

see, Plantinga has said nothing in his paper that helps us see that this challenge fails.

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PIKE AND POSSIBLE PERSONS

I WISH to thank Mr. Pike for his clear and careful discussion of my paper. It does seem to me, however, that pages 212–214 of the paper (with which what follows presupposes some familiarity) contain an explicit answer to his objection.

In the paper I define 'possible person' in two different ways. Here I shall reserve that term for the second of those ways (215–216 of my paper, or 97 of Pike's discussion), using the phrase 'whole possible person' for the first (my paper, 212; Pike, 96). And let us use the term 'perfect possible person' for any whole possible person that contains the properties "free to do what is right and free to do what is wrong" and "never freely does what is wrong."

Now, says Pike, proposition *r2*:

(*r2*) Every free possible person¹ performs at least one wrong action.

is inconsistent with the proposition that God exists. If this is true, of course, then the conjunction of propositions *b*, *r1*, and *r2* (Pike, 94, 95) is not, contrary to what I say in the paper, consistent; in that case my restatement of the Free Will Defense will be unsuccessful. But what leads Pike to suppose that *r2* is inconsistent with the proposition that God exists? Pleading difficulty in "grasping the more subtle implications of propositions in which technical and ordinary ways of speaking are mixed," Pike renders *r2* as what I shall call "*r3*":

(*r3*) Every consistent set of determinate *H* properties (meeting the qualifications of the second definition of 'possible person') that is instantiated is instantiated as a subset of a wider set of properties which contains the indeterminate property "freely-performs-at-least-one-morally-wrong-action" (101).

Now *r3* is not equivalent to *r2*. For *r2* says that every free possible person has a certain property: every free possible person is such that, if it is instantiated, its instantiation will perform at least one wrong action. Pike's *r3*, of course, does not say that.

¹ That is, possible person containing the property "free to do both right and wrong."

It says only that every *instantiated* free possible person has this property—leaving it open whether there are some *other* possible persons that do not. And this is a crucial difference for my purposes; for of course if there were some possible free persons that *lacked* that property, one might expect God to instantiate *them* (and them only), in which case there would be no moral evil.

Nevertheless, $r2$ entails $r3$; so $r2$ is inconsistent with the proposition that God exists if, as Pike claims, $r3$ is. But how does he propose to show the latter? Pike properly points out that every possible person is a subset of several whole possible persons; and every free possible person is a subset of at least one perfect possible person. When a possible person is instantiated, furthermore, its instantiation is also the instantiation of exactly one of the whole possible persons of which it is a subset. Now, says Pike,

If God were all-good he would *want* to instantiate each possible person as a subset of a larger set containing the indeterminate property "performs-only-right-actions" rather than as a subset of a larger set containing the indeterminate property "performs-one-morally-wrong-action." And if God were omnipotent-omniscient, he *could* instantiate each possible person as a subset of a wider set including the indeterminate property "freely-performs-only-right-actions" (101).

The last proposition of this quotation is where the difficulty lies. Pike apparently believes that I take this proposition (or its consequent) to be necessarily false. He attributes this mistake to my failure to see the distinction between making someone do something and creating someone who I know in advance will do something. But what I said in the paper²—and what still seems to me correct—is that this proposition is *contingent*. It is logically possible that God can instantiate every free possible person as the instantiation of a perfect possible person ("as a subset of a wider set containing the indeterminate property 'freely-performs-only-right-actions'") and also possible that He cannot. Whether He can or cannot depends upon the sorts of free choices the instantiations of these possible persons would make. To take Pike's analogy: if I am to hire Jones, who I know in advance will perform the job of his own free will, then it must be true that if Jones is left free to do the job, he will, in fact, do it. And whether this is true is up to Jones; it depends on what he freely decides to do. If I am to hire someone or other who I know in

² "It is possible, then, that God cannot instantiate any possible person containing the property *always freely does what is right*. It is also possible, of course, that He *can* instantiate some such possible persons. But *that* He can, if indeed He can, is a *contingent* truth" (214).

advance will do the job of his own free will, there must *be* someone who will do the job if he is left free to.

Similarly here. For take any free possible person P_1 . Can God instantiate P_1 as a subset of a perfect possible person—i.e., instantiate P_1 as the instantiation of a perfect possible person? Now P_1 contains the property “is free to do what is wrong.” Hence we know that there is some action A such that P_1 contains the properties “free to perform A ” and “free to refrain from performing A ”—and such that, furthermore, if P_1 were instantiated, its instantiation (let’s call it PI) would be doing something wrong in performing A . Furthermore, according to Pike and the atheologians, an omniscient God would know certain relevant facts about P_1 : He would know what sorts of free choices PI would make if P_1 were instantiated.³ He may know, for example, that if P_1 is instantiated, PI will refrain from performing A . In that case God could instantiate P_1 with no unhappy results; and in so doing, he would, as Pike suggests, be creating an actual person who he knows in advance will perform only right actions. He would be instantiating P_1 as a subset of a perfect possible person. On the other hand, it may be that what God knows is that, if P_1 is instantiated, then if PI is left free to perform A , he *will* perform A —i.e., it may be that P_1 has the indeterminate property of performing A . Then God cannot instantiate P_1 as the instantiation of a perfect possible person. For if He instantiates P_1 and allows PI to remain free with respect to A , PI will perform A , thus doing something wrong. But if God instantiates P_1 and does not allow PI to remain free with respect to A , then PI is not free with respect to A and hence not the instantiation of P_1 after all. So if P_1 has the indeterminate property of performing A , God could not instantiate it “as a subset of a wider set containing the property ‘never-freely-does-what-is-wrong’”; He could not instantiate it as the instantiation of a perfect possible person.

If P_1 , therefore, has the indeterminate property of performing A , then God cannot instantiate P_1 as the instantiation of a perfect possible person. It is possible, furthermore, that P_1 *does* have that property; hence it is possible that God cannot instantiate P_1 in that way. But notice how this affects Pike’s argument for the inconsistency of r_2 with “God exists.” One of his premises is the claim that, if God is omniscient-omnipotent, then He can instantiate any possible persons as a subset of a wider set including the property “never-freely-does-what-is-wrong.” What we have seen is that this proposition is, if true at all, *contingently* true.

³ And, presumably, on the basis of this knowledge God would decide whether or not to instantiate a given possible person.

Hence it cannot be used in the deduction of a contradiction from the conjunction of $r2$ with "God exists." So Pike's argument fails.

Furthermore, it is logically possible that *every* free possible person has an analogous indeterminate property. If so, then God cannot instantiate *any* possible person as the instantiation of a perfect possible person. (To return to Pike's analogy, his situation is then like that of the man who wishes to but can't hire someone to do a job of his own free will—for there is no one who will do the job if left free to refuse.) Yet this is surely consistent with God's creating a universe containing moral good (one, for example, that contained an impressive balance of moral good over moral evil). If so, however, then the conjunction of $r1$ with $r2$ and b is consistent; for the proposition that every free possible person has that indeterminate property, conjoined with the proposition that God creates a universe containing moral good, entails the conjunction of $r1$ with $r2$ and b . Hence it seems to me that the Free Will Defense is successful.

I used the supposition that every free possible person has the indeterminate property of performing at least one wrong action to show that "God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all good" is consistent with "God creates men who perform wrong actions." It may be worth noting that other suppositions can play this role; for example, the weaker proposition that, for every copossible set S of free possible persons all of which have the property of never freely performing any evil actions, there is a copossible set S' of free possible persons such that (1) S' contains some free possible persons with the property of performing morally wrong actions, and (2) the balance of moral good over moral evil with respect to the members of S' is greater than that with respect to S . And of course there are others as well.⁴

One final point. The last paragraph of Pike's discussion suggests that he suspects some kind of logical legerdemain in my switch from the first to the second definition of 'possible person'. He means to suggest, I take it, that God could have instantiated certain possible persons (in the *first* sense) containing the property "is-free-to-do-wrong-but-always-does-what-is-right," and he suspects that I switched to the second sense of 'possible person' just to avoid this annoying consequence. But the connection between the two definitions is clear, and no logical sleight-of-hand has occurred. For if, as is possible, all or some possible persons contain the in-

⁴ Notice that the Free Will Defender need not hold that these propositions are true or even probable; he holds only that they do not contradict the proposition that God exists.

determinate property of performing wrong actions, then there are certain whole possible persons that God cannot instantiate. Every free possible person is a subset of several whole possible persons, including at least one perfect possible person. But if a given whole possible person P_1 has the indeterminate property in question, then obviously God cannot instantiate any whole possible person that includes P_1 and does not contain the property of performing at least one wrong action—i.e., God cannot then instantiate any perfect possible person that includes P_1 .

Flew and Mackie issue the challenge: why wouldn't an omniscient, omnipotent, and all-good being instantiate perfect possible persons? The answer is: perhaps He can't.

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NOTES AND NEWS

The American Catholic Philosophical Association will hold its fortieth annual national convention at the Statler Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C., April 11–13, 1966. The general topic will be: Scholasticism in the Modern World.

Speakers and topics include: Alan Donagan, "The Scholastic Theory of Moral Law in the Modern World"; Joseph Owens, "Scholasticism—Then and Now"; Ivan Boh, "Soviet Criticism of the Traditional Form of Western Logic"; Larry Moran, "On Uncaused Events"; William Carlo, "Reductions and Emergence: Mechanism and Vitalism Revisited"; Richard Blackwell, "Approaches to the Explanation of Discovery in Science"; John Somerville, "Human Nature and History"; Raymond Nogar, "Is Human Nature Evolving?"; Gerald Smith, "An Appraisal of Scholasticism"; Anton Pegis, "Thomism 1966"; Patrick Coffey, "Personal Moral Reasoning: Some Problems and Clarifications"; Richard Becca, "The Subjectivity of the Individual Metaphysician"; Frederick Sontag, "Why Language about God Cannot Be Final"; Hilary Armstrong, "Reason and Faith"; Francis Kovach, "Aesthetic Subjectivism and Pre-Modern Philosophy." The meetings are open to the public.

An international symposium on the Technological Society was held at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California, Dec. 19–23, 1965. Thirty-five academicians from many disciplines were present, including the following philosophers: Y. Bar-Hillel (Jerusalem), C. W. Churchman (Berke-