THE FORMALITIES OF EVIL AND A FINITE GOD — CORREGENDA

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Unfortunately, some errors and unclarities are to be found in my recent paper.[1] Fortunately, these problems can be easily corrected without affecting the thrust of my argument. In this note I will first specify what these problems are and then re-state the argument in a way that avoids the problems.

First, I attributed to Walton a premise slightly different from the one he actually holds. I said that Walton assumes:

(9) $\quad (\exists x)(z)(BzPxz) \supset \sim (\exists z)Bz$

Actually he holds:

(9a) $\quad (\exists x)(z)(Bz \supset Pxz) \supset \sim (\exists z)Bz$

Second, and more important, I maintained that given (9) and other premises which I specified a contradiction can be deduced. This is not true and it is not true even if one assumes (9a). Third, premise (5) in my argument is redundant in the proof of (6) and (6'). However, I intended that (5) be essential in the deduction of (6) and (6'). Fourth, the way the dyadic predicate C is defined is awkward and confusing. Because if this the structure of the argument is obscured. Finally, I assumed in my paper a very finite God, a God that is merely more powerful than any man. I now believe that this is too weak an assumption to be plausible.

Let us start afresh and introduce the following predicate expressions:

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[1] Michael Martin, "Formalities of Evil and a Finite God". *Crítica* 25, 1977, pp. 89-92.

M 1: 1 is more powerful than any finite being or finite group of finite beings other than 1.

G 1: 1 is perfectly good.

B 1: 1 is bad.

C 1 2: 1 can prevent 2.

P 1 2: 1 prevents 2.

H 1: 1 can be prevented by a finite being or finite group of finite beings.

Then the first order structure of the argument becomes:

(1′) $(x)(Gx \supset (z)(Bz \supset (Cxz \supset Pxz)))$
(2′) $(x)(Mx \supset (z)(Hz \supset Cxz))$
(3′) $(x)(Gx \supset (Mx \supset (z)(Bz.Hz \supset Pxz)))$
(4′) $(\exists x)(Gx.Mx)$
(5′) $(\exists z)(Bz.Hz)$

A premise analogous to Walton's (9a) is introduced which seems to be a necessary truth:

(6′a) $(\exists x)(z)(Bz.Hz \supset Pxz) \supset \sim (\exists z)(Bz.Hz)$

From (1′)–(6a′) we can deduce:

(7′) $\sim (\exists z)(Bz.Hz)$

which conflicts with (5′).

All of the above mentioned problems are eliminated with this formulation. A contradiction can clearly be derived. The two place predicate C now has a straightforward definition and the structure of the argument is very close to Walton's. (1′) and (2′) entail (3′) and both premises are necessary for the deduction. The finite God that is assumed is a more plausible finite God than was assumed in the original paper.

I showed in my original paper that (1′) is false since a perfectly good being may have sufficient reason for allowing evil. The problem, I argued, can be corrected by defining

the nature of inexplicable evil, represented by the predicate B', an evil which there is no sufficient reason for allowing. B' is substituted for B in the relevant premises and the argument proceeds as it did in my original paper.