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DOMINATION AND THE FREE WILL DEFENSE: A REPLY TO PRUSS

Daniel Speak

Few arguments have enjoyed as strong a reputation for philosophical success as Alvin Plantinga's free will defense (FWD). Despite the striking reputation for decisiveness, however, concerns about the success of the FWD have begun to trickle into the philosophical literature. In a recent article in this journal, Alexander Pruss has contributed to this flow with an intriguing argument that a proposition necessary to the success of Plantinga's FWD is false. Specifically, Pruss has argued, contrary to the FWD, that, necessarily, God is able to actualize a world containing at least one significantly free creature who never does anything morally wrong. Thus, Pruss purports to demonstrate that it is not possible that every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity. Since the possibility of universal transworld depravity is essential to Plantinga's defense, Pruss concludes that the defense in its Plantingian form ultimately fails. After presenting Pruss's argument, I argue that the free will defender can resist it, in large part because the free will defender can quite reasonably reject the dominance principle on which the supposed counterexample depends.

Few arguments have enjoyed as strong a reputation for philosophical success as Alvin Plantinga's free will defense (FWD). Despite the striking reputation for decisiveness, however, concerns about the success of the FWD have begun to trickle into the philosophical literature. In fact, this may understate the situation; it may be more accurate to describe the flow of complaints as substantially more than a trickle.¹ In a recent article in this journal, Alexander Pruss has contributed to this flow with an intriguing argument that a proposition necessary to the success of Plantinga's FWD

¹For example: Keith DeRose, "Plantinga, Presumption, Possibility, and the Problem of Evil," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21 (1991), 497–512; Daniel Howard-Snyder and John O'Leary-Hawthorne, "Transworld Sanctity and Plantinga's Free Will Defense," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 44 (1998), 1–21; Marilyn Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Cornell University Press, 1999); Richard Otte, "Transworld Depravity and Unobtainable Worlds," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78 (2009) 165–177; Jeff Speaks, "Foreknowledge, Evil, and Compatibility Arguments," *Faith and Philosophy* 28 (2011), 528–562; and Daniel Howard-Snyder, "The Logical Problem of Evil: Mackie and Plantinga," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, ed. Justin McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).



is false.² Specifically, Pruss has argued, contrary to the FWD, that, necessarily, God is able to actualize a “morally perfect world” — that is, a world containing at least one significantly free creature who never does anything morally wrong. Thus, Pruss purports to demonstrate that it is not, after all, possible that every creaturely essence suffers from transworld depravity. Since the possibility of universal transworld depravity is essential to Plantinga’s defense, Pruss concludes that the defense in its Plantingian form ultimately fails. After presenting Pruss’s argument, I argue that the free will defender can resist it, in large part because the free will defender can quite reasonably reject the dominance principle on which the supposed counterexample depends.

1. Pruss’s Argument

Let’s remind ourselves that Plantinga formulated his free will defense as a response to logical versions of the problem of evil that claimed to identify an inconsistency in the set of propositions theists typically endorse. In the face of this version of the problem, the goal of the FWD was to defend the broadly logical compatibility of God and evil.³ Crucial to the success of Plantinga’s defense was his argument for the claim that, possibly, God cannot actualize a world devoid of moral evil that also contains creatures enjoying significant free will. And this crucial part of the overall defense depends upon a modal judgment that, possibly, everyone suffers from transworld depravity. Plantinga characterizes transworld depravity, very roughly, as the property a person might have according to which he would freely do something morally wrong in any possible world in which he could be actualized.⁴ And “[w]hat is important about the idea

²Alexander R. Pruss, “A Counterexample to Plantinga’s Free Will Defense,” *Faith and Philosophy* 29:4 (2012), 400–415.

³Plantinga certainly describes his project in terms of establishing this compatibility; but for an argument that this isn’t what was accomplished by the FWD, see Speaks, “Foreknowledge, Evil, and Compatibility Arguments.” (It may need to be emphasized that Speaks is not Speak. Jeff Speaks, the author of the noted and noteworthy 2011 article, is clearly much smarter than Daniel Speak, the author of the present article. The confusion is natural and easy, however. I am sure that I have profited from the confusion in some cases. I suspect, therefore, that Jeff Speaks has, unfortunately, been tainted by it. In the interest of fairness, then, I should probably do my best to undercut the confusion. Thus, this parenthetical.)

⁴The definition of transworld depravity that Plantinga initially offered was this:

An essence *E* suffers from transworld depravity if and only if for every world *W* such that *E* entails the property is significantly free in *W* and does only what is right in *W*, there is a state of affairs *T* and an action *A* such that

- (1) *T* is the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in *W*,
- (2) *A* is morally significant for *E*’s instantiation in *W*,

and

- (3) if God had strongly actualized *T*, *E*’s instantiation would have gone wrong with respect to *A*.

See *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 188.

Now almost everyone (including Plantinga) concedes that Richard Otte (2009) has shown that this account of transworld depravity will not get the free will defender the result she

of transworld depravity," Plantinga emphasizes, "is that if a person suffers from it, then it was not within God's power to actualize any world in which that person is significantly free but does no wrong—that is, a world in which he produces moral good but not moral evil."⁵ Now for the crucial modal judgment: "But clearly it is possible that everybody suffers from transworld depravity."⁶

Pruss's argument against the success of Plantinga's defense turns on an assessment of the modal status of universal transworld depravity. Assuming standard Molinism, as Plantinga's defense does, Pruss claims to be able to show that God could have actualized a world in which human beings are significantly free and yet in which they never act wrongly. If the argument goes through, then it demonstrates that universal transworld depravity is not, contrary to Plantinga's defense, possible after all. In essence, then, Pruss claims that Molinism, together with some adjunct premises, entails that at least some creatures do not suffer from transworld depravity and thus that it was within God's power to create a world with moral good but without moral evil.

A crucial element of Pruss's argument is what he calls the Domination Principle:⁷

(DP) Necessarily: If (a) C and C^* are antecedents appropriate to $\langle x$ freely chooses $A \rangle$, (b) C^* dominates C for x choosing A and (c) $C \rightarrow (x$ freely chooses $A)$, then $C^* \rightarrow (x$ freely chooses $A)$.

If DP is true, then it stands to explain the intuition Plantinga announced regarding Mayor Curley Smith's bribe. If Curley has freely accepted a bribe of \$35,000, then we should be able to trust in the truth of this related counterfactual:

(Bigger Bribe) If Curley had been offered \$36,000, he would freely have taken the bribe.

Since the offer of \$36,000 obviously dominates the offer of \$35,000 (setting aside a few weird possible cases), DP accounts for what seems to us to be the truth of (Bigger Bribe).

Pruss contends that if we do accept some domination principle like DP, then it will be possible, by virtue of domination, for God to actualize a world in which there are free beings who do not choose wrongly. Here is his case. Suppose that w_j is a world in which God forbids Eve from eating

wants—namely, that it is possible everyone suffers from it. Nevertheless, Otte has also shown that some slight modifications, quite clearly in keeping with Plantinga's initial intentions, can avoid the problems and permit the reformed version of transworld depravity to function just as well within the rest of the FWD.

⁵Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*, 186.

⁶Ibid., 186.

⁷The intuitive idea behind "dominance" as Pruss is thinking about it seems to be of one circumstance dominating another for an agent's action by containing all the same "pros" for the action and some additional ones (or fewer "cons").

the apple, and in which she does not eat the apple but dances a jig instead (and further suppose that eating the apple and dancing the jig are the only two options for her). Suppose also that there is a world w_a in which God forbids Eve from eating the apple but, unfortunately, in which Eve nevertheless eats the apple. Parallel to these worlds, Pruss asks us also to suppose that w_j is a world just like w_j except that in w_j God forbids Eve from dancing a jig (and not from eating the apple). Nevertheless, she still dances the jig as she does in w_j . Finally, grant that there is a world w_{a^*} that is just like w_a except that in w_{a^*} God forbids Eve from dancing a jig (and not from eating the apple). Nevertheless, she still eats the apple as she does in w_a . What Pruss notes is that both w_j and w_{a^*} are “morally perfect” worlds. In both, there is significant creaturely freedom and no one does wrong. If God can guarantee that either w_j or w_{a^*} is actualized, then God can indeed actualize a possible world with freedom and without wrongdoing, contrary to the supposition of the possibility of universal transworld depravity; and Pruss does think that, given Molinism, God can in fact guarantee that one or the other of these worlds is actualized.

How? Well, keep in mind that God knows the truth of all the true conditionals of free will. So if it is true that *if God had prohibited Eve from apple eating (C), then Eve would have freely danced a jig (J)*, then God knows this. And if God does know this CCF, then God can bring it about that Eve freely dances a jig by bringing it about that (C) is the case—by prohibiting her apple eating. Similarly, if it is true that *if God had prohibited jig dancing (C*), then Eve would have freely eaten the apple (A)*, then God knows this. And if God knows this CCF, then God can bring it about that Eve freely eats the apple by bringing it about that (C*) is the case—by prohibiting her jig dancing. Pruss’s strategy from here is to attempt to show that one or the other of these two counterfactual conditionals is true. In other words, either $C \rightarrow J$ or $C^* \rightarrow A$ is true (where “ \rightarrow ” indicates the counterfactual conditional). To execute this strategy, Pruss argues that the denial of the first of these conditionals materially implicates the second. Thus, he thinks he can demonstrate that if $\sim(C \rightarrow J)$, then $C^* \rightarrow A$. For we should allow, Pruss argues, that if $\sim(C \rightarrow J)$ is true, then $C \rightarrow \sim J$ is true.⁸ Furthermore, since Eve’s only choice is between eating the apple and dancing a jig, we can see that $C \rightarrow A$ follows from $C \rightarrow \sim J$. Now, for the crucial role of the dominance principle. Given DP, we can infer $C^* \rightarrow A$ from $C \rightarrow A$. This is because C^* dominates C in the relevant sense. The only thing that is different between C^* and C is God’s prohibition. If Eve eats the apple when prohibited from doing so, then she will also eat the apple when she is not prohibited from doing so (when she is prohibited, instead, from dancing a jig).

This means that either $C \rightarrow J$ or $C^* \rightarrow A$ is true. Whichever is true, God knows this. As a result, God can guarantee a morally perfect world. If $C \rightarrow J$ is true, then God will be able to get a morally perfect world by bringing it

⁸By an application of the conditional law of excluded middle (CLEM) for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom—which, according to Pruss, the standard Molinist accepts.

about that C is the case, thereby actualizing w_j . If $C^* \rightarrow A$ is true, then God will be able to get a morally perfect world by bringing it about that C^* is the case, thereby actualizing w_a . Since all of the premises of this argument are supposed to be necessary truths, the conclusion is that, necessarily, there is a morally perfect world that God can actualize. That is, it is not possible that everyone suffers from transworld depravity—and, therefore, Plantinga's defense fails, depending as it does on this possibility.

2. Reply

To see why I do not think we should be persuaded by this argument to conclude that Plantinga's defense fails, we need to turn to the conditions that must be met by a compelling counter-defense. Since the proponent of the logical argument from evil is accusing theism *simpliciter* of inconsistency, and since the free will defender has offered a set of propositions that the theist could, it appears, reasonably endorse and that avoid inconsistency, the counter-defender (like Pruss here, with his black hat on) needs to show us that this is only an appearance. Pruss must show, that is, that the propositions the theist must accept (together with those propositions constitutive of the defense) involve an inconsistency. Granting for the sake of argument that Pruss's argument is valid, the question before us, then, is whether the premises of his argument are among the propositions that the theist must accept. And here I think the answer is pretty clearly that they are not.

The propositions that the theist (merely *qua* theist) must accept are those essential to theism together with those that are plausibly regarded as necessary truths. So, consider the crucial dominance principle DP. Pruss frames it as a necessary truth according to which an agent who freely performs an action under one set of conditions will also freely perform the action under dominating conditions. DP doesn't appear to express a proposition essential to theism. This means that for the invocation of DP to function properly in an argument to the conclusion that the FWD fails, it will have to be that DP is reasonably thought to be a necessary truth. But remember, also, that (given the goals of the logical problem) it is the theist merely *qua* theist who must reasonably think that DP is a necessary truth. In other words, DP can function properly in an argument against Plantinga's free will defense only if it would be in the neighborhood of incoherent for the theist to reject DP. And surely it isn't.

I myself think that DP is flatly false, but I won't try to argue for this conclusion here (in part because the argument would take up too much space and in part because doing so would have the potential to mislead us about where the dialectical burdens lie).⁹ For all that needs to be shown

⁹To gesture at the shape of such an argument, however, consider this intriguing counter-example to DP presented to me in correspondence by Mike Rea. DP suggests that a teenager who would be rational to freely accept a babysitting job offered at \$10 per hour would also be rational to freely accept the same babysitting job offered at \$1 billion per hour. But, as Rea rightly insists, a babysitter offered \$1 billion per hour "ought to become very suspicious

is that it is not incoherent for the theist (merely *qua* theist) to reject DP. To do this briefly, consider the case that Pruss makes for the domination principle. One aspect of this case involves the supposed explanatory power of the principle with respect to this supposed truth regarding Curley Smith's bribe:

(2) If any consideration in favor of taking the smaller bribe would apply at least as well to the larger and any consideration there would be against taking the larger bribe also in fact applied at least as well to the smaller, and if Smith prefers more money to less money, then: Smith is offered a larger bribe → Smith (still) freely accepts the bribe.¹⁰

Since DP stands to explain this supposed datum, it gives us a reason to accept DP. But must we accept this supposed datum? More specifically, must the *theist* (merely *qua* theist) accept this datum? Not clearly. Libertarians are bound to be suspicious about it. Here's a story that would make the suspicions coherent. When Smith was considering the bribe of \$35,000, imagine that it was a very close call for him. But he wasn't wavering on the price. He was wavering over the tension between the competing moral and prudential considerations. Since it was a free choice, he could have rejected the bribe on the basis of the moral considerations that were bumping around in his mind with some real force at the time of his actual decision to take the bribe. Furthermore, the extra \$1,000 in the dominating case would have been essentially irrelevant to Smith. The question for him was about which kinds of considerations (moral or prudential) to be moved by. And since it was a close call in the actual case, and since the dollar value was irrelevant, he might freely have rejected the bribe had he been offered \$36,000. That is, Pruss's (2) need not be taken as a datum requiring explanation—in terms of a domination principle like DP or whatever. In fact, the coherence of this story about Curley should be enough, by itself, to show that the libertarian (whether a theist or not) need not accept DP.

By way of reply, Pruss might reiterate another point he has made in favor of his domination principle. He insists that, "[t]he most promising approach to responding to the randomness objection [to libertarianism] appears to be to hold that choices are always made *because* of considerations, even when the choices are not *determined* by these considerations. . . . But if choices are made because of considerations, libertarians, whether Molinist or not, should accept [a dominance principle]."¹¹ However, in the case I've given, Curley would be making his free choice to reject the \$36,000 bribe *because* of considerations; namely, the moral ones—that, as it happens didn't quite move him to action when he was offered \$35,000, but very well could have (it was a close call, after all).

and reject the proposal—and this even if, *ceteris paribus*, he or she would prefer \$1 billion to \$10."

¹⁰Pruss, "A Counterexample to Plantinga's Free Will Defense," 403.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 404.

Close-call Curley also helps to fill in the aporia in an argument Pruss highlights in responding to an objection roughly like the one I am advancing here. Pruss notes that libertarians to whom he has presented his argument have been inclined to reject the dominance principle; pointing, in some cases, to what he calls the Counterfactual Repeat Intuition (CRI) by way of justification:

(CRI) If an agent freely chooses *A* in circumstances *C*, then it is possible that if the memories of her choice and of its consequences were deleted and she were put for a second time in circumstances just like *C*, she would or at least might choose differently from how she did the first time.¹²

Pruss claims to accept CRI but also insists that he can see no good route from it to the denial of his dominance principle. Perhaps I can help.

If an agent can freely choose differently in a repeat situation without running afoul of the requirement to choose on the basis of considerations, then the considerations on the basis of which the agent chooses on the first run must be different from those on basis of which she chooses on the repeat run. If the choice were based on the same considerations in both scenarios, we would lack an intelligible account of the difference in outcome. Thus, someone who accepts CRI has already accepted the basic conditions of my close-call Curley case. That is, he has already accepted that an agent is able to freely choose to perform an action on the basis of (say) prudential considerations while also being able, under the very same circumstances, to freely choose to perform an alternative action on the basis of (say) moral considerations. Plausibly, however, the deliberation an agent engages in when deciding whether to act on either prudential or moral considerations need not respect the simple dominance calculus that principles like DP presuppose. If I am on the fence about whether to break a promise to a friend to pick her up at the airport in order to make use of an offer of free tickets to a concert, there is no reason to suppose that adding free hot dogs to the concert experience will so much as move the deliberative needle. It *might*; but it need not, because what I am trying to decide is which kind of considerations to act on—and the hot dogs may reasonably be irrelevant to that determination, being just more of the prudential considerations themselves. It is this thought that animates my version of close-call Curley. If Curley is sincerely torn between the demands of morality and the call of personal gain, then there is no reason to suppose that an extra \$1,000 is a difference-maker. And if the extra money is not a difference-maker, and one is already prepared to accept CRI, then it will also be reasonable to think that close-call Curley might have freely refused the bribe at \$36,000, his willingness to accept the bribe at \$35,000 notwithstanding. Thus, there is, after all, a fairly strong argument from CRI to the denial of DP.

¹²*Ibid.*, 410.

Put in terms of Pruss's Eve cases, rejecting DP on the basis of the above sort of reasoning amounts to allowing that even if Eve freely chooses to dance a jig when she is commanded by God not to do so, she might freely choose not to dance a jig (freely choose instead to eat the apple) when she is commanded by God not to eat the apple. The fact that jig dancing dominates in the second case may not result in jig dancing. How could this be? Consider a parallel with close-call Curley. The considerations that Eve takes to favor jig dancing have to do with merriment. The considerations she takes to favor eating the apple have to do with yumminess. But in the original case, suppose it is a close call for Eve whether she freely allows herself to be moved by merriment to dance the jig or by yumminess to eat the apple. In fact, holding everything fixed, and running a repeat on the situation, she would dance the jig about 50 percent of the time, let's suppose. Suppose further that what God commands is not a difference-maker for her under these conditions and plays almost no role in her initial deliberations in circumstances C (when she acted contrary to God's prohibition). By comparison with the values of merriment and yumminess, God's commands do not move her deliberative needle very much. What we are imagining is that Eve takes the fact that a certain action is commanded by God as some reason in favor of the action but not a particularly forceful one, and one not on the same evaluative scale as the considerations of merriment and/or yumminess. Then it need not be surprising that, though she freely dances a jig when commanded not to, she might nevertheless have eaten the apple had there been no divine prohibition against dancing the jig (as in circumstances C*).

I take this line of reply to put substantial pressure on the claim that Pruss's Eve case constitutes a counterexample to Plantinga's FWD. To function as a counterexample, it must be incumbent upon the theist to accept the various elements of the case. However, since DP is neither a proposition essential to theism nor reasonably regarded as a necessary truth (as my argument just demonstrated), it cannot be forced upon the theist in the way demanded of a counterexample to Plantinga's FWD.

3. *Modifying DP?*

For all of this, it may not be the end of the story. It may still be possible for Pruss to respond by weakening his domination principle. All my argument has shown, he might claim, is that a general version of DP can be resisted by the proponent of the free will defense. Perhaps, however, a more specific version—that God could apply in Eve's case—can be forced upon the free will defender. DP allowed Pruss to construct a case in which what could be interpreted as a small bit of domination could assure a particular free choice from Eve. If denying DP blocked this case, it may be that Pruss can get the result he wants simply by increasing the domination in Eve's second case and appealing to a weaker domination principle that will be harder to resist. For surely it is true that if Eve freely dances a jig in circumstances C, then there is *some* circumstance C** in which jig dancing

so significantly dominates apple eating that Eve will definitely choose freely to dance the jig. Formalizing this thought a bit, we get:

(DP*) Necessarily, if C is an antecedent appropriate to $\langle x \text{ freely chooses } A \rangle$, then there is some C^{**} that dominates C for x choosing A, and is such that if $C \rightarrow (x \text{ freely chooses } A)$, then $C^{**} \rightarrow (x \text{ freely chooses } A)$.

The force of DP* comes from the fact that, unlike DP, it does not require that any amount of dominance with respect to A in circumstances C^* over circumstances C results in a free choice to A in C^* . It insists only that there is some circumstance C^{**} that so dominates C with respect to freely choosing A that we (and, more importantly, God) can be certain that, given that x would freely choose A in C, x would also freely choose A in C^{**} . What matters for a Pruss-style objection to the FWD is that it certainly seems that the truth of DP* would allow God to get a morally perfect world either by bringing it about that C obtains (in the case where God knows that $C \rightarrow J$) or by bringing it about that C^{**} obtains (in the case where God knows, rather, that $C^{**} \rightarrow A$).

I concede that DP* is plausible—on my view, substantially more plausible than DP. I also will admit that the Pruss-style argument reconfigured in terms of DP* strikes me as quite forceful. That is, I am attracted to the conclusion that, given DP*, the total package of theistic commitments Plantinga originally deployed to block the logical problem of evil will turn out to be incoherent because universal transworld depravity is not possible after all. But an argument that Plantinga's defense is a failure cannot succeed merely by way of persuading one theist (or even many) that universal transworld depravity is impossible. The question is whether it would be coherent for a reasonable theist to continue to believe that universal transworld depravity is possible, even in the face of the modified Pruss-style argument based on DP*. The following line of argument would, it seems to me, make it reasonable for the Molinist to resist this modified argument against the possibility of universal TWD.

To see the argument, we need to remind ourselves that the counter-defender needs all of the premises of his counterargument to be necessary truths. If any of them are not necessary truths, then the bare logical possibility of all of Plantinga's premises will have established the bare logical compossibility of God and evil. So it is crucial to the Pruss-style argument under consideration now that the free will defender be forced, in essence, to recognize DP* as expressing a necessary truth. Again, as I said above, I am tempted to accept this myself. But I do believe that resistance on this point can be coherent. This is because I believe there is an important tension between the conditions for free will and conditions for successful domination (as expressed in DP*). The reason to resist DP *simpliciter*, I have claimed, is that simple domination may not be enough to guarantee action when an agent is in a close-call situation and the deliberations involve something like incommensurate values. DP* can avoid this objection by allowing God to strengthen the domination however much is

necessary to satisfy the antecedent of a true CCF with the desirable free-actional consequent. What is unclear in this case, however, is just how much strengthening of the domination (and of what form) will remain compatible with the *significance* of the free will that is part of both the letter and the spirit of Plantinga's original FWD.

DP was supposed to work without undercutting any of our intuitions about the deep freedom that agents under light domination would enjoy. Adding \$1,000 or a divine command favoring the action freely chosen without dominance seems to have no effect whatsoever on our sense of both the existence and significance of the agent's free will. This is to say that bringing it about that C* obtained appeared to us to represent no threat to the freedom that the agent expressed in choosing A under these conditions. But must we be so sanguine about the threat when it becomes necessary for God to bring about, instead, some C** that will counter what we have been referring to as close calls? Not obviously. Since close-call Curley isn't moved much by the \$1,000 and close-call Eve isn't moved much by God's prohibitions, God will have to do more to satisfy the antecedent of the relevant CCF in these (and related) cases. Perhaps he will have to add considerably more money to the bribe or a threat to Smith family safety in Curley's case. In Eve's, maybe he will need to add a strong desire in Eve to care about divine prohibitions or a massively increased payoff in yumminess for apple-eating. The important thing is that, given our argument earlier with respect to close calls, we have no way of being sure that only small elements of dominance will issue in the CCFs a Pruss-style argument will require.

Two possible lines of argument seem to me to be available to the proponent of Plantinga's FWD here. Some will be prepared to argue that, possibly, no amount of additional dominance sufficient to guarantee the desired action will be compatible with the agent's free choice. That is, some may be inclined to argue that even DP* can be rejected since it is *possible* that no one who would freely perform an action under conditions C would freely perform the same action under dominated conditions *that nevertheless preserve the agent's freedom*. Of course, there are some conditions under which the dominance would guarantee that the agent act in the desired way—but, possibly, all such strengthening will have to go beyond the limits of free will. Thus, it is possible that there is no relevant C** for DP*.

Another possible line of reply would be to allow that DP* is strictly true but to insist that, possibly, all of the ways in which DP* is true involve a crucial degradation of the freedom agents express under the relevant dominance. The argument here would then amount to the claim that DP* cannot generate the form of conclusion that is relevant to a rejection of the free will defense. In favor of this line of argument is the fact that the preservation of an insignificant form of free will (akin to the freedom to choose between soup or salad at lunch) would not be enough to undermine the

FWD since, as Plantinga emphasized, the freedom of will in question is presumed to ground a suite of morally important properties for human beings. What the proponent of the FWD might reasonably claim, then, is that, possibly, all the forms of dominance that could issue in true CCFs with the desired actional consequents would so diminish the remaining free will as to be unfit for its deep moral tasks. And notice that the theist could affirm this possibility without insisting that DP* is false.

Suppose, for example, that the C** required to get Curley to choose freely to accept the bribe involves a threat to his family. Or suppose that the C** required to get Eve to choose freely to eat the apple involves a massive increase in the perceived yumminess of the apple. In such cases, it is not incredible that while something properly called free will remains, its moral significance is substantially diminished. As a parallel, Aristotle's ship captain is relevant. The captain throws the cargo overboard during a storm in order to weather it safely. The question is whether he throws the cargo overboard freely ("voluntarily" in Aristotle's terms).¹³ Aquinas considers this case and concludes that the action is partially free and partially unfree.¹⁴ There are textual puzzles about how to interpret his claims on this point, of course. What matters, though, is that most will share the intuitive judgment that there is an important respect in which the context of the ship captain's action mitigates its moral significance even when we continue to allow that the action is free under some description. The same seems to be true when, for example, a person gives up her wallet at gunpoint. There is some sense in which she does so freely—she had available to her the option of forcing the gunman to kill her to get it. But it is not a sense in which her moral claim on the wallet has been forfeited, as presumably it would be if she had given it up in response to a mere request. The point is that free choices can be made in contexts that undermine their moral significance to such a degree that very little by way of the standard supervenience of the moral life upon such choices would make much sense. The proponent of Plantinga's FWD can make use of these points in response to the Pruss-style dominance argument deploying DP*. Once the possibility is raised that all sufficient dominance would diminish the moral significance of the choices, it becomes incumbent upon the counter-defender to show that this is not possible. Nothing in Pruss's argument even purports to do this.

4. Conclusion

Since the proponent of the FWD can reject DP and either resist DP* or grant it but deny that it can function to get the conclusion the counter-defender

¹³Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 30.

¹⁴St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise On Happiness*, trans. John A. Oesterle (University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 76. (ST IaIIae6.6).

needs, I conclude that a Pruss-style dominance objection does not threaten the success of Plantinga's original response to the logical problem of evil.¹⁵

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¹⁵For comments on earlier drafts of this paper I would like to thank Tom Crisp, Mike Rea, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Alexander Pruss, and (most especially) Tom Flint.