

WHY ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH

By STEPHEN GROVER

LEIBNIZ claimed that if there were no best of all possible worlds, God would not have created any world at all. This can be defended in the following way: suppose there is no best of all possible worlds, but only an infinite series of possible worlds, each marginally better than the last. An omnipotent God could create any member of this series, whereas a 'weak god', of great but not quite unlimited power, could create many, but not all, of the members of the series. Whichever member of the series God randomly chooses to create, it will be possible that the world He chooses is not as good as the world which a weak god would, if he existed, choose to create. This possibility is incompatible with the claim that God is perfectly good, for that claim must entail the claim that there is no other imaginable agent who could ever act in a way that is morally better than the way in which God acts. It may not impugn God's goodness to say that He could have acted better than He in fact did, but it surely impugns His goodness to say that some other imaginable being could have done so. The easiest way in which this possibility can be excluded is to claim that there is no possible world better than the world which God chooses to create. Either this is the best of all possible worlds, or God is not omnipotent, not perfectly good, or does not exist.

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