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# Thomas Reid and The Problem Of Evil

Roger Gallie

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In this paper I begin, in part one, by showing that Reid's position in Natural Theology is one that is confronted by the problem of evil. In particular we note and consider his adherence to the teaching that God made the world. We then move to consider in part two how Reid categorises the evils to be found in this world, in particular noting that he accepts a division of evils into those of imperfection, natural evils and moral evils. Finally in part three we consider his responses to the problem posed by the existence of these varieties of evil, the problem of evil itself. In particular we consider his case for rejecting Leibniz's doctrine that this is the best of all possible worlds as an aid towards a resolution of that problem.

It will be clear that my principal text for the purpose of this paper is Elmer H. Duncan's *Thomas Reid's Lectures on Natural Theology (1780)*.<sup>1</sup> This is a transcription from contemporary student notes with all the risks and difficulties that such an enterprise involves. The lectures which are the basis of the text are lectures 73 to 87 of a series delivered by Reid in 1780, and throughout the paper I shall refer to the individual lectures by this numbering. I shall also, when referring to specific pages of Duncan's transcription use expressions such as 'D, 38' for page 38 of the lectures in his transcription.

We shall, of course, not be neglecting Essay IV, chapter xi of *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* in Hamilton's seventh edition of Reid's works entitled 'Of the Permission of Evil'.<sup>2</sup> We shall need to consult the passage from Essay VI, chapter VI of *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* concerning the principle that design and intelligence in the cause, may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect.<sup>3</sup> Not to mention one or two items in Reid's

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<sup>1</sup> Elmer H. Duncan (ed.), *Thomas Reid's Lectures On Natural Theology (1780), Transcribed from Student Notes* (Washington DC, 1981), cited hereafter in the text as *D*.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Reid, D.D., *Essays On The Active Powers Of Man*, Sir William Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh, 1872), Vol. II; cited hereafter as *H*, with *a* indicating left-hand column and *b* right-hand column.

<sup>3</sup> Derek R. Brookes (ed.), Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man: A Critical Edition* (Edinburgh, 2002).

correspondence.<sup>4</sup> And we shall be inviting consideration of a passage from Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics*.<sup>5</sup>

### Reid and the problem of evil

Lecture 81 makes it clear that, for Reid, God has unlimited power (*D*, 71), unlimited perfection (*D*, 73), and perfect knowledge and wisdom (*D*, 74). In lecture 82 Reid maintains that God has a perfect moral character, including (*D*, 86), goodness and forbearance, truth and veracity, love of and to virtue and dislike to vice, justice and equity in the administration of things, and, of course, mercy. It will be seen that Reid's adherence to this position on God's moral character plays a fundamental role in his discussion of the problem of evil. Lecture 81 also makes it clear that for Reid God made and sustains the world. He laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens (*D*, 70). The regular, constant and uniform laws of nature not only display his goodness and wisdom but require also his constant operation and therefore require his presence in all parts of duration (*D*, 70). He has made matter which we can neither produce nor annihilate (*D*, 72).

What is more, throughout these lectures Reid, on the basis of what he calls the marks of design to be found in creatures and the creation, insists that God designed creatures. And it must surely be admitted that the position that God made the world and the creatures in it in a fulsome sense can hardly be sustained unless this is so. As Reid maintains (*D*, 15), every new discovery brings new evidence of the most excellent contrivance in the construction of things. We see these excellences exhibited in the planetary system, and in the construction of human and animal bodies and plants, to instance some of Reid's favourite sources of marks of design in the creation. Now we know that Reid wanted to go farther and 'to argue the existence of a first cause or of a deity ... from the appearance of wisdom and design which we see in the creation and in the Universe' (*D*, 15). The marks of design in creatures should enable us 'to infer that they were at first produced and still are governed by a wise and intelligent cause' (*D*, 15). But here perhaps lies a trap. For to argue from marks of design to some designer would seem to be circular, given that 'marks of design' means features of actual designs.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Wood (ed.), *The Correspondence of Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> 'Discourse On Metaphysics', in *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Texts*, trans Richard Francks and R.S. Woolhouse (Oxford, 1998).

But it is clear enough that Reid thinks that the world is full of marks or hints of design. How can he be entitled to hold this position? To get some help with this matter we must turn to Reid's letters to Kames and, in particular, to that of December 16, 1780. In Wood's edition of Reid's *Correspondence* we read:

Efficient causes properly so called are not within the Sphere of natural Philosophy. Its business is, from particular facts in the material World, to collect by just Induction the Laws that are less general, and from these the more general as far as we can go. And when this done, natural Philosophy has no more to do. It exhibits to our view the grand machine of the material World, analysed as it were, and taken to pieces; with the connections and dependencies of its several parts, and the Laws of its several Movements. It belongs to another branch of Philosophy to consider whether this machine is the work of Chance or of design, & whether of good or of bad Design; Whether there is not an intelligent first mover who contrived the Whole, and gives Motion to the whole, according to the laws which the natural Philosopher has discovered . . .<sup>6</sup>

And again:

As to final Causes, they stare us in the face wherever we cast our Eyes. I can no more doubt whether the Eye was made for the purpose of seeing, & the Ear of hearing, than I can doubt of a Mathematical Axiom. Yet the Evidence is neither Mathematical Demonstration nor is it Induction. In a word, final Causes, good final Causes, are seen plainly every where; in the Heavens and in the Earth, in the constitution of every animal, and in our own constitution of body and of Mind.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, in Wood's edition of Reid's *Correspondence*, we are given the following:

As to Efficient Causes, I am afraid, our Faculties carry us but a very little way and almost onely to general Conclusions. I hold it to be selfevident that every production and every change in Nature must have an Efficient Cause, that has power to produce the Effect. And that an Effect which has the most manifest marks of Intelligence, Wisdom

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<sup>6</sup> *Correspondence*, 142.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

and Goodness, must have an intelligent, wise and good Efficient Cause. ... We are led by Nature to believe ourselves to be the Efficient Causes of our own voluntary actions, and from Analogy we judge the same of other intelligent beings.<sup>8</sup>

From the above it would seem we could safely conclude that the knowledge or belief that something in nature was designed does not, as far as Reid is concerned, come from Induction, from the application of the principles of scientific investigation. Nevertheless a belief that something is designed can clearly be well founded as far as he is concerned.

This leads me to some reflection on an apparent threat to the position that God made and designed creatures posed by the Darwinian theory of evolution. We could begin by considering some remarks Reid makes in lecture 85 (*D*, 106), on positions related to Darwin's:

Many attempts have been made to explain the present appearances of things, of mountains, valleys, minerals, etc. different strata & layers of earths, these extraneous bodies, animal and vegetable found at great depths in the Earth & so on. Many ingenious authors have exercised their art to invent a hypothesis to solve all these appearances. According[ly] we find some attributing all to the universal Deluge, in which everything was displaced torn up and tost about & hence that mixture of marine bodies on the top of mountains & so on which is to be found. . . . Such are some of the conjectures about these appearances & what do they amount to? They are only the dreams of speculative men.

So if Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection should be classed among such speculations it is clear that, as far as Reid is concerned, it would pose no threat to the position that God designed creatures. There would not be a direct conflict in this case between two different equally well attested views. But there is surely more to be said. What if that theory were the product of careful experiments and induction? What if it were as well attested as the Newtonian Law of gravity and as other principles of Newtonian mechanics were thought to be by Reid? What if it were the true theory behind the history of the emergence of species, a formulation that can be found sometimes in Reid's exposition, as, for instance, in 'Essays on the Intellectual Powers of

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

Man' (VI, 6, 509). Newton's principles give us 'the true system of the sun, moon, and planets', why not an equivalent for the organic world?

Well, Reid might try resorting to what he says towards the end of Lecture 79 (*D*, 58), in reply to such possibilities:

A law of nature never could produce anything without an intelligent being to put them in execution. As in civil law it is not the law which tries a man, but the judge acting according to those laws and executing them ... In like manner a law of Nature presupposes a Lawgiver, a being who established and operates according to them. We see then it is vain to have recourse to this Subterfuge to say that all was produced by Nature.

Clearly the comparison of laws of nature to laws of a legal system is not without its difficulties, but someone who takes Reid's position here, notwithstanding those difficulties, seems to be exposed to the further objection that such a position differs very little, if at all, from the position that God set initial conditions and the rest of history, including the emergence of the planetary system, plant life, animals and mankind, followed in accordance with the laws of nature God prescribed, no further divine activity being required. Now this last view is at least similar to one for which Reid displays considerable discomfort. Thus in lecture 86 (*D*, 112) we find:

According to the theory of Leibniz the world was so made as to need no operation of the Deity for its government; that every thing had such power implanted in it at its first constitution that [would] produce all subsequent changes without any interposition of the Supreme Being & therefore he considered every interposition of the Deity as a miracle. This is a theory which had many admirers but seems to have no foundation in truth or in reason .

Reid continues:

It may be observed, that he differs from the common meaning affixed to the word miracle. It is not every interposition of Deity that constitutes an action miraculous; it is only actions done in express violation of the usual fixed laws of Nature in order to attest a divine omniscience [omnipotence?]. Thus the raising from the dead [of] a man who has

been four days in his grave & what [whose?] body is become putrid by a single word, this is a miracle as it is contrary to the Laws of Nature. But that every interposition of Deity is a miracle cannot be admitted.

And now Reid continues this passage in the way we would expect given what he said above:

We see indeed that the world is governed by general laws, but do not laws require an agent to execute them & to produce effects according to them. Laws are not agents, they are only rules according to which an agent operates ...

And he also adds (*D*, 113):

Why should it be thought unworthy of Deity to preserve by his care, these natures he formed at first by his power? Indeed, it is unsuitable to the principles of Philosophy or the Sacred Scripture which everywhere represents him as the kind preserver of all his work.

Against this last point is an argument Reid attributes to Leibniz (*D*, 112):

If ... a workman should make a clock that perpetually goes on of itself without needing any future interposition, any mending or reparation this surely would be a more perfect machine than the one that required the hand of the artificer to be continually employed in regulating its motions & preventing it from going wrong. Now all the works of God are surely perfect, the Universe then being the work of God must be perfect & therefore need no future interposition of the power to direct or support it.

Reid argues against this position (*D*, 113), but note that he does not invoke the point that creatures are, in some sense, not perfect. He argues instead that of any such workman all that can be said is:

All that he does is only to apply certain powers, but it is nature & not him that confers these powers.

And so, between this workman and the Deity, 'there is no similitude, neither

is there a greater beauty in the system, than if we believed that all things are governed by a Supreme Being, or by some subordinate nature employed by him?. For the Deity both confers and employs the powers, unlike the workman.

In sum, Reid does think his position differs from that of Leibniz in that it requires continual activity on the part of the deity. But if we admit Darwinian accounts of the emergence of species to the respectable scientific corpus, what then? We still have action on the part of the deity to make the species of animals and plants emerge but it is unclear whether we can still maintain in a sufficiently strong sense that God made these creatures, even though they could not have emerged without his exercising his power through his laws of nature, and even though the creatures display quite remarkable features.

However this may be, we clearly do seem to be confronted by a form of the problem of evil in Reid's system of thought. God is at least answerable for which creatures there are in the world which he made. It is surely a good world that will issue from a deity of perfect moral character and with the powers Reid admits God to have: God is almighty, and all knowing. How is it then there is so much evil and sin in the world if it is subject to good government on the part of such a deity? How is it that there is any evil at all?

## **Varieties of Evil**

In lecture 84 (*D*, 101), Reid tells us that all evil has been reduced by some to three classes, and he seems content to work with this division. These are, (1) the evils of imperfection; (2) natural evil; and (3) moral evil. I shall consider Reid's expositions of these varieties of evil, beginning with the evils of imperfection.

Says Reid,

A man might have been much more perfect, he might have been an angel, a brute might have been a rational being & a plant might have been a brute animal—this however is not an evil it is only a less degree of good. (*D*, 101)

Some comment seems in order here. For one thing it seems clear enough that a human being with congenital heart disease might have been without such a condition, and so must be less perfect than he or she would be without it. But in this case we are inclined to say that the condition making for the



imperfection is an evil, while we are not inclined to say of a brute animal, such as a pig, lacking in rationality, that that lack is an evil. Why is this? For another thing it may be said that if there were fewer beings of lower orders of perfection and more of higher orders in this world then it would be a better world than it is, on this type of view. But we should remember that Reid is not wedded to the view that this is the best of all possible worlds. As he puts it:

Suppose a world twice, nay two thousand times more perfect than ours, still they could have been more perfect.

Presumably ‘they’ are the inhabitants of such a world.

And now let us turn to natural evil. Reid says that there is natural evil, ‘that is that suffering & pain which we see endured by beings in the universe’. For instance one suffers through having certain conditions, by being blind or having congenital heart disease. Or accidents or infections befall one. So perhaps Reid would admit that some conditions leading to imperfection, such as blindness, are productive of natural evil and that is why we think of these conditions as evils, as opposed to conditions merely making for a lower order of perfection. In any case he has further points to make concerning natural evils. He says,

We see that it is by natural evil that men are trained unto wisdom & prudence in their conduct ... from the present constitution of things we see they are necessary to our acquiring any prudence or wisdom, or patience or resignation. (*D*, 101–2)

He allows, however, that it is not as simple as that. He admits that in a world governed by general laws ‘occasionally evils will happen’, even though without general laws rational creatures could never pursue any means for the attainment of ends. Thus,

If gravitation is a good general law & necessary to the presentation [preservation?] of our world, yet by this means (?) houses may fall & crush the inhabitants. (*D*, 102)

To say nothing of earthquakes and tsunamis! Reid remarks at this point that ‘we cannot determine what proportion this evil bears to the sum of the enjoyment of God’s creatures’. But presumably it cannot have escaped his

notice that much of this sort of evil, evil resulting from gravitation and plate tectonics and such, does not serve in any obvious way as a part of training in virtues for many of the people involved in such calamities. Many of them are killed instantly. Now it may well be that those that are instantly killed, or at least some of them, are quickly granted heavenly bliss. But this grant is no aid to further acquisition of virtue, although it may affect the balance between misery and the sum of the enjoyment of God's creatures. In any case the fact that Reid has made this remark about our ignorance of the relative proportions of natural evil and enjoyment among creatures is, as we shall soon see, one of crucial importance.

Let us now turn to moral evil. For Reid moral evil is the misconduct of rational beings (*D*, 102), and he quickly moves to two possibilities. The first is that man is not a free agent. But then, says Reid, every event, good or bad, is to be considered God's doing and the actions of the worst men are 'equally imputable to Deity as the rising or setting of the sun' (*D*, 102). And so the existence of moral evil implies an evil God. Perhaps this is a little too quick and we shall return to this point later.

The second possibility is that man is a free agent and Reid immediately adds to this possibility that to this free agent God has granted a certain sphere of power (*D*, 102ff). In this case the actions done by men are, Reid claims, not God's actions but only the doings of men for which God has no responsibility, given they are done within that sphere of power. And, of course, what is the action of one agent cannot be the action of another. Reid is far from denying that to God 'we must ascribe the lot in which we are placed by his Providence with all its advantages and disadvantages' and that 'by such a connection with our fellow men we are indeed liable to be sometimes hurt'. But the injurious actions that result in this hurt are not to be attributed to God but to the agents who have abused the power God gave them (*D*, 103).

At the end of Lecture 84 Reid says, by way of summing up, that it appears that the objection against a good administration of things brought either from the evils of imperfection, natural evil or moral evil have no force. And perhaps his hope was that in so doing he would be contributing to the moral and spiritual uplift of his mainly youthful lecture audience. But he is not so sanguine in Essay IV, chapter XI, of *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*. Thus,

The permission of natural and moral evil is a phenomenon that cannot be disputed. To account for this phenomenon under the government of a Being of infinite goodness, justice, wisdom and power, has, in all ages,

been considered as difficult to human reason, whether we embrace the system of liberty or that of necessity. (*H*, 633a)

Later, Reid reminds us that to permit means, first, not to forbid, and, second, not to hinder by superior power (*H*, 634b). He continues:

In the first of these senses God never permits sin. His law forbids every moral evil. By his laws and his government, he gives every encouragement to good conduct, and every discouragement to bad. But he does not always, by his superior power, hinder it from being committed ... and this, it is said, is the very same thing as directly to will and to cause it.

So he acknowledges that even on the system of liberty the difficulty that God is responsible for the moral evil has not entirely disappeared. Reid claims here that the difficulty that God directly wills and causes moral evil is asserted without proof. But this much at least can be said: a powerful politician who denounces certain kinds of misdeed and is not aware that his subordinates are busy doing those misdeeds might get off the hook of personal responsibility in such a case, but God cannot ever be in such a state of unawareness.

On the system of necessity it may be that we need not accept that every event is to be considered merely as God's doing. Thus it may be said that God made men with certain desires and certain reasoning powers and endowed them with certain moral sentiments and that actions done by men in accordance with desires accompanied by a rational awareness are to be imputed to them even if these are not free actions, stemming, perhaps, from the strongest desire. And then, perhaps, they would have responsibility for such actions to at least some degree. And so we need not impute all bad behaviour and its consequences to God alone on the system of necessity.

We saw above that Reid, in effect, admitted that we cannot determine what proportion the sum of natural evil bears to the sum of the enjoyment of God's creatures. And we must not forget that a sizeable proportion of natural evil stems from moral evils that we encounter, such as greed, cruelty and sexual abuse of infants. I wonder whether this admission on Reid's part in the lectures is a hint from him that were the sum of the enjoyment of God's creatures to be outweighed by the sum of natural evil then this would be a further difficulty for the argument that we are under a good divine administration.

**Reid's Leibniz to the rescue?**

In Lecture 84 of this series, Reid expounds a theory that he imputes to Leibniz that this world is the best possible. It is meant to serve as the best account of the origin of evil and as the most amiable representation of the divine perfections and administration. Reid expounds the theory as follows:

The supreme being from all eternity by his infinite understanding saw all the possible constitutions of worlds which could be and their various qualities. Among all the possible systems that could be he would choose that in which there was the greatest sum of happiness upon the whole. He then, from his infinite understanding and perfect goodness, constituted the present system as that which contained the greatest possible sum of happiness upon the whole. (*D*, 98)

This view presupposes, according to Reid, that 'all the divine attributes consist in directing all things to produce the greatest degree of good on the whole'. So,

Though we give different names to the moral attributes of the deity such as justice, truth and righteousness they may all be resolved into one attribute and are only different modifications of his goodness and benevolence, that is, a disposition to promote the greatest degree of happiness on the whole in the universe.

But there is more, for the protagonists of such a position

think that all the Evil we see in the world is a necessary ingredient in a system in which we see the greatest possible good; it was proper then to admit it and if we remove it an equal proportion of happiness is at the same time removed. (*D*, 99)

Now Reid is desperately unhappy with this theory. His unhappiness first, and perhaps foremost, stems from his opinion that the moral attributes of the deity are degraded by this position. In his view, 'we can only form a just notion of moral character in Deity from what appears most perfect in moral character among human creatures when separated from all the imperfections with which they are attended in us' (*D*, 99). Now 'goodness alone is far from making a

perfect moral character in Man. We cannot conceive a moral character without a regard to Virtue and a dislike to Vice. To make the only principle of action in man to produce the happiness of others is to degrade his Nature. This, tho' a necessary branch of Virtue, is not the whole of it'.

One difficulty for Reid's position here is alluded to later:

Some... conceive that the attributing different moral attributes to the Deity is inconsistent with the simplicity and unity of his nature which we ought to ascribe to an infinitely perfect being. (*D*, 100)

In response he admits that our conceptions of the Supreme Being are undoubtedly inadequate but, such as they are, they are the result of our faculties and their imperfections must remain with us until our faculties are enlarged. How is this?

Reid offers some justification for attributing to the Deity a perfect moral character in the lecture 83. First, every real excellence in the effect is to be found in the cause, and so our excellences must be in the Deity. Second in the moral government of the world virtue is countenanced and vice discouraged, virtue being in itself rewarded by the approbation of our own minds. Third, the voice of conscience leads us to ascribe a perfect moral character to the Deity: shall not the judge of all the earth do right? (*D*, 84–5). Moreover, the laws of nature as far as we can know them 'are fitted to promote the interest of his creatures and to give all that degree of happiness of which their several natures are capable' (*D*, 86). This last, we have already seen, is open to considerable doubt. And given the sheer amount of sin to be encountered in this world one might also have considerable reservations about Reid's view of the moral government of the world as expressed in this passage.

Indeed, if it were not the case, claims Reid, that a perfect moral character could be ascribed to the Deity, 'and if these attributes to which we give names in man had not the same meaning when we turn to God, we would speak without understanding and could reason no way with regard to them'. This last consequence is one that Reid attributes to Hume, 'in a posthumous work of his on Natural Religion' (*D*, 95).

Next, Reid points out (*D*,99) that even if by this system we have the greatest possible sum of happiness for creatures nevertheless, within it, evil has a necessary and fatal connection with good and could not be removed even by divine power. But, it might be replied, how could God have the power to overturn his decrees or choices? Again, (*D*,99) Reid argues that,

This system leads to the necessity of all human actions... because it was necessary that every part should be adjusted to produce the greatest degree of happiness on the whole.

But it is not clear in what sense the actions are necessary. It is not clear that human beings have to be machines for a fatalistic scenario, such as this appears to be. But in any case Reid is surely right when he says of this theory that,

This is to suppose a Fate superior to the human being, which necessarily connects evil with the greatest possible sum of happiness.

In any case Reid is sure in 'Of the permission of Evil' (*H*, 633a), rightly or wrongly, that on this view God is

the proper cause and agent of all moral evil as well as good... He does evil that good may come, and this end sanctifies the worst actions that contribute to it. All the wickedness of men being the work of God, he must, when he surveys it, pronounce it, as well as all his other works, to be very good.

And there is yet another difficulty Reid explicitly raises for the position of Leibniz, based on his admission in the lectures of our lack of knowledge of how much natural evil there is in this world. In 'Of the Permission of Evil' he says:

A world made by perfect wisdom and Almighty power, for no other end but to make it happy, presents the most pleasing prospect that can be imagined. We expect nothing but uninterrupted happiness to prevail for ever. But, alas! When we consider that, in this happiest system, there must be necessarily all the misery and vice we see, and how much more we know not, how is the prospect darkened! (*H*, 634a)

The difficulty is that even if this world be the one with the greatest amount of happiness possible we still do not know if in this world, upon the whole, that happiness is not outweighed by misery, or suffering or vice. Here the hint given in the lectures that I mentioned above seems to be made explicit. Hence the theory brings us no closer to assurance that this is a good world than does an account which simply acknowledges that God sometimes permits the

abuse of liberty in moral agents and sometimes, for all we know, all too often allows harm to befall them.

I want to conclude this discussion of Leibniz's theory according to Reid by noting how Reid deals with the following difficulty presented at the beginning of 'Of the Permission of Evil' that arises for those who, like himself, hold with both divine prescience and liberty in agents:

To suppose God to foresee and permit what was in his power to have prevented, is the very same thing as to suppose him to will, and directly to cause it. He distinctly foresees all the actions of a man's life, and all the consequences of them. If therefore he did not think any particular man and his conduct proper for his plan of creation and providence, he certainly would not have introduced him into being at all. (*H*, 632a)

Now Reid, by way of response to this reasoning, objects

That all the actions of a particular man should be distinctly foreseen, and at the same time that that man should never be brought into existence, seems to me to be a contradiction; and the same contradiction there is, in supposing any action to be distinctly foreseen, and yet prevented. (*H*, 632b)

Now it certainly seems to be the case that Leibniz himself comes close to falling foul of this response in some formulations of his position that God chose to bring into being this world, along with such unsavoury characters as Judas Iscariot, as opposed to another possible world without him. Thus he says in his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, section 30 (Woolhouse and Francks, p81f)

The only remaining question therefore is why such a Judas, the traitor, who in God's idea is merely possible, actually exists. But to that question there is no reply to be expected on this earth, except that in general we should say that since God found it good that he should exist, despite the sin that he foresaw, it must be that this evil is repaid with interest somewhere in the universe, that God will derive some greater good from it, and all in all that it will turn out that the sequence of things which includes the existence of this sinner is the most perfect out of all the other possible ways.

It does seem clear that one can scarcely adopt such a position as this without being committed to the view that God did not choose to bring into being another possible world in which there was someone like Judas, but who did not betray Christ for 30 pieces of silver, because of what God could foresee about him and, no doubt, others in that world. If so, and Reid's claim above is correct, then the very notion that God chose this world as the best possible sequence of things based on an assessment of foreseen outcomes is under threat. And that surely leaves the notion that this is the best possible world quite unsupported.

Even if it were true that this is the best possible world Reid would still be right to insist that (*H*,634a) in it

There must necessarily be all the misery and vice we see, and how much more we cannot know.

So even if Leibniz's position could be repaired this would still be the case. And so it is hard to see how his position poses any threat of being potentially superior to Reid's position: one in which we cannot determine what proportion the sum of natural and moral evil bears to the sum of enjoyment of God's creatures. Neither of them can establish that this world is a good world if that means one in which evil does not preponderate over good.

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