Langtry on God, the Best and Evil

Langtry's fine book has already received a number of positive reviews—e.g. Gale (*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* 27/05/2009), Sturch (*Journal of Theological Studies*, 60, 2, 2009, 771-2), Schellenberg (*Mind* 118, 472, 2009, 1155-60), and Kraay and Gelinas (*Philosophical Quarterly* 60, 239, 2010, 442-6). Here, after giving an account of the contents of the book, I shall focus on criticisms that, as far as I know, have not been made elsewhere.

Langtry's book has three stated aims: (1) to explore God's providential policies and to investigate whether God is a maximiser; (2) to assess objections to God's existence based on the apparent fact that God could have made a better world; and (3) to assess objections to God's existence based on evil.

The book begins with an introductory chapter treating problems, concepts and background theories. Langtry characterises, in terms of the following two theses, three positions—Theological Determinism, Molinism, and Open Theism—between which the results advanced in his work are intended to be neutral:

Comprehensive Providence: Everything that occurs is either intended by God or is an unintended consequence of what he intends. God plays an active causal role that guarantees both that his intentions are fulfilled and that their unintended consequences occur. God is in complete control of all that occurs. All of God's decisions are reached before he implements any of them.

Comprehensive Knowledge: All states of affairs that actually obtain are known infallibly by God, and there is never a time at which God exists but does not then know about any state of affairs that actually obtains.

On Langtry's characterisation, Theological Determinism and Molinism affirm both of these theses, whereas Open Theists reject them both. Theological Determinists suppose that God strongly actualises the actual world by strongly actualising every contingent state of affairs (except any contingent states of God that are metaphysically prior to all of God's actions which strongly actualise states of affairs). Molinists suppose that God weakly actualises the world by strongly actualising some states of affairs and weakly actualising all others that obtain—including, in particular, the free choices and actions of human agents—except, of course, any contingent states of God that are metaphysically prior to all of God's actions that strongly or weakly actualise states of affairs.

(Perhaps it is worth noting here that Gale claims that Langtry's account of weak actualisation is flawed—but only because he misreads Langtry's account. Langtry says that 'a person weakly actualises non-conjunctive state of affairs x iff neither any other person nor any other state of affairs *strongly actualises* x and yet this person performs some single action that both makes a salient causal contribution to x's occurrence and is such that if he or she were to perform it then x would obtain' (my italics); Gale reports Langtry saying that 'a person weakly actualises non-conjunctive

state of affairs x iff neither any other person nor any other state of affairs *actualises* x and yet this person performs some single action that both makes a salient causal contribution to x's occurrence and is such that if he or she were to perform it then x would obtain' (my italics).)

Langtry's opening chapter offers novel accounts of omnipotence and omniscience:

God is *omnipotent with respect to world creation in world W* iff God exists in W and for any world W* in which God exists either God can, in W, create W* or else he cannot, but his doing so is not precluded by any defect of limitation in the intrinsic causal powers and cognitive capacities he has in W.

God is *omniscient in world W* iff God exists in W and for any proposition p which is true in W, in W it is the case that either God knows that p, or else he does not but his knowing that p is not precluded by any defect or limitation in his intrinsic cognitive capacities.

I am not sure that the 'working definition' of omniscience does work. Suppose that there are things that God does not know, not because of defects or limitations in his intrinsic cognitive *capacities*, but simply through inattention or performance error. Surely that would count against his omniscience. (Gale worries that Langtry's account allows for a God who can do and know very little because he is not given suitable opportunities to exercise these capacities. However, Langtry does say that his working definition is one upon which Theological Determinists, Molinists and Open Theists can agree—and I am not sure how, on any of those views, it could turn out that God failed to have 'suitable opportunities to exercise his intrinsic cognitive capacities'.)

In chapter two, Langtry starts by examining the question whether there are worlds that have infinite value. After distinguishing between aggregative theories of value—which assume that the values of worlds are somehow dependent upon the values of basic states in those worlds—and non-aggregative theories of value, Langtry argues that no known non-aggregative theories of value can affirm that a world has quantitatively infinite value. He then goes on to argue that there is no good reason to suppose that aggregative theories of value *must* assign infinite values to some worlds; and that there is no good reason to suppose that aggregative theories of value *do* assign infinite value to some worlds. And then he argues that two *prima facie* plausible arguments for the conclusion that there is no maximal world—i.e. no world than which there is none better—should be regarded with considerable suspicion. The key premises in these arguments are:

Same People, Better Lives: For any world V containing people there is some other world W in which exactly the same people exist as in V, each person's life in W is better, overall, then their life in V, the distribution of goods in W is not less than it is in V, and the differences between V and W are not due to morally bad actions or unfair processes in W.

Extra People: For any world V containing people there is some other world W such that (1) everyone who exists in V exists in W, while there are a finite number of people who exist in W but not in V; (2) in each world, every inhabitant leads a life which is worth living, and is neither better nor worse than any other inhabitant's; (3)

everyone who exists in both worlds leads a life in each which is neither better nor worse then his or her life in the other; and (4) the distribution of goods in W is not less fair that it is in V, and the differences between V and W are not due to morally bad actions or unfair processes in W.

Finally, Langtry produces a series of arguments intended to establish (a) that, regardless of whether we suppose that Theological Determinism, or Molinism, or Open Theism is true, we have no *a priori* guarantee that the actual world is a maximal one; and (b) that, according to both Theological Determinism and Molinism, either God cannot create a maximal world or else he can but even given that he creates a world his omnipotence, omniscience and perfect goodness do not jointly entail that he creates a maximal world.

Chapter three begins with some definitions. Two worlds are *commensurable* with each other iff each is either better then, or inferior to, or ranked equally with, the other. A *creatable hierarchy* is a set S of worlds such that each member of S is commensurable with each other member, and God can create any member of S, and there is no world outside S which is both commensurable with each member of S and which God can create. A world W is a *prime member* of a creatable hierarchy H iff W is a member of H and there is no better member. A world is *prime* iff it is a prime member of some creatable hierarchy. The main thesis of chapter three is that we should reject the claim—defended by Rowe, Wielenberg, Sobel, and others—that *There are no prime worlds* and *If there exists an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good being then he creates some world* jointly entail *There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good being*. In particular, Langtry argues that, if there is no prime world, God can satisfice: God can choose a world that is non-disappointing in the light of the values that underlie the ranking of worlds and moreover is abundantly better than those worlds that only just barely escape the accusation that they are disappointing.

Chapter four begins with a defence of the following thesis ('Prime Actually'): *It is logically necessary that if God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, and there is exactly one creatable hierarchy and it has at least one prime member and God creates a world, then God creates a prime world.* After offering a couple of 'argument sketches'—'the appeal to God's rationality', 'the appeal to God's moral unsurpassability'—in support of this thesis, Langtry provides a detailed argument based on 'the Better Outcome/Action principle': *Other things being equal, in bringing about the better overall outcome, one acts in the better way.* Langtry's strategy is to try to show that no possible defeaters to this principle apply to God's choice between a prime and a non-prime member of a creatable hierarchy. After considering divine choice in circumstances in which there are several creatable hierarchies all containing prime members, and in circumstances in which there are several creatable hierarchies, some and only some of which contain prime members, Langtry embraces 'Prime Actually Strengthened': *It is logically necessary that if God exists and there are prime worlds and God creates a world then God creates a prime world.* This principle in turn entails 'Maximal Actually': *It is logically necessary that if God exists and there are maximal worlds that God can create and God creates a world then God creates a maximal world.* And this final principle, when conjoined with the last-mentioned conclusion from chapter two, entails that—on either Theological Determinism or Molinism—God cannot create a maximal world.

Chapter five addresses objections to theism based on considerations about the improvability of our world that are not related to considerations about evil. Langtry divides the discussion into three. First, he considers an objection to Theological Determinism and Molinism on the assumption that there are prime worlds. Second, he considers an objection to Theological Determinism and Molinism on the assumption that there are no prime worlds. Finally, he considers an objection to Open Theism (which considers how matters stand if there are, or there are not, premium worlds—i.e. worlds that, if God exists, he cannot replace with a better world). In all of these objections, the key assumption is that our *world* is not good enough. Langtry argues that, while it is true that we can point to respects in which our world could have been improved, we have no good reason to suppose that there are any worlds that, if improved in those respects, are non-arbitrarily all-things-considered better than our world.

In chapter six, Langtry discusses logical arguments from evil due to Mackie (1955), McCloskey (1974), and Schellenberg (1993), along with three arguments of his own devising. In chapter eight, Langtry discusses evidential arguments from evil due to Tooley (1991), Rowe (1996) (and (1979) and (1986)), and Schellenberg (2000), as well as evidential counterparts of the three arguments of his own devising from chapter six. Langtry supposes that the premises of logical arguments should be 'widely known to be true and unlikely to be doubted by anyone whom the proponent of the argument is trying to persuade'—and he makes a plausible case that none of the arguments that he examines meets this standard. Langtry makes various different kinds of objections to the evidential arguments that he considers; his conclusion is that 'although theists should continue to be uneasy about the threat posed by evidential arguments from evil, the uneasiness is about what menaces may lurk on the other side of a fog-shrouded hill, rather than about a dangerous foe clearly seen advancing towards them' (227).

In chapter seven, at least in part following the lead of Richard Swinburne, Langtry offers theodicies for the following two 'general truths about evil': (1) In the actual world, human beings undergo a lot of suffering, weakness, paralysis, blindness, psychosis, mental retardation, senile dementia, breakdowns in family life, and so forth (hereafter: 'suffering and dysfunction'); and (2) The actual world contains a great many serious cases of morally wrong choosing, acting, and failing to act. In connection with the existence of suffering and dysfunction, Langtry argues that if God ensures that there is no suffering and dysfunction, then rational creatures are not free and morally responsible in refraining from causing individual instances of suffering or dysfunction, and whether or not rational creatures undergo any suffering or dysfunction does not depend on individual rational creatures' personalities, values, beliefs, tastes, reasoning or intentions—and the value that has thereby been lost is very great, and greater then the disvalue of there being some suffering and dysfunction. In connection with the amount of suffering and dysfunction, Langtry argues that if God ensures that there is not much suffering and dysfunction, then rational creatures have a low degree of freedom and moral responsibility in refraining from causing individual instances of suffering or dysfunction, and whether or not rational creatures undergo a lot of suffering or dysfunction depends only to a small extent on individual rational creatures' personalities, values, beliefs, tastes, reasoning or intentions—and the value that has thereby been lost is very great, and greater then

the disvalue of there being much suffering and dysfunction. In connection with the existence of wrong, Langtry argues that if God ensures that there is no wrong, then rational creatures are not free and morally responsible in refraining from wrong, and whether or not there is any wrong does not depend upon individual rational creatures' personalities, values, beliefs, tastes or reasoning—and the value that has thereby been lost is very great, and greater than the disvalue of there being some wrong. (Langtry offers a similar argument in connection with the amount of wrong.)

I turn now to a discussion of some of the places where I found myself disagreeing with what Langtry says, where I think that it is possible to give this disagreement a relatively brief formulation. (One thing that is worth thinking about, but that I won't pursue here, is whether Langtry's theodical arguments meet the standards that he claims that logical arguments from evil fail to meet. I have my doubts.)

I

Langtry writes:

> God strongly actualises A and *If God were to strongly actualise A then he would thereby weakly actualise B* do not together entail *B obtains*. For *God strongly actualises A* is consistent with *God strongly actualises both A and C*, and *If God were to strongly actualise A then he would thereby weakly actualise B* is consistent with *If God were to strongly actualise both A and C, then B would not obtain*. (21n18)

Given that Langtry does not mean to deny that *God weakly actualises B* entails *B obtains*, it seems to me that what Langtry is offering is an objection to modus ponens for counterfactual conditionals—i.e. to the claim that *A* and *If it were that A then it would be that B* entail *B*. As far as I can make out, his objection is that, if we accept modus ponens for counterfactual conditionals, then the following situation can arise: A is consistent with C, (A→B) is consistent with ((A&C)→~B), A and (A→B) entail B, and (A&C) and ((A&C)→~B) entail ~B. We can see that there is something wrong with this objection by reinterpreting the above in classical propositional calculus: for it is beyond question that such a situation can consistently arise there. Of course, in the classical propositional calculus, {A, (A&C), (A→B), ((A&C)→~B)} is inconsistent; but it does not follow from that that at least one of {A, (A&C)} and {(A→B), ((A&C)→~B)} is inconsistent. Friends of modus ponens for counterfactual conditionals can say the same about the case that Langtry presents.

II

Langtry writes:

> Restall writes:
>
> > For any function f that the proponent of infinite quantitative value might suggest as the measure of value, proponents of only finite quantitative value can offer a function g which has a maximum finite value N that it never goes beyond. It's straightforward to define this from f: let g(x) = fix (f(x), where fix

is a function from [0, ∞] to [0, N]: fix (a) = Na/(a+1) and fix (∞) = N. … If for any measure of value with an infinite quantitative value we can construct what looks like a measure of value which doesn't have one, exactly what rules out this so-called 'measure'?

I have two answers to Restall's question. … Consider the problem of measuring the combined lengths of two rods laid end on end. If the lengths of the rods are x and y, then we can specify the combined length as l(x, y) = x+y. … Suppose that we now define the function g in Restall's way. There are decisive reasons for preferring f to g. For one thing, f gives the same results independently of our choice of units of measurement, whereas g does not. … The same holds for weights, temperatures, etc. The discrepancy indicates that the use of g is absurd.

… The main problem with the idea is this: Someone might offer a similar argument from the availability of some relevant mathematical function to the conclusion that even a galaxy containing an infinite number of stars could not properly, non-arbitrarily be said to have infinite mass or infinite size. … Surely we would regard such an argument as too-powerful-to-be-sound. (55-6)

There is no doubt that what Langtry says about *length* and *mass* is correct: additive properties cannot be properly handled by Restall's proposal. However, what Langtry says about *temperature* is plainly wrong. If I take two bodies that are at 30° and join them together, the temperature of the conjoined body is … 30° (not 60°). It is well known that there are no in-principle objections to adopting a temperature scale that conforms to Restall's g-function. (For a nice discussion of these—and other—matters, see P. Ehrlich (1982) 'Negative, Infinite and Hotter than Infinite Temperatures' *Synthese* 50, 57-76.) Moreover, as Langtry himself notes, there are reasons for supposing that value is not an additive property (in the way that length and mass are). So, at the very least, it seems to me that Restall's question remains live: if value is more like temperature than it is like length, then it seems that it will just be a matter of convention—i.e. a matter of arbitrary choice of scale—whether or not we say that there are infinite values.

III

Langtry writes:

Although various specific versions of compatibilism employ analyses of free will which, if plausible, would undermine my claims about freedom to perform a morally wrong action, compatibilism itself, the generic position, does not. Hence it is consistent with compatibilism for me to say that the relevant difference between performing a morally wrong act and reading aloud the second 1000 digits of pi is that in the former case, but not in the latter, the very structure of the creation rules out its being the case that both if S were to attempt to do A then S would do A, and S attempts to do A. Compatibilists ought to acknowledge that in such a situation S is not free to do A. (63)

I am not sure that Langtry is right about 'generic compatibilism'. Langtry does not discuss conceptions of freedom in this book, and nor does he provide an explicit

account of libertarianism. I have always thought that part of what distinguishes 'compatibilism' from 'libertarianism' is the conception of freedom that belongs to each. According to libertarians, S acts freely in doing A in circumstances C at time t in world w iff there are worlds that are identical to w up to t in which S does something other than A in circumstances C. On this libertarian conception of freedom, free actions just are actions in which one is *free to* do something else in the libertarian sense. Compatibilists do not accept this libertarian conception of freedom. As Langtry points out, there are different specific versions of compatibilism; however, they typically say something like this: S acts freely in doing A in circumstances C at time t in world w iff in doing A, S acts on S's normally acquired beliefs, desires, intentions, etc. and is not subject to certain kinds of external constraints. On compatibilist conceptions of freedom, there is no decent sense that attaches to talk about 'freedom to do something else': one might even characterise compatibilist views as those which suppose that one can act freely even though one is not *free to* do anything other than what one actually does.

I can't see that, on a compatibilist analysis of freedom, there is a relevant difference between no person's ever performing a morally wrong act, and no person's ever reading aloud the second 1000 digits in the decimal expansion of pi (even if it is in some sense an accident that God has chosen to make a world in which no person ever reads aloud the second 1000 digits in the decimal expansion of pi, and not in that same sense an accident that no person ever performs a morally wrong act). Compatibilists might worry that freedom of action is undermined if there are upstream decisions by other agents that determine our actions; but those worries would apply in equal measure to all of our actions. And if it is supposed that God's creative choices do not undermine the freedom of our actions, then it seems to me that compatibilists should say that there is no relevant difference between, say, my performing a morally right act and my reciting the first fifty digits of the decimal expansion of pi.

IV

Langtry writes:

> Suppose that a superior being offers to prolong your life for a finite number of good days, with the number of days to be chosen by you, without restriction on how many days you may pick. Rational decision theory can reasonably be required to advise you about what you should do in the foregoing situation. It is tempting to argue: For any number of days, N, that you might obtain, you would be better off if you obtained N+1 instead. So for any N you have better reason to select N+1 instead. So you would be acting more rationally if you selected N+1 than if you selected N. So you should not select N. This conclusion, however, is inconsistent with the obvious truth that you should select some number, rather than walk away from the offer. You should satisfice … (75-6)

> The foregoing problem has an ethical variant. Suppose that you are a child's guardian, and have a moral obligation to act in that child's interests. A superior being offers to prolong the child's life for a finite number of good days, with the number of days to be chosen by you. What should you do? An argument similar to the one above leads to the conclusion that, morally speaking, you should satisfice for the sake of the child.

We should not respond to the problem of how an omnipotent and omniscient being should choose when there are no prime worlds by concluding that *There are no prime worlds* entails *There is no omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good being*. Drawing that conclusion would provide no way out of the underlying ethical problem, which is raised equally by agents who are limited in knowledge and power, and who may or may not be morally perfect, but are faced with an infinite hierarchy of better and better states of affairs that they can decide will be brought about. (77-8)

If a purportedly superior being offered to prolong my life—or the life of one of my children—for a finite number of good days of my choosing, I would not believe that the being in question had the capacity to deliver on the offer. Indeed, not only would I not believe that the being in question had the capacity to deliver on the offer, I would believe that the being could not possibly have the capacity to deliver on the offer. Under standard principles of decision theory, the course of action that would maximise my—and my child's—expected utility would be for me to walk away, i.e. to go away and do something else.

Suppose that I picked a number: say, a googolplex$^{\text{googleplex}}$. (A googol is 10^{100}. A googolplex is 10^{googol}.) I believe that the universe will be more or less nothing but empty space within 10^{130} years. I believe that protons will all have decayed within about 10^{40} years. I believe that all of the stars will have burned out within about 10^{20} years. Even if I could have a googolplex$^{\text{googolplex}}$ days, those days are almost all going to be utterly miserable. But, in any case, surely I'm not the kind of creature that could have a googleplex$^{\text{googleplex}}$ of good days: after all, I'm not yet fifty, and already my eyesight, memory, strength, and flexibility are on a downhill trajectory. Etc.

Perhaps it might be said that I'm not playing fair. Am I really denying that there *could be* agents limited in knowledge and power faced with infinite hierarchies of better and better states of affairs that they are able to decide between? Set aside the point that finite agents can only represent finitely many alternatives, and so cannot be faced with decisions between infinite hierarchies of any kind. Set aside the point that finite agents can only discriminate between finitely many states of affairs, so that there cannot be infinite hierarchies of states of affairs ordered according to how good they are *for them*. I think that all possible worlds share an initial segment with the actual world, and diverge from it only as a result of the outworkings of objective chance. I also think that all possible agents are creatures much like ourselves. But, if these last two claims are correct, then, I think, it is impossible for there to be agents who are faced with infinite hierarchies to choose between. And, I think, all that we need demand of our decision theory is that it is suitable for all possible agents.

Perhaps it might be objected: even if you are right about metaphysical possibility, you can hardly deny that it is epistemically—or, better, doxastically—possible that there are agents who are faced with infinite hierarchies to choose between. And, if it is doxastically possible that there are agents who are faced with infinite hierarchies to choose between, then it is reasonable to demand that our decision theory is suitable for such agents. To which I reply: even if I'm prepared to grant that it is doxastically possible that there are agents who are faced with infinite hierarchies to choose between—i.e. even if I'm prepared to allow that one can rationally believe that it is

metaphysically possible that there are agents who are faced with infinite hierarchies to choose between—I am not prepared to grant that decision theory needs to be suitable for the decisions of such agents. Of course, if you happen to think that it is metaphysically possible that there are agents who are faced with infinite hierarchies to choose between, then you will likely want a decision theory that is suitable for the decisions of such agents—but so much the worse for you.

<p style="text-align:center">V</p>

Langtry writes:

> If the core argument concerning wrong is sound, then one would expect there to be some error in the [following] line of thought presented by Graham Oppy.
>
> 1. It is as close to certain as you please that a perfect being can choose to make a universe in which everyone always freely chooses the good. (Premise)
> 2. Necessarily, universes in which everyone always freely chooses the good are non-arbitrarily better than universes in which someone sometimes freely chooses the bad. (Premise)
> 3. Necessarily, if a perfect being chooses between options, and one option is non-arbitrarily better than the other options, then the perfect being chooses that option. (Premise)
> 4. Hence, it is as close to certain as you please that, if a perfect being makes a universe, then it makes a universe in which everyone always freely chooses the good. (From 1-3)
> 5. It is not the case that everyone always freely chooses the good. (Premise)
> 6. Hence, it is as close to certain as you please that our universe was not made by a perfect being. (From 4, 5)
>
> Indeed there is. If proposition 4 is to follow from premises 1-3, then proposition 2 must read: 'Necessarily, all universes in which everyone always freely chooses the good are non-arbitrarily better than any universes in which someone sometimes freely chooses the bad'. But this is very implausible. For example, many of the universes consisting of only one created person who always freely chooses the good will surely be inferior to many of the universes containing a large number of people who always freely choose the good along with one person who sometimes freely chooses the bad. (186n22)

I do not think that the argument is vulnerable to the objection that Langtry makes. True enough, if 2 had to be read in the way that Langtry says that it must be read, then the objection would be a good one. But, in fact, 2 should be read in the following way: *Necessarily, for any universe in which someone freely chooses the bad, there is a non-arbitrarily better universe in which everyone always freely chooses the good.* While arguing in support of this claim is beyond the scope of the present review, I can perhaps give some indication of the attractiveness of this claim.

Suppose that C is a bad choice in a universe U, freely made at a time t by agent S. Then there are possible universes U' which are otherwise identical to U up until t, in which S freely chooses the good at t. It is obvious that the U' up until t are better than

U up until t (since the U' up until t and U up until t differ only in the decision that S freely makes at time t).

Suppose that U to t and U' to t are initial universe parts that are identical up until t, but that differ at t in—and only in—the decision that S makes at t: in U the decision is bad but in U' the decision is good. It seems to me that the following claim is plausible: for each completion C_U of U to t, there is a completion $C_{U'}$ of U' to t that is otherwise at least as good C_U, but is non-arbitrarily better overall because in it S freely chooses that good rather than the bad at t.

Given the claim that I say is plausible, it is a relatively short step to 2. Suppose that U is a universe in which there are bad choices. Consider the first bad choice (made, we may suppose, by S at t). By the plausible claim, there is an initial universe part U' that is identical to t, except that, in U' S chooses the good at t, and U' has a completion $C_{U'}$ that is non-arbitrarily better than U. If there are no bad choices in $C_{U'}$, then we're done. Else, we consider the first bad choice in $C_{U'}$, and apply the same argument again. Eventually, we arrive at a universe V that terminates a chain of universes, each of which is non-arbitrarily better than its predecessor, the first element of which is U, and wherein—by construction—everyone always freely chooses the good. (This version of the argument assumes that there is only one choice at a time. That assumption can be forgone. Simultaneous free choices are independent. So we can amend the plausible claim to deal with collections of simultaneous choices rather than with single choices.)

The closest that Langtry comes to discussing the claim that I say is plausible is in the following passage:

> Sections 2.4 and 2.5 … assume that every maximal world contains many free, morally right choices and actions by rational creatures, and no morally wrong ones. This proposition is unproved, but nevertheless plausible. Its chief opponents seem to be those, such as Leibniz, who hold on *a priori* grounds that the actual world is maximal. Of course, many theologians have believed that the actual world, containing as it does Adam's sin and Christ's redemptive activity, is much better than the world that would have been actual had Adam resisted temptation. And greater-goods theodicists often assert that we are better off with various moral evils and the greater goods for which they are logically necessary than we would have been with neither the moral evils nor the goods. But each of these statements is consistent with the assumption. (60-1)

I take it that the theologians and greater-goods theodicists to whom Langtry here refers deny the claim that I have said is plausible. Consider our world up until the time t at which Adam sins. I claim that, for any completion of our world up until t in which he sins, there is a non-arbitrarily better completion of our world up until t in which Adam does not sin. Indeed, given that Adam's sin is the first sin, I claim that there is a completion of our world up until t in which Adam does not sin and in which, thereafter, everyone always freely chooses the good. But, given that everyone always freely chooses the good, there is no need for Christ's redemptive activity—and so much the better. (Think about this from the standpoint of Open Theism. Imagine God looking down on Adam, while Adam repeatedly chooses the good. Should God be sweating, mumbling to himself "Sin, dammit, sin!". I don't think so.)

VI

As I said at the beginning, this is a very fine book. Everyone who is interested in the topics that it takes up will want to read it, and to think seriously about the arguments that it defends.