

# Incommensurability, Incomparability, and God's Choice of a World

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A core theistic doctrine holds that God is the creator and sustainer of all that is. In contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, this is generally understood as follows: God surveys the array of possible worlds, and in his wisdom selects exactly one for actualization, based on its axiological properties.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I discuss an under-appreciated challenge for this account of God's selection of a world. In particular, I urge that there are failures of comparability between various possible worlds, and I argue that these failures threaten the rationality of God's choice of a world. This result, I suggest, threatens the central theistic notion that God is a perfect being.

## 1. Some Preliminary Assumptions

Discussions of God's choice of a world assume that worlds have axiological status, and that they can be evaluated: some are good, others are bad; some are better, others are worse.<sup>2</sup> Here is one way to understand these claims. Whether possible worlds are taken to be concrete objects, abstract objects, or convenient fictions, it seems plausible to suppose that, if a world is actual, it can properly be said to bear – or fail to bear – *world-good-making* properties (hereafter WGMPs). These are properties which, if instantiated in a world, tend to make that world good (*ceteris paribus*), or at least better than it would otherwise be.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, it seems reasonable to speak of *world-bad-making* properties (hereafter WBMPs): properties which, if instantiated in a world, tend to make a world bad (*ceteris paribus*), or at least worse than it would otherwise be.<sup>4</sup> On this account, the overall axiological status of a given world can be understood to depend upon which WGMPs and WBMPs are in fact instantiated in that world, and (for degreed properties) the *degree* to which they are instantiated.<sup>5</sup> In what follows, I assume this account.

I also assume two positions discussed in the literature on rational choice. The first is the *trichotomy thesis*.<sup>6</sup> This view holds that if two items  $x$  and  $y$  are axiologically comparable, then either  $x$  is better than  $y$ , or  $x$  is worse than  $y$ , or else  $x$  and  $y$  are equal in value. The second is *comparativism*.<sup>7</sup> This view holds that only a comparative fact – specifically, a fact about the relative axiological status of some alternatives – can rationally ground one's choice between those alternatives. As Ruth Chang notes: "...if comparativism is correct, the significance of incomparability among alternatives is very great indeed. For if alternatives are incomparable, justified choice is precluded, and the role of practical reason in guiding choice is thereby restricted" (1997, 9). In what follows, I argue that God is faced with incomparable alternatives in choosing a world.

## 2. Necessitarianism and Contingentism

Consider the set,  $S$ , which comprises all the WGMPs and WBMPs there actually are: this set, in effect, is a complete list of criteria according to which the overall axiological status of the actual world is to be measured. *Necessitarianism* (as I shall use the term), holds that

there could not possibly have been different WGMPs and WBMPs than the ones there actually are: in other words, *S* is the only such set that there could possibly be. The denial of necessitarianism, which I call *contingentism*, holds that, indeed, there are alternative sets of WGMPs and WBMPs.

Why might anyone endorse contingentism? One line of support is inspired by Descartes. Notoriously, Descartes held that God's will determines not only what is obligatory and what is forbidden, but also what is *good*, and what is *true*:

[N]othing good or true, or nothing that is to be believed or done or omitted, can be imagined, for which the idea will have been in the divine intellect before *God's will decides that it be of that kind* as a result. Nor do I speak here of priority of time; it is not even prior in order, or nature, or the processes of reason (*ratione ratiocinata*), as they say – namely such that that idea of good impelled God to choose one thing over another. Certainly, to give an example, he did not thus will to create the world in time because he saw it to be better thus than if he created from eternity; nor did he will the three angles of a triangle to be equal to two right angles because he knew it could not be made another way, etc. *On the contrary, because he willed to create the world in time, it is thus better so than if he had created from eternity, and because he willed the three angles of a triangle necessarily to be equal to two right angles, therefore now this is true and cannot be made in another way; and so on for the rest* [emphasis added].<sup>8</sup>

Because of the sovereignty this view accords to God's will, it is called *theological voluntarism*.<sup>9</sup> One reason for being a *contingentist*, then, is the belief that God's will determines which properties are world-good-making and which are world-bad-making. To say that God could have willed otherwise in this domain, then, is to say that there is a set, *T*, that comprises a different collection of WGMPs and WBMPs than *S* does. While *S* contains the actual list of criteria willed by God, *T* is a set of criteria that God might have chosen instead.

Contingentism might be thought to suggest the following picture: all possible worlds are, in fact, properly to be evaluated with reference to the set *S* of axiological properties, but, had things turned out otherwise – for example, had God willed differently – then all possible worlds would instead have properly been evaluated with reference to *T*. But this is a mistake. *That set S is the proper collection of criteria to evaluate world w is a fact about w*: accordingly, it is a feature *of w*; a fact *in w*. Therefore, no world can be evaluated by more than one set of criteria, for if one purports to evaluate *w* by the criteria of *T*, one is really evaluating a different world – a world in which *T* comprises the relevant criteria, not *S*.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, it cannot be held, on contingentism, that *all* possible worlds are to be evaluated by any one set of axiological criteria.

Instead, on contingentism, there are some possible worlds for which one set of axiological criteria are relevant, and there are other worlds for which a *different* set of properties is the appropriate standard. Let's stipulate that *S* constitutes the proper axiological standard for evaluating the actual world, *w*. On contingentism, then, there is at least one other world, *x*, for which *T* is the appropriate standard instead. Let's say that a *cluster* is a set of worlds which are all subject to a single common standard of axiological evaluation.<sup>11</sup> So there is a cluster, which includes the actual world *w*, for which *S* is the appropriate standard, and there is a different cluster, which includes *x*, for which *T* is the appropriate standard.<sup>12</sup> It follows that there are *incommensurable*<sup>13</sup> pairs of worlds: if the

axiological standards of *S* are relevant to appraising world *x*, but the different axiological standards of *T* are the appropriate criteria for appraising *y*, then *x* and *y* are incommensurable. Generalizing, we see that no two worlds from different clusters can be commensurable. One immediately obvious consequence is that the expression “best of all possible worlds” lacks a referent on contingentism: if it’s not the case that all worlds are to be appraised by the same axiological standards, then no world can be deemed better than *all* others.

As I use these terms, then, on necessitarianism there is exactly one cluster of worlds. On contingentism, however, there is more than one. How many? It’s of course difficult to say, but the Cartesian theological voluntarist should at least say that the number of clusters is determined (like everything else) by God’s will. In Section 3, I consider some puzzles for God’s choice of a world on contingentism, and in Section 4, I consider some further puzzles relevant to both contingentism and necessitarianism.

### 3. Incommensurability and God’s Choice of a World on Contingentism

On *contingentism*, then, there are failures of comparability between worlds: since no two worlds from different clusters are commensurable, no two such worlds can be compared. In this section, I explore the implications of this view for God’s choice of a world on contingentism.

Logically prior to God’s choice of a world *within* some cluster, surely, is God’s choice of *which cluster* to favour. But on what basis does God opt for one cluster over another? This choice cannot sensibly be grounded in the relative (de)merits of the worlds from various clusters, since *inter-cluster* judgments about worlds are impossible on contingentism.

God’s choice of a cluster, then, must be based on something else.<sup>14</sup> One might think that God should base his choice of cluster on the relative (de)merits of the *various sets of axiological properties governing worlds*. On this view, if the world-good/bad-making properties of set *S* are somehow *better*, or more *choiceworthy*, than the properties of set *T*, then God should choose the cluster of worlds for which set *S* is the appropriate standard of axiological evaluation.

But difficulties bedevil this proposal. First, it seems to presuppose that there is a set of *second-order* properties – properties about sets of axiological properties like *S* and *T* – that can undergird God’s selection of a cluster. It is very difficult to imagine, however, what such properties might be. Such properties would have to be capable of revealing (for example) set *S* to be better, or more choiceworthy, than set *T*, even when worlds that are properly to be evaluated with reference to *S* are literally incomparable with worlds for which *T* is the appropriate standard.

Suppose we waive this worry, and grant that the sets of axiological properties, like *S* and *T*, can themselves be ranked. A different worry remains. Contingentism, recall, holds that there really are various clusters of worlds. Since these are genuine possibilities, this means that God really might have chosen those clusters. But this means that it’s possible that God might have opted for a worse set of axiological properties when in lieu of a better one. Put differently, this means that from the vantage point of such clusters, God – who is a necessary being, after all – *really did* select a worse set when a better one was available. This seems rather difficult to square with the notion of essential divine unsurpassability.<sup>15</sup>

Setting this difficulty aside, a third serious problem looms for this proposal. Suppose there is indeed a set,  $S^*$ , of second-order properties according to which sets of properties like  $S$  and  $T$  can properly be evaluated. Is  $S^*$  the only such set that there could possibly be, or might there have been others? It will be very difficult for the contingentist to remain consistent while maintaining the former alternative. Surely the intuitions that support contingentism (particularly, for example, theological voluntarism) would suggest that the contingentist should likewise hold that there are alternative sets of second-order properties, different from  $S^*$ . But in this case, one might sensibly ask why  $S^*$  in fact constitutes the appropriate criteria for evaluating sets like  $S$  and  $T$ , rather than some other set of second-order properties. If the answer given appeals to some further set of *third-order* properties,  $S^{**}$ , we have a devastating regress problem.

On the basis of these considerations, I conclude that on contingentism, it is very difficult to see how God's choice of a cluster could be justified. In the next section, I consider further problems for God's choice of a world *within* a given cluster. This will be relevant to both contingentism and necessitarianism.

#### 4. Intra-Cluster Failures of Comparability (on Contingentism and Necessitarianism)

On contingentism, there are various clusters of worlds – as many clusters as there are different possible sets of world-good/bad-making properties governing worlds. *Inter*-cluster axiological comparisons of worlds are not possible, due to incommensurability, but *intra*-cluster comparative axiological judgments are possible, since all worlds within a cluster are commensurable. On necessitarianism there is, in effect, just one cluster of worlds, since all worlds are measured according to the same set of world good/bad-making properties.

All worlds within a cluster are commensurable, but it doesn't follow that all worlds within a cluster are *comparable*. Indeed, several authors have argued or assumed that there can be failures of comparability between commensurable worlds, and others have offered arguments that can be deployed in support of this view.<sup>16</sup> In this section, I canvass two reasons for thinking that there can be failures of comparability within a cluster.<sup>17</sup>

- (1) Multiple Rankings. One such argument proceeds from the claim that there can be multiple legitimate rankings of worlds, none of which is privileged. In explaining this argument, Ruth Chang (1997, 22-23) considers a comparison between two philosophers, Eunice and Janice, with respect to philosophical talent. Plausibly, there are multiple good-making properties of philosophers (originality, insightfulness, clarity of thought, clarity of expression, and the like), and perhaps there is no single best way to weigh the contributing effects of these on overall talent. Perhaps Eunice surpasses Janice with respect to some properties, but Janice surpasses Eunice with respect to others. If no such 'sharpening' is privileged, one might argue that the two philosophers are incomparable, even though they are commensurable with respect to the set of philosophical good-making properties. Such an argument can be generalized to worlds: if there are multiple legitimate ways to rank a pair of commensurable worlds with respect to a common set of axiological properties, perhaps they are incomparable.
- (2) Minor Improvements. Several philosophers have argued that when neither of two items surpasses the other, but when a minor improvement to one item fails to make it better than the other, it is reasonable to deem these items incomparable. Inspired by an

example given by Raz (1986), Mann (1991, 270-1) imagines an individual's choice between two different careers. Teresa, in Mann's story, is faced with the choice between a vocation serving the dying poor in Calcutta, and a successful operatic career. Mann stipulates that neither option can be pursued fully without detriment to the other, and urges that neither option surpasses the other. Nor, says Mann, are they exactly equal, since this would mean (for example) that one additional outstanding performance of *Tosca* would – absurdly – make that career surpass the career in which Teresa serves the poor, and thereby justify Teresa's choice of a musical career. Again, such an argument can be generalized to worlds: if the states of affairs consisting in Teresa's alternative careers are incomparable, perhaps worlds that include them, *ceteris paribus*, are incomparable too.<sup>18</sup>

It is plausible to suppose that arguments such as these can support the conclusion that there are failures of comparability between (commensurable) worlds within a given cluster.

Following Bruce Langtry (2008), let's use the term *hierarchy* to denote a set of worlds within a cluster, each member of which is both commensurable with *and comparable to* all others in that set. The number of hierarchies within a cluster is, then, determined by the number of failures of comparability that there are between worlds.

What sorts of hierarchies are there? Three relevant<sup>19</sup> kinds suggest themselves. First, there may be hierarchies that feature exactly one unsurpassable world – a world that is better than all others in that hierarchy. Second, there may be hierarchies that feature multiple unsurpassable worlds. Third, there may be still other hierarchies that lack an unsurpassable world altogether: in these, there is an infinite ascending sequence of increasingly better worlds.<sup>20</sup>

## 5. Langtry on God's Choice of a Hierarchy

In an important new book, Bruce Langtry (2008) considers various questions about what sort of world God will choose, given different alternatives. (I take it that Langtry presumes necessitarianism in his discussion, though he does not say so explicitly. In any case, the question of how God selects a world *within* a cluster is relevant to both necessitarianism and contingentism.) Langtry thinks that if God decides to select a world from a hierarchy that has one or more unsurpassable members, God will choose one of those. He also thinks that if God decides to select a world from a hierarchy that contains no unsurpassable members, then God will *satisfice*: he will select a world that is *good enough* from the hierarchy.<sup>21</sup>

Both positions are controversial.<sup>22</sup> For now, though, let's suppose that Langtry is correct in these claims, in order to turn to what he says about God's choice of a hierarchy. First, Langtry urges that if God is faced with a choice between hierarchy H (which has no unsurpassable members) and hierarchy J (which has such members), God will opt for hierarchy J, and select an unsurpassable member from that set.<sup>23</sup> Langtry next considers what God will do when deliberating between two hierarchies, H and H\*, *both* of which have unsurpassable members. Langtry imagines God considering the choice between *v*, a surpassable member of H, and *w*, an unsurpassable member of H\*. Langtry says that God will choose *v*.<sup>24</sup> Langtry's overall view, then, is this: when faced with a choice between hierarchy of the different kinds, God will opt for a hierarchy that features one or more unsurpassable worlds, and, further, God will select an unsurpassable world from within such a hierarchy.

## 5.1 Problems for Langtry's View

In this section, I set out three difficulties for Langtry's account. First, a general worry. Logically prior to God's choice of a world is, presumably, God's choice of a hierarchy. But on what *basis* might God prefer one hierarchy to another? Worlds from different hierarchies within a cluster are (by definition) incomparable, so it is difficult to see what basis there might be for preferring one hierarchy to another. Put differently, it is hard to see how one hierarchy could be thought more choiceworthy than another, when worlds in any hierarchy are incomparable with worlds in every other hierarchy.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps, however, Langtry does not owe an account of how *hierarchies* are to be compared and evaluated. After all, Langtry concentrates on evaluating God's alternative *actions* in selecting from one hierarchy or another, rather than concentrating on the relative (de)merits of the hierarchy chosen. Langtry maintains that God *acts in a better way* by selecting an unsurpassable world from some hierarchy, instead of either (a) selecting a surpassable world from the same hierarchy; or (b) selecting a surpassable world from some other hierarchy.

*Pace* Langtry, it is difficult to see how God's alternative *actions* can sensibly be compared, when the *objects of choice* cannot. But suppose we waive this worry. A different one remains: Langtry's analysis is too coarse-grained. Langtry's reasoning simply tells us that God will select an unsurpassable world from some hierarchy, over certain alternatives. But, suppose that there are two hierarchies, *H* and *I*, that both feature exactly one unsurpassable world. On what basis could God, consistent with his goodness, wisdom, and other attributes, select the unsurpassable world from either cluster? Both candidates for selection are unsurpassable (relative to their cluster, of course), but they are also incommensurable. It seems that God's decision to select one or the other must be groundless – on comparativism – and hence arbitrary.

One final problem is worth mentioning, though it does not pertain specifically to failures of comparability. Suppose, with Langtry, that God could (somehow) justifiably select a hierarchy that contains *more than one* unsurpassable world. How is God to choose from *among* these unsurpassable (and comparable) alternatives? It would seem that God could have no *sufficient reason* for selecting any one of the unsurpassable worlds over all the others.<sup>26</sup> But it is standardly assumed that God must have a sufficient reason for selecting whichever world is actual.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, Langtry's account fails adequately to explain how God can, consistent with his attributes, defensibly select one unique world from a range of choices spread out over multiple hierarchies.

## 6. Conclusion

Either contingentism or necessitarianism is true. If contingentism is true, there are failures of comparability between worlds, since no two worlds from different clusters can sensibly be compared. Logically prior to God's selection of a world is God's choice of a cluster. But, given comparativism, it is difficult to see how God's choice of a cluster could possibly be justified. While all worlds within a cluster are commensurable, it doesn't follow that all worlds within a cluster are comparable. There are good reasons to think that there are failures of comparability between worlds *within* the same cluster. If there are such failures, serious problems arise for the rationality of God's choice of a hierarchy within a given cluster. These problems affect both contingentism and

necessitarianism. (On contingentism, there are multiple clusters, but on necessitarianism, there is, in effect, only one cluster.) Therefore, no matter whether contingentism or necessitarianism is true, there are serious difficulties for the core theistic claim that God's choice of a world from among many alternatives is rational. And this, in turn, threatens the traditional notion that God is a perfect being, since it is plausible to expect the choices of such a being – particularly on such an important matter as selection of a world – to be rationally defensible.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> When God selects a world for actualization, God causes it to be the case that one world rather than another is actual. It is sometimes tempting to imagine that, in so doing, (a) God stands outside the set of possible worlds; that (b) God always *creates* something; and that (c) God determines each and every feature of the ensuing world (d) all at once. Elsewhere (in Kraay 2008), I argue that the first two assumptions are false, and that the latter two are dispensable on theism.

<sup>2</sup> I do not mean to suggest that worlds can be *cardinally* ranked – an ordinal ranking will do.

<sup>3</sup> Candidate WGMPs pick out a property held to be good-making. Traditional examples include: the presence of free moral agents in the world; the favourable balance of moral actions over immoral ones; the variety of phenomena in the world; and the simplicity of a world's governing laws.

<sup>4</sup> The most frequently discussed candidate WBMP is the presence of gratuitous suffering in the world. On the Augustinian view according to which evil is in fact the absence of good (*privatio boni*), every WBMP would presumably refer to the *absence* of a WGMP. There may be such WBMPs, and there may also be WBMPs that are the *contraries* of WGMPs, and there may be still other, different, WBMPs. I remain neutral on this; nothing turns on it for my purposes.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, it may be that certain good-making properties cease to make worlds better past a certain point, or in certain combinations. The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for WBMPs. So, while the goodness of a world depends on its axiological properties, this dependency may not be simple. This is the point of the *ceteris paribus* clause in the definitions of WGMPs and WBMPs.

<sup>6</sup> This term is due to Chang (1997, 4), who notes that it is almost universally assumed in the literature on rational choice. Many authors also assume it in the literature on God's choice of a world: see, for example, Flint 1983, Mann 1991, Grover 1998, and Langtry 2008. Chang herself, however, denies the trichotomy thesis. She thinks there is a fourth relation – *parity* – and maintains that this can help solve some puzzles for rational choice. I do not believe that parity can solve the challenges posed below for God's choice of a world, but space does not permit developing this argument here.

<sup>7</sup> This term is also borrowed from Chang (1997, 9), although my definition is more precise than hers. Chang merely defines comparativism as “the view that all choice situations are comparative”. Chang defends comparativism against a series of objections.

<sup>8</sup> Adam, C. and Tannery, P. *Oeuvres de Descartes* (Vol.7), 431-432. Translation by William Mann (1991, 258.)

<sup>9</sup> Many philosophers have found this sort of voluntarism repugnant. For example, Leibniz writes:

In saying, therefore, that things are not good according to any standard of goodness, but simply by the will of God, it seems to me that one destroys, without realizing it, all the love of God and all his glory, for why praise him for what he has done, if he would be equally praiseworthy for doing the contrary? Where will be his justice and his wisdom if he has only a certain despotic power, if arbitrary will takes the place of reasonableness, and if in accord with the definition of tyrants, justice consists in that which is pleasing to the most powerful? Besides it seems that every act of willing supposes some reason for the willing and this reason, of course, must precede the act (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, §2).

I do not think that these points constitute a refutation of voluntarism (still less of contingentism) – but they do suggest difficulties for any account of God's choice of a world on voluntaristic

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contingentism. I develop such difficulties in Section 3. For my purposes, since either contingentism or necessitarianism is true, it will suffice to raise difficulties for God's choice of a world on either view.

<sup>10</sup> There may be other constraints. Suppose, for example, that the axiological properties of worlds supervene on natural characteristics of those worlds. If so, then no two worlds with the same natural characteristics can be governed by different axiological properties.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'cluster' is due to Mann (1991, 271), although he uses it to refer to what I will in Section 4 call (following Langtry 2008) a 'hierarchy'. Flint (1983) uses the term 'galaxy' for what Langtry and I call a 'hierarchy'. I do not assume that every cluster has more than one member. But I do assume that every possible world is appropriately subject to *some* standard of axiological evaluation.

<sup>12</sup> It may even be that the axiological standards of *T* appear abhorrent from the perspective of a world governed by *S*: perhaps, for example, properties considered *good-making* in *S* are *bad-making* in *T*, and vice-versa. One vivid literary depiction of this idea can be found in the idea of *Bizarro World* that occasionally crops up in the *Superman* comic books series. The inhabitants of this topsy-turvy planet swear allegiance to the Bizzaro code, which reads: "Us do opposite of all earthly things! Us hate beauty! Us love ugliness! Is big crime to make anything perfect on Bizarro World!" The results can be seen in the panel below:



(Source: Wikipedia)

<sup>13</sup> See Hsieh (2007) for a nice survey of the myriad ways this term has been used. I use it to refer to failures of comparability between bearers of value – possible worlds, in this context – which cannot properly be evaluated by some common axiological standard. Chang calls these *formal* failures of comparability, as opposed to *substantive* failures (1997, 29). I consider the latter in Section 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Comparativism*, recall, stipulates that rational choice in this domain must be grounded in axiological comparison of alternatives.

<sup>15</sup> These claims connect to a large literature on the more general question of whether God has the power to sin. If God is omnipotent, some argue, God has the power to sin. But having the power to sin, some say, entails that possibly, God sins. This in turn means that there really are possible worlds in which God does sin. On the other hand, some argue that divine impeccability precludes the possibility that God sins. Evidently, I am attracted to the latter position. The contemporary discussion of this problem begins with Pike (1969). Wolf (1998, 409-416) includes a good list of contributions to this discussion up to 1996. Moves and countermoves from this discussion can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the question of whether God can choose a worse cluster when a better one is available.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Flint (1983), Mann (1991), and Langtry (2008).

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<sup>17</sup> For surveys of other arguments in defence of incomparability, see Chang (1997, 13-27) and Hsieh (2007, Section 3). Chang considers the two I discuss here to be the most plausible, though she thinks neither is decisive. Space does not permit an evaluation of Chang's claims in this regard.

<sup>18</sup> Grover (1998) criticizes Mann's argument. Space does not permit an examination of Grover's arguments.

<sup>19</sup> No doubt there are many ways to categorize hierarchies. But the three types identified below are the most significant for the problem of God's choice of a world. They are also the three types discussed by Flint (1983) and Langtry (2008).

<sup>20</sup> Vividly, Flint (1983) terms these three types of hierarchy "monarchic", "oligarchic", and "anarchic", respectively.

<sup>21</sup> Flint (1983) agrees.

<sup>22</sup> Famously, Robert Adams (1972) has suggested that God is not obliged to select the best alternative from a series of worlds. Langtry's account of satisficing has been criticized by Rowe (2004) and Kraay (2005).

<sup>23</sup> Here's what Langtry says (note that he uses 'create' where I use 'actualize', and 'prime' where I use 'unsurpassable'):

Given that there are both H and J, whichever specific member of H God were to create he would act in a better way if he created some other world instead ... On the other hand, if God were to create some prime member of J, then he will not have better reasons for creating some non-prime world instead. Therefore God acts in a better way, all things considered, if he creates a prime member of J than if he creates some member of H. Therefore his perfect goodness guarantees that if God creates a world then he will create some prime member of J (108).

<sup>24</sup> Here's what Langtry says (note that he uses 'create' where I use 'actualize', and 'prime' where I use 'unsurpassable'):

[I]f God creates  $v$  then he has better reasons for creating some other world instead – a better member of H – whereas if God creates  $w$  then he does not have better reasons for creating some other world instead. Therefore, despite the fact that  $v$  and  $w$  are incommensurable, God acts in a better way if he creates  $w$  than if he creates  $v$ . Therefore God's perfect goodness guarantees that if God creates a world then he will create some prime world (109).

<sup>25</sup> On contingentism, there are further problems. The second and third problems raised in Section 3 for choice of a *cluster*, on contingentism, apply to the choice of a *hierarchy* too (*mutatis mutandis*).

<sup>26</sup> Blumenfeld (1975, 166; 1994, 396) and Strickland (2006, 142-3) attribute this worry to Leibniz.

<sup>27</sup> Lloyd Strickland (2006) points out that in ordinary human affairs, when rational choice is thwarted by the absence of sufficient reasons, practical considerations make it reasonable for us to choose *at random*. Equally, he urges, in a case like this God could justifiably select a world at random. I criticize this argument in Kraay (2008b).

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