strong compatibilism, weak compatibilism, and libertarianism. On any conception of free will, it is necessarily true that God *can* actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. But, again on every conception of free will, it is *impossible* that, necessarily, God *does* actualize a morally and naturally perfect world. According to weak compatibilism, free moral agents are causally determined to go right only if it is metaphysically possible to do otherwise. According to strong compatibilism, free moral agents are causally determined to go right only if they are able to do otherwise. And according to libertarianism, free moral agents go right only if they are able to do otherwise. But then we can conclude generally that God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world—under any conception of free will available—only if there exist morally imperfect possible worlds. God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world—under any conception of free will available—only if God can coexist with evil. Since it is evident that God can actualize a morally and naturally perfect world, we have a solution to the logical problem of evil on the assumption of any conception of free will.

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