REPLIES

truth of (4) doesn’t entail that God could not have weakly actualized \( w \); so it doesn’t entail that \( w \) is, in Adams’ word, “unrealizable”.

Second (and more important): the atheological deductive argument from evil is most plausibly developed in terms of counterfactuals of freedom (see above, p. 48). In most of my developments of the free will defense, therefore, I proceeded on the assumption that there are such counterfactuals and that some of them could be true. But Adams is at best deeply suspicious of counterfactuals of freedom. In MKPE, where he gives a fuller statement of his objection to such counterfactuals, he seems to hold either (1) that there simply are no counterfactuals of freedom or (2) that there are some, but they have no truth value, or (3) that there are some, but they are all false; and in the present piece he says he doubts that counterfactuals of freedom can be true.

I am inclined to think that (3) must be the position Adams means to hold — (3), at any rate, seems more plausible than either (1) or (2). For (so far as (1) is concerned) there certainly seem to be counterfactuals of freedom; there certainly seems to be such a proposition as if David had stayed in Keilah, Saul would have (freely) besieged the city. Indeed, I think there are counterfactuals of freedom which I believe; I believe, for example, that if Bob Adams were to offer to take me climbing at Tahquitz Rock the next time I come to California, I would gladly (and freely) accept. I could be wrong; perhaps I am not in fact free and hence would not freely accept this attractive offer; but surely there is such a proposition as the one I claim to believe. I can’t prove that there is such a proposition (any more than I can prove, e.g., that there is such a proposition as Some people don’t believe that there are any counterfactuals of freedom). But does it require proof? And (2) seems equally unlikely: if there is such a proposition, how could it fail to have a truth value? It’s easy to see how a sentence (relative to a context) could fail to have a truth value. I’m getting over a cold. In order to test my voice, I utter the words (referring to no one) “He’s being impossible again”. Under those conditions my sentence is neither true nor false. (In those conditions it fails to express a proposition.) Perhaps the sentence “This sentence is false”, in the present context, fails to express a proposition and hence is neither true nor false. But how could a proposition fail to have a truth value? Either things are as it claims they are, in which case it is true, or it’s not the case that things are thus, in which case it is false.

Of these three alternatives, then, the most plausible is that counterfactuals of freedom are all false and their denials are all true. This, I believe, is the claim Adams means to make. Presumably his view would be that they are
necessarily false; it's not as if they all just happen to be false. And initially this seems odd. For it seems that we often believe them to be true. (For example, I believe the counterfactual of freedom mentioned above.) What is the reason for thinking we are always, on those occasions, mistaken, that we believe what couldn't possibly be true? Why should we think that counterfactuals of freedom are all necessarily false?

Adams has, substantially, two arguments. First (MKPE, p. 110-111) he holds that there seems to be no ground or basis for the truth of such counterfactuals; there seems to be nothing, as he says in his present paper, that makes or causes them to be true. Suppose I claim that if Curley had been offered a bribe of $35,000, he would have (freely) accepted it. If I'm right, the antecedent neither entails nor causally necessitates the conclusion. It is both logically and causally possible that the antecedent be true and the consequent false. So what, Adams asks, makes this counterfactual true?

To investigate this question properly, we should have to investigate the implied suggestion that if a proposition is true, then something grounds its truth, or causes it to be true, or makes it true. Is this supposed to hold for all propositions? What sorts of things are to be thought of as grounding a proposition, and what is it for a proposition to be grounded by such a thing? What grounds the truth of such a proposition as this piece of chalk is three inches long? I don't have the space to enter this topic; let me just record that the answers to these questions aren't at all clear. It seems to me much clearer that some counterfactuals of freedom are at least possibly true than that the truth of propositions must, in general, be grounded in this way. But suppose we concede, for purposes of argument, that propositions must be thus grounded. Adams apparently believes that in fact human persons are free (he very clearly believes they are possibly free). Suppose, then, that yesterday I freely performed some action A. What was or is it that grounded or founded my doing so? I wasn't caused to do by anything else; nothing relevant entails that I did so. So what grounds the truth of the proposition in question? Perhaps you will say that what grounds its truth is just that in fact I did A. But this isn't much of an answer; and at any rate the same kind of answer is available in the case of Curley. For what grounds the truth of the counterfactual, we may say, is just that in fact Curley is such that if he had been offered a $35,000 bribe, he would have freely taken it.

Still further, God acts freely, and acts in response to his creatures. It is extremely plausible to suppose, for example, that if Adam and Eve had not sinned, God would not have punished them; if they had not sinned he would have freely refrained from driving them out of the garden. Perhaps you