

God is rightly conceived as creating the world freely in that God effects the transition from the more abstract, indeterminate possibility of some world or other to the more concrete, determinate possibility of just this particular world or that. This implies that there must be contingency both in God and in the world, since God's creative act could have been otherwise than it in fact is, and so, too, could the world whose more determinate possibility God creates.

Traditionally, theologians have assumed that, if God is free in having the positive freedom to create this possible world rather than that, God must also be free in having the negative freedom to create nothing at all, i.e., not to create anything. But this assumption seems counterintuitive. What's the use of a freedom not to have something that it's better to have than not to have? Since any world is better than no world at all, there being no value in nonentity, it would be wrong or foolish of God not to create if God could create. And being all-powerful, God certainly could create, even as being all-good and all-wise, God just as certainly could not be wrong or foolish.

Of course, on some views of God, all possible value is already actual in God, no matter what else exists, or whether anything else exists at all. But if this means, as it certainly seems to, that it is no better to have creatures than not to have them, it also means that creatures really have no value at all, since by existing they add nothing to God's eternal value. In this case, our lives as creatures are pointless; and this is counterintuitive for sure!

I conclude, therefore, that, just as there is contingency both in God and in the world with respect to creation, so must there also be necessity both in God and in the world, in that God cannot not create *some* world of creatures and therefore some world of creatures cannot not exist.

To be sure, *I* might not have existed, *you* might not have existed, *the earth* might not have existed—and so on, for literally everything whatever other than God. But it in no way follows that God might have been all alone because there might have been

nothing other than God. It may be—and I believe is—the case that God's unsurpassable creative power always was and is bound to create some world or other. Even so, it would remain utterly contingent and in no way necessary that just this or that actual world was in fact created as a more determinate possibility. God Godself was bound to exist, and to exist as God, but not I myself, or you yourself, or any world itself. Only God and *some creatures or other* were bound to be.

By radical contrast, the necessity that I affirm in God's case is not just for some God or other but for *the one and only God* who alone is *the* Creator of all things. This kind of necessity cannot be affirmed for any other determinate being whatever. Therefore, although I maintain that there is necessity as well as contingency both in God and in the world, I also maintain this radical asymmetry between the relative necessity of any world for God and the absolute necessity of God for any world.

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