

A BETTER SOLUTION TO THE GENERAL PROBLEM OF CREATION

JEREMY W. SKRZYPEK

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Abstract. It is often suggested that, since the state of affairs in which God creates a good universe is better than the state of affairs in which He creates nothing, a perfectly good God would have to create that good universe. Making use of recent work by Christine Korgaard on the relational nature of the good, I argue that the state of affairs in which God creates is actually not better, due to the fact that it is not better for anyone or anything in particular. Hence, even a perfectly good God would not be compelled to create a good universe.

I. INTRODUCTION

What sorts of alternative possibilities, if any, were available to God in His initial decision to create the universe? Could He have chosen to create some other universe instead, populated by different kinds of creatures, or one with similar creatures in a different arrangement? Or was it necessary that He create the particular universe that He did in exactly the way that He did create it? Could He have chosen to refrain from creating altogether? Or was it necessary that He create at least one universe (even if it was not necessary that He create any universe in particular)? Following Norman Kretzmann, let us refer to the set of questions pertaining to God's creation of some particu-

lar universe as the “Particular Problem of Creation” and the set of questions pertaining to God’s creation of any universe at all as the “General Problem of Creation” (Kretzmann (1990a, 1990b)).

In this paper I will focus primarily on the General Problem of Creation. I will argue that it is plausible to suppose that God did have alternative possibilities in His initial decision to create, such that He could have refrained from creating altogether. It is often suggested that, since the state of affairs in which God creates a good universe is, in some relevant sense, *better* than the state of affairs in which He creates nothing, a perfectly good God would *have* to create at least that good universe. Making use of recent work by Christine Korsgaard on the relational nature of the good,¹ I will argue that the state of affairs in which God creates might not actually be better than the state of affairs in which He does not, due to the fact that it is not better *for* anyone or anything in particular. And if this is the only way that some state of affairs *can* be better, then there is nothing about God’s perfect goodness that would compel Him to actualize that state of affairs. I will end by responding to two important objections to my “better” solution to the General Problem of Creation: first, that my solution eliminates any reason that God could have for creating, and, second, that it gives God *too much* freedom in His initial decision to create.

II. TWO RELATED ARGUMENTS FOR NECESSITARIANISM

Consider first the following argument for the conclusion that it was necessary that God create the particular universe that He did in exactly the way that He did create it:

- (1) To actualize some possible state of affairs that is less good than some other possible state of affairs is to perform a less than perfectly good action.

¹ See Korsgaard (2014, 2013, 2011). It should be noted that Korsgaard is only the most recent philosopher to defend this sort of view. See also: Kraut (2011, 2009); Foot (2003, 1985). The view probably goes back even as far as Aristotle. See, for instance, his rejection of the Platonic notion of the good in Chapter Six of Book I of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Broadie and Rowe (2002, 98-100)). Here I will be treating the work of Korsgaard as representative of this sort of view.

- (2) There is a uniquely best possible state of affairs.
- (3) God cannot perform a less than perfectly good action.
- (4) Therefore, God cannot actualize any possible state of affairs that is not the uniquely best possible state of affairs. In other words, it was necessary that God actualize the uniquely best state of affairs.²

Call this argument the *Particular Necessitarian Argument*. Once we formulate the problem this way then it becomes clear that in order to avoid a necessitarian response to the Particular Problem of Creation, one would have to defend at least one of three claims: (i) that God could actualize some other state of affairs besides the best possible state of affairs without thereby surrendering His perfect goodness, (ii) that it is not even possible for there to be a uniquely best possible state of affairs (and so God cannot be faulted for not having actualized it), or (iii) that God can perform less than perfectly good actions (and so He is not absolutely perfect). Clearly one can hold (iii) only if one is willing to abandon the traditional Anselmian conception of God as that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought. If we stick to the traditional perfect-being conception of God, then, we would have to defend (i) or (ii). One notable defender of (i) is Robert Adams, who argues in his (1972) that God would not be failing to meet any of his moral obligations if He were to actualize a state of affairs that is less than the best. However, as William Rowe points out in his critique of Adams's paper, there might be other, non-moral obligations that would arise for an absolutely perfect being due to His perfect goodness (Rowe 2004, Chapter Five). (After all, the first premise of the Particular Necessitarian Argument above does not explicitly refer to any moral obligations.)

Most of the literature on the problem of divine freedom and creation revolves around something like (ii). In his (2004, Chapter Six), Rowe considers nine different attempts to defend this claim that have been proposed. Rowe deems each of these strategies unsuccessful for various reasons, but a common failing for this approach is that succumbs to something Rowe calls "Principle B":

2 For a similar, Leibnizian version of this argument, see Rowe (2004, 2).

B. If an omniscient being creates a world when there is a better world that it could have created, then it is possible that there exists a being morally better than it. (Rowe 2004, 91)

We do not need to go into all of the details of Rowe's argument here, but the general idea is that if there is no uniquely best possible state of affairs, but, rather, there is an infinite series of successively better possible states of affairs, then any state of affairs that God actualizes will be less good than some other possible state of affairs that He could have actualized. Given something like the first premise of the Particular Necessitarian Argument above, we get the conclusion that the most perfect being possible (God) cannot exist and also have actualized any particular state of affairs.³

Why introduce all of this material on the Particular Problem of Creation? Two reasons. First, I think that an argument very similar in structure to the Particular Necessitarian Argument is what is driving the intuition that God would be necessitated to create at least one good universe. And, as a result, by reflecting on the sorts of moves that are available to someone who wants to reject the necessitarian response to the Particular Problem of Creation, we will be able to see what sorts of similar moves are available to someone who wants to reject a necessitarian response to the General Problem of Creation.

Consider, then, the following argument for the conclusion that it was necessary that God create at least one good universe:

(1') To actualize some possible state of affairs that is less good than some other possible state of affairs when one could have actualized the better state of affairs is to perform an action that is less good than an action that one could have performed.

(2') Any possible state of affairs that contains both God and a minimally good universe is better than the state of affairs that contains only God.

(3') God cannot perform any action that is less good than an action that He could have performed.

³ See Rowe (2004, 91). For a more recent defense of something like (ii), see Timpe (2013, 114-118).

(4') Therefore, God cannot actualize the possible state of affairs that contains only God. In other words, it was necessary that God actualize a possible state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe.

Call this the *General Necessitarian Argument*. Similar to the conclusion of the Particular Necessitarian Argument, the conclusion of the General Necessitarian Argument is built on three premises: one concerning the sorts of restrictions that are placed on God by virtue of his absolute perfection (premise 3'), one concerning the sorts of actions that would count as deficient were they to be performed by some agent (premise 1'), and one outlining a very minimal principle for ranking possible states of affairs (premise 2'). Accordingly, in order to resist a necessitarian response to the General Problem of Creation, one will have to defend at least one of three claims: (i') that God could actualize some state of affairs that is less good than some other state of affairs that He could have actualized without thereby surrendering His perfect goodness, (ii') that no state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe is better than the state of affairs that contains only God (and so God cannot be necessitated by his perfect goodness to actualize any of these states of affairs), or (iii') that God can perform some action that is less good than an action that He could have performed.

Once again, the goal will be to try to preserve alternative possibilities in God's initial decision to create without having to abandon the traditional Anselmian conception of God. As a result, (iii') is out, and we are left with either (i') or (ii'). What is interesting about the General Necessitarian Argument in particular is that its second premise does not commit its proponent to the controversial thesis that there is a uniquely best possible state of affairs. All that is required is the seemingly plausible assumption that the state of affairs in which God creates a good universe is, in *some* relevant sense, better than the state of affairs in which He creates nothing at all. Similarly, premise 1' does not place any restrictions on moral agents that are based solely on some external ideal of perfection. Rather, it holds agents to a standard that is sensitive to their own abilities. And so it should be clear that the General Necessitarian Argument is, *prima facie*, a much more formidable argument than the Particular Necessitarian Argument.

If claim (ii) from the discussion of the Particular Necessitarian Argument above is correct, then perhaps God necessarily actualizes some state of affairs that is less good than another state of affairs that He could have actualized. We might, then, see this as a reason to reject the second half of premise 1' of the General Necessitarian Argument – that to do so would be to perform an action that is less good than an action that one could have performed. This would be to defend (i'). I take it that this is the strategy proposed by Sandra Menssen and Thomas Sullivan in their (1995). However, leaving premise 2' intact might still allow Rowe's Principle B Argument to go through, and so preclude the existence of the very entity whose freedom one is trying to preserve! A more promising, though no less controversial, strategy, I think, is to defend (ii'). For as soon as one admits that a state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe is better than the state of affairs containing only God, I think one is going to be very hard-pressed to explain how God can refrain from actualizing it. But if the former state of affairs is not, in any relevant sense, better than the latter, then it seems that there is nothing about God's perfect goodness that necessitates Him to actualize it. In the next section of the paper, I explain how this strategy might work.

III. A "BETTER" SOLUTION

Much of the discussion surrounding the General Problem of Creation assumes that the state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe would be better than the state of affairs containing only God. For instance, in the context of his discussion of Menssen and Sullivan's proposed solution, Rowe explains that,

We are supposing that God is confronted with an infinite number of different choices. Each of these choices, save the first, consists in his creating a world. The second choice is to create a minimally good world, W1. The third choice is to create a slightly better world, W2. The fourth choice is to create a world (W3) that is slightly better than W2, etc., etc. The first choice is simply the choice not to create any world at all, even the least good world, W1. And we will suppose with our authors [Menssen and Sullivan] that the first choice is not a bad choice, although it is not clear from anything they say that there is any reason to believe that it itself is a good choice. But *whether that be so or not, it is clear both that the choice to create Wn is a better choice than*

the choice to create W_{n-1}, and therefore, so it seems, that the choice to create W₁ is a better choice than the choice to create no world at all. (Rowe 2004, 129-130, emphasis added)

Adams, too, who, as we saw, wants to preserve alternative possibilities for God in at least His decision to create some particular universe, casually remarks in a footnote at the beginning of his paper that “the existence of no created world at all would surely be a less excellent state of affairs than the existence of some of the worlds that God could have created” (Adams 1972, 317). And even Menssen and Sullivan themselves reject the possibility that the state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe might not be better than the state of affairs containing only God:

It is often said that one can't add to the infinite, and since God is infinite there is no greater value in a W* world than in the state of affairs that consists of God alone...this 'standard' Thomistic approach - which may not have been Aquinas's approach - makes the divine creative action out to be nugatory, and we don't think that it is nugatory. (Menssen and Sullivan 1995, 324)

But what reason is there to think that 2' is true? Is the former state of affairs better because it contains more good things? Is it better because there is more happiness in a state of affairs that contains more happy things? In what follows, I argue that, if we accept what I will refer to as “Korsgaard's Thesis”, any attempt to defend 2' is fundamentally misguided. As I will explain below, according to Korsgaard's account of the nature of “the good”, the former state of affairs cannot, in any relevant sense, be considered better than the latter, despite our initial intuitions otherwise. Let us, then, consider Korsgaard's account.

According to Korsgaard, “someone's being in a condition of having a good, or something's being good for someone, is prior to the good itself” (Korsgaard 2014, 412). What this means is that “there are good and bad states of affairs *because* there exist in the world beings *for* whom things can be good or bad in a specific way” (Korsgaard 2013, 13). This seemingly innocuous claim about the nature of goodness has surprising repercussions for the present debate. For as Korsgaard goes on to explain,

what I am suggesting here is that there is a conceptual problem with the idea of what 'does the most good.' If it seems plausible that everything that is good or bad is so in virtue of being good or bad for someone (some person or animal), then it is also plausible that the goodness or badness of experi-

ences—or of anything else for that matter—is tethered to the subjects *for whom* they are good or bad. In that case, it may be that the goods of different subjects can't be added at all: what's good for me plus what's good for you isn't *better*, because there is no one *for whom* it is better. (Korsgaard 2011, 95-96)

Taking these remarks as representative of her considered view, let us formulate *Korsgaard's Thesis* as follows:

Korsgaard's Thesis: For any state of affairs, x , and for any state of affairs y , x is a better state of affairs than y only if (a) there is some entity z , which is common to both x and y , and (b) there is something about x such that x is a better state of affairs for z than y is.

If Korsgaard's Thesis is correct, consider what this would mean for the General Problem of Creation. In order to say that the state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe is better than the state of affairs containing only God, it would have to be the case (a) that there is some entity that is common to both states of affairs and (b) that there is something about the state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe such that it is better than the state of affairs containing only God for that entity. With regard to condition (a), there is indeed an entity that is common to both states of affairs. But, importantly, there is also only one such entity: God Himself. And so if the state of affairs in which God creates is really better than the state of affairs in which He does not, then it must be the case that the former is better *for God*, given Korsgaard's Thesis.

However, if God really is an absolutely perfect being, then He cannot be perfected by the existence of any further thing. God cannot be made better by creating anything, since His perfect goodness is supposed to be entirely self-sufficient. As Thomas Aquinas puts it, "God's goodness is the cause of things, not as though by natural necessity, because the Divine goodness does not depend on creatures; but by his free-will. Wherefore...without prejudice to His goodness, He might not have produced things into existence" (Aquinas 1981, I, Q. 104, A. 3, ad. 2). And so, unless we abandon the Anselmian conception of God as the most perfect being possible, God cannot be said to gain anything by creating. The state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe, then, fails to meet condition (b), which is required for some state of affairs to count as better than some other. As a result, Korsgaard's

Thesis, paired with the traditional Anselmian conception of God, gives us grounds for saying that the state of affairs containing both God and at least one good universe is actually not better than the state of affairs containing only God.

Interestingly enough, Korsgaard herself considers this sort of implication for her view. In her treatment of the issue, she responds to the sort of worry introduced by our initial intuitions that some created universe is better than no universe at all:

Isn't it better if the world is full of happy people and animals, because it is better *for* those people and animals? ... The trouble with... [this claim]— that the world is better if it is full of happy people and animals because it is better for those people and animals — is that it is unclear that the world would be the worse for *those* people and animals, if they did not exist at all. Are all of the people and animals who never existed, and never will, in an unfortunate condition? Is that a bad thing for them? What a miserable place the world must be, if that is the case! But surely, you will reply, it is better if the world is full of happy people and animals than of miserable ones? But for whom is it better? If we are comparing two worlds containing the *same* inhabitants, in one of which those inhabitants are miserable and in one of which they are happy, the second world is clearly better for *them*. But suppose we are not comparing two worlds with the same inhabitants. If you are miserable, would it be better *for you* if you were replaced by someone who is not? (Korsgaard 2014, 406)

I propose, then, that a promising way of avoiding the necessitarian conclusion of the General Necessitarian Argument is to defend precisely this: not (i'), but (ii'), and so thereby reject premise 2'.⁴

4 Menssen and Sullivan also briefly consider this sort of solution to the General Necessitarian Argument before settling on their own rejection of premise 1'. In their article, they write, "If there were a better world, it seems either it would have to be better *for* someone, or better *simpliciter*. But who could it be better for? Not God, and not the creatures that can't appreciate it. And if it is claimed to be better *simpliciter*, then in the first place one needs to give an account of what the claim means (how can something be "better," but not "better for something or someone?")" (Menssen and Sullivan (1995, 336)). Though Menssen and Sullivan ultimately abandon this strategy later on in their paper, their reasons for doing so are unclear. The quotation from Menssen and Sullivan above would seem to suggest that their main worry for this strategy is that it would make "the divine creative action out to be nugatory". But on my proposed account, God's creative action can still result in something good, even if that result cannot be said to be better than that of having not created anything at all. And so I do not think it makes God's creative action out to be nugatory. I consider this issue in more detail below.

IV. CREATING FOR NO REASON?

The first objection to my proposed solution to the General Problem of Creation that I will consider here pertains to the rationality of God's decision to create, given Korsgaard's Thesis. If, as I have proposed, the state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe is not, in any relevant sense, better than the state of affairs that contains only God, what reason could God possibly have for actualizing the latter rather than the former? In other words, what can explain the fact that God decided to actualize the state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe (assuming that that is what He did) rather than actualizing the state of affairs that contains only God? It seems that all of the reasons that God could have for creating some particular universe are consistent with His creating some other (minimally good) universe or creating no universe at all. But then God's decision to create is entirely arbitrary.

One way a defender of my proposed solution to the General Problem of Creation might reply to this objection is to insist that it begs the question against his or her view. To see why the objection might be construed as begging the question, let us begin with the following distinction between contrastive and non-contrastive explanations.⁵ A contrastive explanation is one that includes explicit reference to the specific alternative possibilities available. It is this type of explanation that one is looking for when asking the question, "Why does this universe exist rather than another possible universe or no universe at all?" A non-contrastive explanation, on the other hand, gives a plausible reason for the existence of some actual object or state of affairs, but it need not provide any details as to why other possible objects or state of affairs are not actual instead. An example of a question demanding only a non-contrastive explanation is the one Timothy O'Connor sets out to answer at the beginning of his (2012): "Why do the particular contingent objects there are exist and undergo the events they do?" (xii). Notice that O'Connor's question does not make any reference to any other objects that could have existed but do not. For that reason his question and the explanation it requests are of the non-contrastive variety.

5 In what follows, I track the distinction made by Timothy O'Connor in his (2012, 80, 84).

Anyone who wants to preserve God's free choice, either in His act of creation or in any other action that He performs, ought to reject the possibility of fully contrastive explanations for His actions. For, on the Anselmian conception, God is understood to be an omniscient, omnipotent, maximally rational being. And an omniscient, omnipotent, maximally rational being would, without fail, act on the best reasons that are, or could ever be, available. A fully contrastive explanation for any of God's actions would, then, provide a sufficient explanation for that action to the degree that that action becomes, in some significant sense, necessary. If there are sufficient reasons to prefer one state of affairs over another, God, because he is omniscient, omnipotent, and maximally rational, must act on those reasons. To demand that such fully contrastive explanations be given for His free actions, then, is to beg the question against the very possibility of God's choosing freely.

As a result, my own response to the first objection to my proposed solution to the General Problem of Creation is to point out that to demand an answer to the question, "Why did God actualize the state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe rather than actualizing the state of affairs that contains only God?" is to demand a fully contrastive explanation for God's free decision to create. And to demand a fully contrastive explanation for God's free decision to create is to preclude the very possibility of God's having free choice at all.

Importantly, this does not mean that no explanation can be given for God's decision to create. A perfectly good God might actualize the state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe precisely because it would be a good state of affairs for the inhabitants of that universe. Alternatively, He might choose to actualize the state of affairs that contains only God because it would be a good state of affairs for Him. Either way, the fact that the state of affairs that God freely chooses to actualize is good for those entities that it contains serves as a non-contrastive explanation for His decision. And, if the goal is preserve God's free choice in his initial decision to create, then that sort of explanation is, in principle, all that can be given.

V. TOO MUCH FREEDOM?

The second objection to my proposed solution to the General Problem of Creation pertains to the scope of God's freedom in His initial decision to create, given Korsgaard's Thesis. To see how this objection might go, let us begin with the following slightly modified version of Korsgaard's Thesis (hereafter referred to as "Korsgaard's Modified Thesis"):

Korsgaard's Modified Thesis: For any state of affairs, x , and for any state of affairs y , x is a worse state of affairs than y only if (a) there is some entity z , which is common to both x and y , and (b) there is something about x such that x is a worse state of affairs for z than y is.

With Korsgaard's Modified Thesis in place, we can now formulate the objection as follows:

(1") If Korsgaard's Modified Thesis is true, then some possible state of affairs (x) that contains both God and some particularly bad universe that is full of suffering and death without any chance of redemption is worse than some other possible state of affairs (y) that contains both God and some particularly good universe that is full of happiness and flourishing only if there is some entity, z , who is common to both x and y , and for whom x is worse than y .

(2") God's absolute perfection is entirely self-sufficient, and so there is no universe that could make some state of affairs worse for God than some other.

(3") Assume: there is no other entity, z , which is common to both x and y (or at least no entity for whom x or y could be bad).⁶

(4") Hence, if Korsgaard's Modified Thesis is true, then x is not worse than y .

6 If there are any necessary beings besides God, then these will be common to both x and y (and to any other states of affairs, for that matter), but I take it that the only other necessary beings there could be would be something like Platonic Forms. And it is not clear to me how the existence of some universe could be good or bad for a Platonic Form.

(5'') If x is not worse than y , then, given the choice between actualizing x and actualizing y , God could actualize x without surrendering His perfect goodness in any way.

(6'') Hence, if Korsgaard's Modified Thesis is true, then given the choice between actualizing x and actualizing y , God could actualize x over y without surrendering His perfect goodness in any way.

(7'') But surely if God actualizes a universe that is full of suffering and death without any chance of redemption, then He is less than perfectly good.

(8'') Therefore, Korsgaard's Modified Thesis is false.

The main worry here is that Korsgaard's Modified Thesis would seem to allow a perfectly good God to actualize some possible state of affairs that contains both God and some irredeemably bad universe when He could have actualized some other state of affairs that contains both God and some minimally good universe instead, as long as we stipulate that the two universes have nothing in common (besides God). This would seem to give God too much freedom in His decision to create some particular universe. Surely if a perfectly good God chooses to create, then He will have to create a universe that is not irredeemably bad! Since Korsgaard's Modified Thesis seems to have this implausible result for the Particular Problem of Creation, we ought to reject it. And without Korsgaard's Thesis or its modified equivalent, we will need some other way of avoiding the necessitarian conclusions for both the Particular Necessitarian Argument and the General Necessitarian Argument.

A defender of my proposed solution to the General Problem of Creation could bite the bullet and deny premise (7'') of the argument above, but I think a better strategy would be to deny premise (5''). According to premise (5''), if some state of affairs, x , is no worse than some other state of affairs, y , then, given the choice between the two, God could actualize x over y without surrendering His perfect goodness in any way. However, there might be other ways in which God's perfect goodness constrains His decision to actualize some particular state of affairs besides the fact that the considered state of affairs is worse than some other. Recall that according to Korsgaard, "there are good and bad states of affairs *because* there exist in the world beings *for*

whom things can be good or bad in a specific way” (Korsgaard 2013, 13). What this means is that an irredeemably bad universe, whatever it is that makes it irredeemably bad, is only that way because it is irredeemably bad *for* some or all of the inhabitants of that universe.⁷ Now, plausibly, a perfectly good God would have certain moral obligations (pertaining to justice perhaps) such that, if He creates some universe, that universe must be at least minimally good (or at least not bad) *for* some or all of the inhabitants of that universe.⁸ And so we might say that a perfectly good God cannot actualize the state of affairs in which He creates some irredeemably bad universe, not because that state of affairs is worse than some other state of affairs that He could have actualized instead, but because He cannot create any irredeemably bad universe while at the same time upholding His moral obligations to the inhabitants of that very universe. In other words, God cannot create any irredeemably bad universe and still be perfectly good.

As it turns out, then, a perfectly good God and an irredeemably bad universe might very well be incompatible. And so there would be no possible state of affairs that contains both God and some irredeemably bad universe; the choices that God considers in His decision to create some particular universe would not include any state of affairs in which He creates an irredeemably bad universe. There could be, however, infinitely many good possible states of affairs in which God creates at least one minimally good universe (in addition to the state of affairs containing only God). And, given Korsgaard’s Thesis and the modified version of that thesis above, none of these states of affairs would be any better or worse than any of the others. So when deciding between any of the good states of affairs that He could actualize, God would have a remarkable number of alternative possibilities, even if none of those alternative possibilities involves His creation of an irredeemably bad universe.

7 What exactly a universe would have to be like in order to count as good or bad is not something I spell out completely here, but, given my commitment to Korsgaard’s account of goodness, this would have to be fully explicable in terms of the state of affair’s goodness or badness for its inhabitants.

8 For a similar analysis of why God would have to choose a happy universe over a miserable one, see Korsgaard (2014, 426-427).

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have tried to sort through some of the puzzles concerning God's freedom with regard to His initial decision to create in order to defend a particular response to what is known as the "General Problem of Creation". Admittedly, my conclusion is a conditional one. I have argued that it is plausible to suppose that God had alternative possibilities available to Him in His initial decision to create *if* we accept Korsgaard's account of the nature of the good. I have not given here a full defense of Korsgaard's Thesis. There might be other reasons for Christians (or even theists more generally) to reject it.⁹ I have only tried to show the kind of work that it can do in this (seemingly orthogonal) debate. If Korsgaard is right about the nature of the good, then this opens up a new and interesting way of preserving God's freedom in His act of creation. What this shows is that it might not have been entirely necessary that God create at least one good universe, despite what the current literature on the topic would suggest.¹⁰

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, R. 1972. Must God Create the Best? *The Philosophical Review* 81(3), 317-332.
- Aquinas, T., Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Trans.) (1981) *Summa Theologiae*. Westminster, MD: Christian Classics.
- Broadie, S. and C. Rowe (Trans.). 2002. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foot, P. 2003. *Natural Goodness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1985. Utilitarianism and the Virtues. *Mind* 94(374), 273-283.
- Korsgaard, C. 2011. Interacting with Animals: A Kantian Account. In T. Beauchamp and R.G. Frey (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics* (91-118). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

9 For instance, we might worry that Korsgaard's Thesis leaves us unable to say that God is the best possible being.

10 I would like to thank Jonathan D. Jacobs, Max Parish, Sam Murray and audiences at the 2015 Meeting of the North Carolina Philosophical Society, the 2015 Midsouth Philosophy Conference, and the 2016 Meeting of the Illinois Philosophical Association for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

—2014. On Having a Good. *Philosophy* 89 (3), 405-429.

—2013. The Relational Nature of the Good. In R. Shafer-Landau (Ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, 8 (1-26). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kretzmann, N. 1990a. A General Problem of Creation. In S. MacDonald (Ed.), *Being and Goodness* (208-228). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

—1990b. A Particular Problem of Creation. In S. MacDonald (Ed.), *Being and Goodness* (228-249). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kraut, R. 2011. *Against Absolute Goodness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—*What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being*. Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press.

Menssen, S. L. and T. D. Sullivan. (1995). Must God Create? *Faith and Philosophy* 12(3), 321-341.

O'Connor, T. 2012. *Theism and Ultimate Explanation*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Rowe, W. 2004. *Can God Be Free?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Timpe, K. 2013. *Free Will in Philosophical Theology*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.