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WHICH WORLDS COULD GOD HAVE CREATED? *

ACCORDING to Leibniz, the *actual* world must be best of all *possible* worlds. His reasoning is as follows. Before God created anything at all, he was confronted with an enormous range of choices; he could have created or actualized any of the myriads of different possible worlds. Being perfectly good, he must have chosen to create the best world he could; being omnipotent, he was able to create just any possible world he pleased. He must, therefore, have chosen the best of all possible worlds; and hence *this* world, the one he did create, must be (despite appearances) the best possible.¹

Various questions arise here; for example, is there such a thing as *the* best of all possible worlds, or even *a* best? Perhaps for any world you pick there is a better. More to present purposes, however: is it true that God, if omnipotent, could have created just any world he pleased? Suppose God is omnipotent; does it follow that each possible world is such that he could have created it? This is the question I wish to examine.

But first some preliminary matters. What is a possible world? Suppose we say that a state of affairs *S* *includes* a state of affairs *S** if it is impossible that *S* obtain and *S** fail to obtain, or if the state of affairs *S* and \bar{S}^* (where \bar{S}^* is the complement of *S**) is impossible; and *S* *precludes* *S** if it is impossible that *S* and *S** both obtain, i.e., if *S* and *S** is an impossible state of affairs. Then I shall say that a state of affairs *S* is *maximal* if, for every state of *S**, *S* includes *S** or *S* precludes *S**; and a possible world is a maximal possible state

* To be presented in an APA symposium on God and Possible Worlds, December 29, 1973; commentators will be Robert Merrihew Adams and William L. Rowe; see this JOURNAL, this issue, pp. 552-554 and 554-555, respectively.

Much of the material for this paper is drawn from chapter ix of my *The Nature of Necessity* (New York: Oxford, forthcoming).

¹ *Theodicy*, Part One, paragraphs 7-9.

of affairs. It is evident that exactly one possible world is *actual*, or *obtains*; for ease of reference suppose we name the actual world 'α'. 'α' is thus a proper name of the actual world. Furthermore, propositions will be true or false in possible worlds; *P* is true in a world *W* if it is impossible that *W* be actual and *P* be false: more loosely, *P* is true in *W* if *P* would have been true had *W* been actual. The *book* on a possible world *W* is the set of propositions true in *W*. Like possible worlds, books have a maximality property; a book is a maximal possible set of propositions. And finally an object—Paul M. Zwier, for example—will exist and have properties in various different worlds: *x* exists in *W* if and only if *x* would have existed had *W* been actual—if and only if, that is, *W* includes *x*'s existence. Similarly, *x* has a property *P* in *W* if and only if *W* includes *x*'s having *P*.²

Secondly, what is meant by saying God is omnipotent? There are notorious difficulties in defining the notion of omnipotence.³ In what follows I shall take it for granted that God's being omnipotent does not imply that he can create or actualize states of affairs such that his actualizing them is logically impossible; that is, God's being omnipotent at *t* does not imply that at *t* he can actualize a state of affairs *S* such that there is no possible world in which he actualizes *S* at *t*. For the rest, what I say will depend only on utterly uncontroversial facets of the notion of omnipotence.

A final preliminary: we speak of God as *creating* the world; yet if it is α of which we speak, what we say is false. For a thing is created only if there is a time before which it does not exist; and this is patently false of α, as it is of any state of affairs. What God has created are the heavens and the earth and all that they contain; he has not created himself, or numbers, propositions, properties, or states of affairs: these have no beginnings. We can say, however, that God *actualizes* states of affairs; his creative activity results in their being or becoming actual. God has *created* Socrates, but *actualized* the state of affairs consisting in the latter's existence. And God is *actualizing* but not *creating* α.

Furthermore, although we may properly say that God actualizes α, it does not follow that he actualizes every state of affairs the latter includes. He does not, as previously mentioned, actualize his own existence; that is to say, he does not create himself. Nor does he

² For fuller discussion of these matters, see my "World and Essence," *Philosophical Review*, LXXIX, 4 (October 1970): 461–492, and chapter iv of *The Nature of Necessity*.

³ See my *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1967), p. 169–170, and P. T. Geach, "Omnipotence," *Philosophy*, XLVIII, 183 (January 1973): 7–20.

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

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

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

is true.

Obviously it isn't, if God is or could be both omnipotent and a contingent being. For if he is a contingent being, then there are worlds in which he does not exist; and clearly he could not have actualized any of *these* worlds. Clearly the only worlds within God's power to actualize are those which include his existence. So suppose

we restrict our attention to these worlds. Is the following true?—that

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

Still more distinctions are needed. In particular, we must investigate the idea of *freedom*. If a person is free with respect to an action *A* at a time *t*, then at *t* it is within his power to perform *A* and within his power to refrain from *A*. Causal laws and antecedent conditions determine neither that he performs *A* at *t* nor that he refrains from so doing. That is, *x* is free with respect to *A* at *t* only if there is a causally possible world *W** such that it shares its initial segment up to *t* with the actual world, and such that *x* performs *A* in the actual world but refrains from *A* in *W**, or vice versa. Like God himself, a free creature is a center of creative activity. The freedom of such creatures will no doubt be *limited* by causal laws and antecedent conditions. They won't be free to do just anything; even if I am free, I am not free to run a mile in two minutes. Of course my freedom is also *enhanced* by causal laws; it is only by virtue of such laws that I am free to build a house or walk on the surface of the earth. But if I am free with respect to an action *A*, then causal laws and antecedent conditions determine neither that I take *A* nor that I refrain.

More broadly, if I am free with respect to an action *A*, then God does not *bring it about* or *cause it to be the case* either that I perform or that I refrain from this action; neither through the laws he establishes, nor by direct intervention, nor in any other way. For if *he brings it about* or *causes it to be the case* that I take *A*, then I am not free to *refrain* from *A*, in which case I am not free with respect to *A*. Although of course God may cause it to be the case that I *am* free with respect to *A*, he cannot cause it to be the case either that I freely take or that I freely refrain from this action—and this though he is omnipotent.⁴ But then it follows that there are plenty of contingent states of affairs such that it is not within the power of God to bring about their actuality, or cause them to be actual. He cannot cause it to be the case that I freely refrain from some action; for if he does so, he causes it to be the case that I refrain from the action, in which case I do not do so *freely*.

Now I have been using 'brings it about that' as a rough synonym for 'causes it to be the case that'. Suppose we take the term 'actualize'

⁴ Just to simplify matters I shall henceforth take it for granted that *if God exists, he is omnipotent* is a necessary truth.

the same way. Then God can actualize a given state of affairs *S* only if he can cause it to be the case that *S*, cause *S* to be actual. And then there will be many contingent states of affairs *S* such that there is no time at which God can actualize *S*. But we said above that

- (3) God could have actualized a given possible world *W* if and only if,
for every contingent state of affairs *S* that *W* includes, there is a
time at which God can actualize *S*

Given just the possibility that there are created free agents, it follows that there are any number of possible worlds including God's existence and *also* including a contingent state of affairs *S* such that there is no time at which God can actualize *S*. Hence [contrary to (2)] there are any number of possible worlds that God could *not* have actualized, even though they include his existence: all those containing a state of affairs consisting in some creature's freely taking or refraining from some action. Whether *there are* free creatures is not, of course, at issue; the question is only whether it is *possible* that there be such creatures; and surely it is. So (2) is false.

But perhaps Leibniz never meant to affirm it. His discussion is set in the context of the traditional problem of evil. He is concerned with an objection to theistic belief: the objection that the existence of evil is incompatible with the existence of an all-good, omnipotent God. The objector claims that God, if all-good, would have actualized the best world he could; and, if omnipotent, could have actualized just any world he wished to. Now suppose he concedes that not even God can cause it to be the case that I freely refrain from *A*. Even so, claims the objector, God *can* create me in some set *S* of circumstances and cause me to be free with respect to *A*. He may also know, furthermore, that *if* he creates me and causes me to be free in these circumstances, I will refrain from *A*. If so, there is a state of affairs he can actualize, cause to be actual, such that if he does so, then I'll freely refrain from *A*. In a broader sense of 'bring about', therefore he *can* (under these circumstances) bring it about that I freely refrain from *A*. In the narrower sense there are many contingent states of affairs he cannot bring about; what is relevant to the objector's claim and Leibniz's reply, however, is not this narrow sense, but the broader one. For what is really at issue is whether for each possible world there are some actions God could have taken such that, if he *had*, then that world would have been actual.

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

- (4) If God brings it about that I refrain from *A*, then I don't *freely*
refrain from *A*

expresses a necessary truth. You are free with respect to an action only if God does not bring it about or cause it to be the case that you refrain from *A*. But now suppose God knows that if he creates you free with respect to *A* in some set *S* of circumstances, you will refrain from *A*; suppose further that he brings it about (narrow sense) that you *are* free with respect to *A* in *S*; and suppose finally that you do in fact freely refrain from *A*. Then in a broader sense of 'bring about' we could properly say that God has brought it about that you freely refrain from *A*. We must make a corresponding distinction, then, between a stronger and a weaker sense of 'actualize'. In the stronger sense, God can actualize only what he can *cause* to be actual; in that sense he cannot actualize any state of affairs including the existence of creatures who freely take some action *A*. But we have no reason for supposing that the same holds for *weak* actualization. And what the objector requires for his argument, presumably, is not that every possible world (including the existence of God) is one God could have actualized in the *strong* sense; weak actualization is enough for his purposes. What is at issue is not the question whether each world is such that God could have *strongly* actualized it, but (roughly) whether for each world *W* there is something he could have done—some series of actions he could have taken—such that if he had, *W* would have been actual. For, the objector claims, if God is all good, he would have secured the actuality of the best world *W* he could have; that *W* is a world he could not strongly actualize is irrelevant even if true.

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

Perhaps we can best proceed by way of an example. Curley Smith, the mayor of Boston, is opposed to the proposed freeway route. His objection is relatively trivial; the route would require destruction of the Old North Church along with some other antiquated and structurally unsound buildings. Lewis K. Smedes, the Director of Highways, offers him a bribe of \$35,000 to drop his opposition. Unwilling to break with the fine old traditions of Bay State politics, Curley accepts: whereupon Smedes spends a sleepless night wondering whether he could have had Curley for \$20,000. That is to say, Smedes wonders whether

- (5) If Curley had been offered a bribe of \$20,000, he would have accepted it

Now (5), of course, is a *counterfactual conditional*, a category widely thought to present profound problems of understanding. How shall we interpret (5)? Robert Stalnaker⁵ suggests the following explanation of a counterfactual $A \rightarrow B$. Suppose A is possible, and consider those possible worlds which include it. One of the worlds—call it W —will be *more similar* to the actual world α than any other; and $A \rightarrow B$ is true if and only if B holds in W . So

- (6) A counterfactual $A \rightarrow B$ is true just in case either A is impossible or B holds in the closest world in which A holds.

This intriguing proposal provokes questions. In the first place, the required notion of similarity is in many respects problematic. What does it mean to say that one possible world is more similar to α than another? In this context, is there such a thing as similarity *überhaupt*, or should we speak only of similarity in given respects? This is a good question; we have no time to linger over it, but let us pause just long enough to note that we do seem to have an intuitive grasp of this notion—the notion of similarity between states of affairs. Secondly, take any false but possible proposition P and any proposition Q . On the proposal in question, either *if P then Q* or *if P then not- Q* will be true. This may seem a bit strong: *if I had had red hair, Napoleon would not have lost the Battle of Waterloo* is obviously false; but *if I had had red hair, Napoleon would have lost the Battle of Waterloo* doesn't seem much better. Indeed, take any such proposition P ; on this proposal there must be some entire possible world W such that the counterfactual *if P had been true then W would have obtained* is true. But is it not unduly extravagant to hold that there is some possible world W such that, if I had been taller or shorter than I am, then W would have obtained? Is there a world W such that, if α had not been actual, W would have been? Is there reason to believe there is a world including A that is uniquely closest to α ? Perhaps several worlds include A , each such that none including it is closer; or perhaps for any world including A , there is a closer world that also includes it. Such considerations lead David Lewis⁶ to reject (6) in favor of the more cautious

- (7) A counterfactual $A \rightarrow B$ is true if and only if either A is impossible or some world W in which A and B hold is more similar to the actual world than any world in which A and \bar{B} hold

⁵ "A Theory of Conditionals," in N. Rescher, *Studies in Logical Theory*, *American Philosophical Quarterly* supplementary monograph, 1968, p. 98.

⁶ *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), ch. 1, sec. 1.3.

We may find (6) and (7) problematic in some dimensions; but at the least they help us think about and evaluate forms of argument involving counterfactuals.

Now suppose we return to our question: Was it within the power of God to actualize just any world including his existence? Could he have actualized just any such world? Among these there is a world W in which Curley is offered a bribe of \$20,000, is free to accept or reject it, and freely accepts it. In W , furthermore, God strongly actualizes various states of affairs. Let T be the largest of these; that is, T is a state of affairs that God strongly actualizes in W and that includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W . Now $GT \rightarrow A$, i.e.,

- (8) If God had strongly actualized T , Curley would have freely accepted the bribe

is either true or false. Suppose it is true. GT , of course, does not include A ; for God cannot strongly actualize Curley's *freely* accepting the bribe. There is another possible world W^* , therefore, in which God strongly actualizes the very same states of affairs as in W , and in which Curley is offered a bribe of \$20,000 but freely refuses it. In W^* (as in W) T is the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes. And W^* is a world God could not have actualized.

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

- (9) $GC^* \rightarrow W^*$

But W^* includes GT ; so

- (10) $GC^* \rightarrow GT$

Now either GC^* is included in W^* or it isn't. If it isn't, then it is precluded by W^* , in which case if God had actualized C^* , W^* would not have been actual: i.e.,

- (11) $GC^* \rightarrow \overline{W^*}$

But (9) and (11) are both true only if GC^* is impossible, in which case God could not have actualized C^* . So W^* includes GC^* . T , we recall, is the largest state of affairs God actualizes in W^* ; so T includes C^* and GT includes GC^* . From this together with (8) it follows that

- (12) $GC^* \& GT \rightarrow A$

But from (10) and (12) it follows that

$$(13) GC^* \rightarrow A^7$$

But of course A precludes W^* , since in W^* Curley freely rejects the bribe. Hence

$$(14) GC \rightarrow \overline{W}^*.$$

But then C^* is *not* such that if God had strongly actualized it, W^* would have been actual—unless GC^* is impossible, in which case, again, C^* is not such that God could have actualized it. So if (8) is true, then God could not have actualized W^* .

Suppose, therefore, that (8) is false, i.e., suppose

$$(15) \sim(GT \rightarrow A).$$

Then God could not have actualized W . For suppose he could have. It follows, again, that there is a state of affairs C such that God could have strongly actualized C and such that if he had, W would have been actual:

$$(16) GC \rightarrow W.$$

Now if (16) is true, then the same must be said for either

$$(17) GC \& GT \rightarrow W$$

or

$$(18) GC \& \overline{GT} \rightarrow W.^8$$

But the fact is neither (17) nor (18) is true. For consider (18). Either GC includes GT or not: suppose it does. T is the largest state of affairs God actualizes in W ; so T includes C and GT includes GC . So if GC includes GT , then GC is equivalent to GT , in which case (16) is true if and only if

$$(19) GT \rightarrow W$$

⁷ The argument form involved here is

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

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

⁸ Again, the argument form involved here, namely

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

is intuitively valid on both Lewis and Stalnaker semantics.

is. But from (15) and the fact that W includes A it follows that (19) is false. So GC does not include GT ; so $GC \& \overline{GT}$ is possible. But W includes GT ; hence \overline{GT} includes \overline{W} ; hence $GC \& \overline{GT}$ includes \overline{W} ; and from this together with the possibility of $GC \& \overline{GT}$ it follows that (18) is false. The same goes for (17): since GT includes GC , (17) is true if and only if (19) is; but (since W includes A) if (15) is true, (19) is not. So if (15) is true, neither (17) nor (18) is, in which case God could not have actualized W .

By way of summary, then: (8) is either true or false; either way, there are possible worlds God could not have actualized; so there are possible worlds God could not have actualized.

Obviously this fact is significant with respect to the traditional problem of evil that Leibniz takes up in the *Theodicy*. He agrees with the objector in holding that God, if omnipotent, could have created just any possible world, and, if all good, would have created the best world he could. So if there is an all-good omnipotent God, he would have created the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz then concludes that the actual world is in fact the best of all possible worlds; the objector takes the denial of Leibniz's conclusion as a premise and concludes that there is no all-good omnipotent God. They agree, of course, on

- (20) If God is omnipotent, he could have created just any possible world

What we have thus far seen is that (20)—call it “Leibniz's lapse”—is false.

And seeing that (20) is false enables us to improve on Leibniz's response to the objector. The latter claims that

- (21) God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all-good

is inconsistent with

- (22) Evil exists

One way to show him wrong is to produce a proposition P that is consistent with (21) and together with the latter entails (22). With this end in mind, suppose we begin by distinguishing *moral* from *natural* evil: the former is evil resulting from the free activity of human beings, and the latter is any other kind of evil; we make a similar distinction between moral good and natural good. Further, an action A is *morally significant* for a person at a time t if his taking or performing A at t is morally right and his not performing

it wrong, or vice versa. And a person is *significantly free* at *t* if at *t* he is free with respect to an action that is morally significant for him.

Now suppose we return to Curley and his venality. Obviously, significant freedom does not guarantee or entail wrongdoing; so there are possible worlds in which God exists and Curley is significantly free but never goes wrong. But consider *W*, any one of these worlds. Perhaps the sad truth about Curley is this: there is a state of affairs *T* such that God strongly actualizes *T* in *W*, and *T* includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in *W*. Furthermore, Curley is significantly free in *W*; there are some actions that are morally significant for him in *W* and with respect to which he is free in *W*. Among these actions, however, there is at least one—call it *A*—such that

- (23) If God had actualized *T*, Curley would have gone wrong with respect to *A*.

[Notice of course, that (23) is not true *in W*; my claim, rather, is that it may be true *in fact*, in the actual world.] But then it follows (by argument paralleling that on pp. 546–548 above) that it was not in God's power to actualize *W*. Now *W* was just any of the worlds in which Curley is significantly free but always does only what is right. It therefore follows that it was not within God's power to actualize a world in which Curley produces moral good but no moral evil. Every world God can actualize and in which Curley is significantly free, is a world in which Curley takes at least one wrong action.

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

If it *is* true, however, Curley is pretty clearly in serious trouble.

I shall say that he suffers from *transworld depravity*.⁹ By way of explicit definition:

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

What is important about the idea of transworld depravity is that, if a person suffers from it, then it wasn't within God's power to actualize any world in which that person is significantly free but does no wrong—that is, a world in which he produces moral good but no moral evil. Now suppose we consider Curley's *essence*—a property that, like *being identical with Curley*, is essential to Curley and entails all his essential properties.¹⁰ Among these are his *world-indexed* properties¹¹: such properties as *being venal in α* or (for a specific world *W*) *being six feet tall at the age of 14 in W*. For each property *P* and world *W*, either Curley's essence entails the world-indexed property *has P in W* or else it entails the complement of that property.¹¹ Recalling that Curley suffers from transworld depravity, we note the following interesting fact about Curley's essence. Take those worlds *W* such that *is significantly free in W* and *never does what is wrong in W* are entailed by Curley's essence. Each of these worlds has an important property, if Curley suffers from transworld depravity: each is such that God could not have actualized it. For suppose *W** is some world such that Curley's essence entails the property *is significantly free but never does what is wrong in W**. That is, *W** is a world in which Curley is significantly free but always does what is right. But of course Curley suffers from transworld depravity. And this, as we have seen, means that God could not have actualized *W**. So if Curley suffers from transworld depravity, then God could not have actualized any world *W* such that Curley's essence entails the properties *is significantly free in W* and *always does what is right in W*.

We can use this connection between Curley's transworld depravity

⁹ I leave as homework the problem of comparing transworld depravity with what Calvinists call "total depravity."

¹⁰ For further explanation of essences, see "World and Essence," section II.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, section IV.

and his essence as the basis for a definition of transworld depravity as applied to essences rather than persons. We should note first that, if *E* is a person's essence, then he is the instantiation or exemplification of *E*; he is the thing that has *E*. To instantiate an essence, God creates a person who has that essence; and in creating a person he causes an essence to be instantiated. Now we can say that

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

(1) God strongly actualizes *T* in *W* and *T* includes every state of affairs God strongly actualizes in *W*,

(2) *A* is morally significant for *E*'s instantiation in *W*,

and

(3) If God had strongly actualized *T*, *E*'s instantiation would have gone wrong with respect to *A*.

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

Now the interesting fact here is this: It is clearly possible that every creaturely essence¹² suffers from transworld depravity. But suppose this is true. God can create a world containing moral good only by creating significantly free persons. And, since every person is the instantiation of an essence, he can create significantly free persons only by instantiating some creaturely essences. But if every such essence suffers from transworld depravity, then no matter which essences God instantiated, the resulting persons, if free with respect to morally significant actions, would always perform at least some wrong actions. If every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity, then it was beyond the power of God himself to create a

¹² That is, every essence entailing *is created by God*.

world containing moral good but no moral evil. Under these conditions God could have created a world containing no moral evil only by creating a world without significantly free persons. But it is possible that every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity; so it's possible that God could not have created a world containing moral good but no moral evil.

And now it is a simple matter to specify the proposition *P* we were looking for on page 548: a proposition whose conjunction with

(21) God is omnipotent, omniscient, and all good

is consistent and entails

(22) There is evil

Obviously,

(26) God creates a world containing moral good, and every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity

will do the trick.

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MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE *

IN controversy with Dominicans, Jesuit theologians have held that God has what they call "middle knowledge." By this they mean that God knows, not just what is actual and what is merely possible, but also which of the various possible free actions *would* be performed by each possible free creature in any possible situation. Consider:

(1) If David stayed in Keilah, Saul would besiege the city.

(See I Sam. 23:1-14.) It is claimed both that God knows with certainty that (1) is true and that Saul's action would be free in a sense that is inconsistent with any sort of determinism.

Plantinga seems to agree that God has such knowledge. But I do not think that is possible, because I cannot understand what it would be for such counterfactuals as (1) to be determinately true, given the Jesuits' and Plantinga's assumptions about free will. (1) cannot be true by corresponding with an actual siege of Keilah by

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