

Review of: "A Priori Arguments for Determinism/Universal Necessity – and the Leibnizian Theodicy"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is a good paper. I agree with the main thesis defended by Meixner: I have always found the Leibnizian distinction between moral and metaphysical necessity suspect. However, I have some remarks on some specific points of the paper:

1. Some clarifications in the main text on the semantics of @ would be useful. I have noticed that other reviewers have misunderstood the semantics of this symbol. One of the aspects that puzzled me is the criticism to Lewis's indexical theory of actuality. It is true that if we interpret @ as an indexical, as Lewis does, then $\Box(@=w_0)$ becomes true. However, it seems to me that Lewis uses a semantics of @ different from that of the main text. In Lewis's semantics, @ is an indexical whose reference depends on the context (i.e., world) in which this operator is used. However, @ is a rigid designator in this interpretation, like any other indexical. It is because @ rigidly refers to w_0 , when used in w_0 , that $\Box(@=w_0)$ is true. But, if the necessitation of premise 2) of the argument follows in this semantics of @, premise 4) becomes problematic for the same reasons explained by Meixner in appendix γ. I found this change of semantics of @ in the main text confusing.
2. I wonder whether a perfect being theologian is forced to acknowledge the conclusion of the argument and, thus, determinism. I believe that it might be replied that there is no unique best possible world and that God, although absolutely perfect, can choose which world to create among many worlds. First of all, not every choice has a moral value. Suppose that Ann has to choose between a chocolate and a vanilla ice cream. Presumably, this choice is not a moral choice, that is, it has no moral consequences. Now, suppose that worlds w_0 and w_1 are identical except the fact that in w_0 Ann chooses a chocolate ice cream and in w_1 a vanilla ice cream. Then, w_0 and w_1 are equivalent from the moral point of view. If w_0 is a best possible world, so is w_1 . Secondly, some choices can have equivalent moral consequences. Suppose that actions a_0 and a_1 have both moral value n . In other words, even though they are different actions, their moral value is identical. Again, suppose that worlds w_0 and w_1 are identical except the fact that in w_0 Ann performs a_0 and in w_1 she performs a_1 . Then, w_0 and w_1 have the same moral value, and if w_0 is a best possible world, so is w_1 . Therefore, even though an absolutely perfect being necessarily creates a best possible world, many equivalent worlds can be chosen. Being a best possible world is a property that does not identify a world but a class of morally equivalent worlds. In this scenario, $\Box(@=w_0)$ is no longer true and the conclusion of the argument does not follow. One can be a perfect being theologian and nevertheless reject determinism.
3. A small point. In the final part of the paper and then in appendix β, Meixner distinguishes between necessity by essence and necessity as truth in every possible world, and states that something can be necessary by essence

without being true in every possible world. This sounds strange to me. Suppose that the essence of a is E . Can a world exist in which a is not E ? It does not seem so. If a can be not- E , then E is not essential to a and therefore E is not the essence of a . For example, if w_0 is essentially the best possible world, then w_0 is the best possible world with respect to every other world. Suppose for contradiction that it is not. Then, there is a world w_1 in which it is not true that w_0 is the best possible world. However, if w_0 can be outdone by some other world, then it is not essentially the best possible world. Thus, an absolutely perfect God could have created another world.