

Presumption and the Necessary Existence of God

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Recent discussions of modal variants of the ontological argument for the existence of God¹ have tended to come to the following conclusion. If the existence of God, conceived as a Necessary Being, is even possible, then such a God actually exists—and, indeed, exists necessarily. I shall assume here that this conclusion is correct. I do not believe that the ordinary concept of God requires God to be a Necessary Being in the relevant, broadly logical sense of ‘necessary’; but we can certainly define *a Necessary God* as a being such that it is necessary, in a broadly logical sense, that that being exists and satisfies the concept of God. And we can say that a Necessary God must exist in fact if the existence of one is even possible.

But is it possible? Some think so, some think not; but I believe no conclusive argument for either opinion has been found. Empiricist criticisms of the notion of a Necessary Being no longer enjoy the unanimous support of analytical philosophers; I have argued against them elsewhere (Adams (1987), chs. 13-14), and will say no more about them here. Nevertheless, the justification of the thesis that it is possible for a Necessary God to exist remains by common consent the weakest point in modal versions of the ontological argument.

Leibniz found himself in a similar situation. He held that the ontological argument does establish that God must exist in fact if his existence is so much as possible. He also saw that this conclusion could be reached more directly by defining God as a Necessary Being than by reasoning about perfections (G IV, p. 405f). But he repeatedly criticized typical presentations of the ontological argu-

ment for assuming without proof that the existence of God is possible. And he pointed out that possibility assumptions are not trivial, arguing that it would be a mistake to assume the possibility of a fastest motion (G IV, p. 424/L p. 293) or necessary body (G III, p. 442f.).

Leibniz thought of more than one strategy for filling this hole in the argument. We shall be concerned here with only one of them, which turns on the concept of presumption. He argued that the existence of God ought to be presumed possible even if it cannot be proved possible, and thus that the ontological argument establishes the existence of God presumptively if not demonstratively. "For every being ought to be considered possible until its impossibility is proved" (G IV, p. 405).

The topic of this paper is whether the issue of the possibility of a Necessary God can be settled by a presumption of possibility. We shall consider (in section I) whether presumption settles the issue in favor of the existence of such a being, as Leibniz claims. Then (in section II) we shall take up the contrary suggestion that presumption settles the issue the other way, in favor of nonexistence. I will argue against both of these views. Then (in section III) I will question the general plausibility of the presumption of possibility or contingency, and suggest that even in the absence of proof, other considerations may be more important for deciding questions of possibility, such as whether a Necessary God is possible.

I

It is worth quoting a passage in which Leibniz explains very nicely his notion of presumption:

For every being ought to be judged possible until the contrary is proved, until it is shown that it is not possible at all.

This is what is called *presumption*, which is incomparably more than a simple *supposition*, since most suppositions ought not to be admitted unless they are proved, but everything that has presumption for it ought to pass for true until it is refuted.

Therefore the existence of God has presumption for it in virtue of this argument, since it needs nothing besides its possibility. And possibility is always presumed and ought to be held for true until the impossibility is proved.

So this Argument has the force to shift the burden of proof to the opponent, or to make the opponent responsible for the proof. And as that impossibility will never be proved, the existence of God ought to be held for true. (G III, p. 444)

Presumption, in the sense with which we (and Leibniz) are concerned, is a matter of accepting something as true in the absence of proof, and on the basis of a general rule. Leibniz was a lawyer,

and presumption plays an important role in legal procedure. We are all familiar with the rule of English common law according to which the defendant in a criminal case is "presumed innocent until proven guilty." We also know, of course, that what this presumption governs is *behavior* in the legal system, and that persons presumed innocent are not necessarily *believed* innocent. With regard to the possibility of a Necessary God, however, Leibniz's claim is clearly that there is a rule of presumption that should govern individual belief as well as public behavior. There may be less compelling reason to rely on rules of presumption in matters of individual belief than in matters of legal procedure, but that ground for suspicion of presumptive arguments will not be explored here.

The rule of presumption to which Leibniz appeals favors possibility and imposes a burden of proof on those who assert that something is impossible. His statement that "possibility is always presumed and ought to be held for true until the impossibility is proved" seems to express a very general rule of this sort. It is at least initially plausible to interpret him as meaning that the truth of any proposition ought to be presumed possible unless and until it is proved impossible. In accordance with this principle, and in the absence of proof, it might be argued, the truth of 'A Necessary God exists' ought to be presumed possible.

Unfortunately, the general rule of presumption in favor of possibility seems equally to support an argument that, in the absence of proof, the truth of 'No Necessary God exists' ought to be presumed possible. But we are assuming that if 'A Necessary God exists' is possibly true, it is necessarily true—from which it follows that if 'A Necessary God exists' is possibly true, 'No Necessary God exists' is not possibly true. Therefore we cannot consistently accept both of these propositions as possibly true. It may be plausible in most cases to presume, in the absence of proof, that a proposition is possibly true. But when we have two propositions of which we know that exactly one is possibly true, but we have not proved which one it is, the general rule of presuming propositions possibly true yields no consistent conclusion.

The only defensible general presumption in favor of possibility would really be a presumption in favor of *contingency*—a presumption that a proposition should be presumed contingent (possibly but not necessarily true) unless proved not to be. There are propositions that are known not to be contingent but about which it has not been proved whether it is they or their contradictories that are possibly (and hence necessarily) true. Goldbach's conjecture (that every even number is the sum of two primes) is a famous example. We are assuming here that 'A Necessary God exists' is another ex-

ample. A general presumption in favor of contingency has no bearing on such cases, and that is as it should be. It would be absurd to suppose that we ought to decide about Goldbach's conjecture on the basis of a presumptive rule favoring possibility or contingency or any other modal status of propositions as such.

A general presumptive rule favoring possibility cannot tell us whether a given noncontingent proposition, rather than its contradictory, should be assumed possibly (and hence actually) true, because such a presumption fails to discriminate between the alternatives—that is, because no difference between the alternatives is relevant according to the rule. A more specific rule, however, might discriminate between 'A Necessary God exists' and 'No Necessary God exists'. Leibniz may be interpreted as proposing such a rule when he says that "every being ought to be judged possible until the contrary is proved." Taking seriously the idea that it is *beings* that are to be presumed possible might lead to a rule of presumption favoring possibility of existence, in preference (if need be) to possibility of nonexistence. Such a rule would say that every proposition asserting that there exists something of a certain kind is to be presumed possibly true unless it is proved not to be. In the absence of proof, it would direct us to presume that 'A Necessary God exists' is possibly true; and it would not contradict its own advice by generating a similar presumption for 'No Necessary God exists', since the latter is not an affirmative existential proposition. With this rule, therefore, a modal version of the ontological argument would indeed "yield . . . presumptively the Existence of God," as Leibniz claims (G III, p. 443).

I do not know whether Leibniz would have argued for this rule, but in any case it is liable to a fatal objection. For if we apply it to *all* affirmative existential propositions that may plausibly be regarded as noncontingent but not (yet) disproved, we shall be led to regard them all as true. But if there are any such propositions at all, it is very likely that among them are some that are known to be inconsistent with each other.

Consider, for example, 'A Necessary God exists' and 'The Form of the Good exists'. 'A Necessary God exists' is plausibly understood as implying

- (1) Necessarily, there exists a conscious being that does not depend for its existence on anything distinct from itself.

Without claiming to give a correct interpretation of Plato, we may stipulate that 'The Form of the Good exists' implies

- (2) Necessarily, there exists a being that is not conscious, on which everything else that exists depends for its existence.

Clearly, both (1) and (2) are affirmative existential propositions, and both are noncontingent. Yet just as clearly, they are inconsistent. For suppose both were true. The God that exists according to (1) is conscious, and the Form of the Good that exists according to (2) is not conscious; so they must be distinct from each other. According to (1), therefore, God cannot depend for his existence on the Form of the Good; whereas according to (2), God must depend for his existence on the Form of the Good.

Both (1) and (2) are controversial. But I do not know of a conclusive disproof of either. If the presumptive rule in favor of possibility of existence is to be of use in matters of this sort, it would seem to apply to both of them. Applying it to both of them, however, leads to the inconsistent conclusion that both of them are true. It would be better to abandon the rule, or at least to limit its application to contingent propositions.²

Obviously we have not considered every possible rule of presumption. Is there perhaps some other plausible rule that would lead, without inconsistency, to a presumption that 'A Necessary God exists' is possibly true? In a sense we must say, "Wait and see if someone produces such a rule." But I won't hold my breath. Intuitively, it is not very plausible that 'A Necessary God exists' should be *presumed* possible, in *preference* to 'No Necessary God exists'.

II

Let us see if the shoe fits the other foot any better. Perhaps more philosophers today would be inclined to believe in a presumption favoring the possibility of 'No Necessary God exists' than in one favoring the possibility of 'A Necessary God exists'. We have seen that a general presumption in favor of possibility yields no reasonable basis for preferring either of these supposed possibilities to the other, and that a presumptive rule specifically favoring possibility of existence is likely to lead to contradiction if applied to noncontingent propositions. What about a presumptive rule specifically favoring possibility of *nonexistence*?

I do not see any reason to think that it would lead us into formal contradiction. But it is not particularly persuasive as applied to the noncontingent issues of existence that we understand the best—namely, those in arithmetic. If it is presently plausible to think it possible, and indeed true, though unproved, that there does not exist an even number that is not the sum of two primes, that is due to the frequency with which even numbers, when examined, have been discovered to be the sum of two primes. It is not because of any presumption favoring negative existential propositions as such. Or consider any property *P* of natural numbers in which mathemati-

cians have begun to be interested but about whose distribution nothing much is known. In the absence of proof should we presume that there is no integer between 35,357 and 35,368, inclusive, that has *P*, on the basis of a presumption favoring negative existential propositions? That would be an irrational way of proceeding.

Perhaps a presumptive argument against divine necessity will get farther by a less direct route. One could try to find various other propositions that entail 'No Necessary God exists' and whose possibility, or contingency, is favored by a plausible presumptive rule. On the assumption that any God would be essentially omniscient, for example,

(3) Nobody knows everything about the past³

entails 'No God exists', and hence 'No Necessary God exists'. If God exists, (3) is false, and if a Necessary God exists, (3) is necessarily false. Otherwise, however, (3) might well be contingent. If no God exists, there might or might not exist some other sort of being that knows everything about the past. So far as I know, (3) has not been conclusively proved not to be contingent. If we accept a general rule that says that every proposition ought to be presumed contingent unless it has been proved not to be, that will direct us to presume that (3) is contingent. Presuming that (3) is contingent entails assuming that 'No Necessary God exists' is possibly true. We are assuming that that in turn entails that 'A Necessary God exists' is not possibly true; but that consequence is quite consistent with a general presumption in favor of contingency, since we already knew that 'A Necessary God exists' is not contingent. Thus a general presumption in favor of contingency seems to generate an indirect argument for assuming the nonexistence *rather than* the existence of a necessary God to be possible.

If we accept this argument, however, a disturbing symmetry threatens once again to lead us into inconsistency. For example,

(4) Giraffes have been created by a Necessary God

obviously entails 'A Necessary God exists'. If the existence of a Necessary God is not possible, (4) is necessarily false. Otherwise, however, (4) is contingent. A Necessary God could create giraffes, but could also refrain from creating them. If the existence of a Necessary God has not been proved impossible, then (4) has not been proved not to be contingent. If we accept a general rule that says that every proposition ought to be presumed contingent unless it has been proved not to be, that will direct us to presume that (4) is contingent. And presuming that (4) is contingent entails assuming that 'A Necessary God exists' is possibly true. Thus a general

presumption in favor of contingency seems to generate an indirect argument for assuming the existence of a necessary God to be possible, as well as an indirect argument for a contrary assumption.

In view of this sort of symmetry it seems unlikely that we will be able to resolve the issue about the existence of a Necessary God by adopting a presumptive rule of maximizing the number of contingent propositions. The same number (probably the same infinite number) of propositions will be excluded from contingency by the necessity as by the impossibility of the existence of a Necessary God.

Perhaps it is a mistake, however, to focus on the *number*, rather than the *kind*, of propositions that are allowed to remain contingent. Let us define a "purely nonmodal proposition" as a proposition that does not involve a modal concept. Consider the rule,

- (5) Every *purely nonmodal* proposition ought to be presumed contingent unless it has been proved not to be.

(4) obviously involves a modal concept (the concept of a Necessary God), but (3) seems not to. It may be argued, therefore, that according to (5) we should presume the contingency of (3), and hence the possible *nonexistence* of a Necessary God, but are under no obligation to presume the contingency of (4) or the possible existence of a Necessary God. Moreover, this asymmetry between the existence and the nonexistence of a Necessary God with respect to (5) does not seem to be due to an arbitrariness in the selection of (4) as an example. I have been unable to think of a way of generating a plausibly contingent proposition that entails 'A Necessary God exists' but does not itself involve a modal concept.

Is there reason to accept (5), and in particular to presume the contingency of propositions that do not involve modal concepts, in *preference* to the contingency of propositions that do involve modal concepts? It may be argued that there is. Some philosophers suppose that modality must begin with purely nonmodal propositions, in something like the following way.

There are maximal consistent sets of purely nonmodal propositions—consistent in the sense that all the members of the set could be true together, maximal in the sense that adding to the set any purely nonmodal proposition not already a member of it would produce an inconsistent set. If we are willing to speak of possible worlds, we can say that maximal consistent sets of purely nonmodal propositions are correlated one to one with the possible worlds, as complete descriptions or histories of the possible worlds. The consistency and inconsistency of sets of purely nonmodal propositions may be viewed as the basic modal facts from which all other modal facts are derived. Given the purely nonmodal descrip-

tions of the possible worlds, we may be able to derive modal features of the possible worlds. A possible world will contain or lack a necessary being, for example, depending on whether or not its complete purely nonmodal description entails the existence of an individual x such that for every possible world w , the complete purely nonmodal description of w entails the existence of an individual that is identical with x , according to the appropriate criteria of trans-world identity.

The important point, according to the view I am presently expounding, is that while the possible worlds may have modal features, they are given by their purely nonmodal descriptions. Distinct possible worlds must differ in the purely nonmodal propositions that are true of them; there are no two possible worlds that differ only in their modal features. On this view, therefore, the variety or diversity of possibilities will be maximized by maximizing the contingency of *purely nonmodal* propositions. For only the impossibility of a purely nonmodal proposition will deprive us of a world that would otherwise be possible. It follows that it is reasonable to have a presumptive rule like (5), specifically favoring the contingency of purely nonmodal propositions, if the intent of the rule is that we should presume the maximum variety or diversity of possibilities.

This is an argument that must be taken seriously. It offers the most plausible way I can see of settling by presumption the issue about the possibility of a Necessary God. I fully expect some philosophers to be convinced by it. I am not convinced by it, however.

I am not convinced by it because I suspect that there are not enough purely nonmodal propositions to do the jobs the argument requires them to do. Many, probably most of our ordinary (and our scientific) descriptive concepts have modal aspects. To say of an individual that it is a dog or an oak tree, that it is composed of water or of steel, that it has a positive electrical charge, that it is red or blue, or that it is understanding the conversation that it is hearing, is to say a lot about what is causally (and hence logically) possible for that individual. If possible worlds are given by propositions containing such concepts as these, they are not given by purely nonmodal propositions.

A Humean might reply that this only shows that most ordinary (and current scientific) concepts have no place in the most basic description of either the actual world or any other possible world. Believing that all causal facts, in any possible world, must be reducible to facts about lawlike generalizations not involving any causal concepts, the Humean will be confident that possible worlds are

given by propositions not involving any causal concepts. Not being a Humean, I have no such confidence.

I therefore doubt that possible worlds are given by purely non-modal propositions. And doubting that, I have little reason to suppose that we will be led to a maximum variety or diversity of possibilities by a presumptive rule specifically favoring the contingency of purely nonmodal propositions. Hence I have little reason to accept such a rule.

And even if we were to adopt such a rule, the partly modal character of so many ordinary concepts might lead us to doubt that we have found a purely nonmodal, plausibly contingent proposition that entails the nonexistence of a Necessary God. Is proposition (3) really a purely nonmodal proposition? Doesn't the concept of *knowing* that occurs in (3) really have a modal aspect, extending its tentacles through many possible worlds, bringing in various considerations of what would, and could, have happened if . . .? According to some widely influential theories of knowledge and belief, it certainly does.

III

There is also a more general and more radical reason for misgivings about all the presumptive arguments we have discussed thus far. They all rely on some rule of presumption that favors possibility or contingency of propositions, with or without some qualification to avoid inconsistent presumptions. The general idea of a presumption of possibility is initially plausible, and widely assumed to be rationally compelling. Perhaps we should not be so quick to accept it, however.

Consider the following modal hypotheses:

- (6) I could have been born in the 13th century.
- (7) Phenomenal colors could be seen which we do not see, replacing orange between red and yellow on a possible visual spectrum.
- (8) Bodies could have existed without any minds ever existing.
- (9) Minds could have existed without any bodies ever existing.

(In these formulations 'could' expresses the sort of possibility that is at stake in discussions of the modality of God's existence—an absolute or metaphysical possibility that does, not necessarily imply causal possibility.) Consider also

- (10) Traveling to the past in a time machine is metaphysically, if not causally, possible.

All these hypotheses are (or deserve to be) philosophically controversial. I have opinions about some of them, but I do not know of

a conclusive proof or disproof of any of them. Ought I therefore to presume that each of them is true? Or, more cautiously, ought I to think there is a weighty presumptive consideration in favor of each of them, inasmuch as presumption favors possibility? I don't think so.

I might try to justify my rejection of presumption in these cases by appeal to presumptive counter-arguments reminiscent of some that were discussed above. There is a general method for generating such counterarguments. Let n be any one of (6-10), and consider

(11) p & not- n

formed by conjoining any obviously contingent proposition p with the negation of n . (11) will be contingent if and only if n is necessarily false, on the assumption that modal propositions, such as n , are necessarily false if false at all. On that assumption, we cannot consistently presume both the truth of n and the contingency of (11).

This counterargument strategy may or may not yield a good reason for not relying on presumptions of contingency regarding the truth of (6-10). I don't think we need it in any event. For I can't see a reason why any presumption favoring possibility or contingency should have a place in our thinking about metaphysical issues that are modal in character, such as the issues of the truth of (6-10). In considering such issues many, perhaps most, philosophers experience some genuine puzzlement about the extent of possibility and necessity. And this puzzlement undoubtedly arises in part from the limitations of our understanding of the nature and grounds of possibility and necessity. It would be an unreasonable prejudice to approach this area of perplexity with a presumption in favor of enlarging the extent of possibility.

No doubt there are cases in which it is plausible to presume possibility in the absence of proof. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there are cases in which our failure to find a proof of impossibility is a good reason for assuming possibility. It seems to be metaphysically possible, for example, for Fernando Valenzuela to pitch 35 no-hit major league games in one year. One important reason for assuming this to be possible is that we can see no good reason why it would be impossible.

But that is because it is plausible to assume that if it were impossible we would see a good reason for thinking so. Incidental features aside, the supposed possibility differs only quantitatively from events (individual no-hitters) that we know to be possible because they are actual. There is therefore no reason to suspect that we are entering into an area of deep perplexity about modality in this case. The quantitative aspects of the case also seem fairly simple,

so that if there were a mathematical impossibility we would probably have found it.

It is worth noting that we often have similar reasons for presuming impossibility. Can ideas sleep furiously? Most of us think not; why is that? I would not expect to find a strict proof in this matter; but I think we can reasonably reject any supposed possibility of ideas sleeping furiously, on the ground that we can't see how anything would count as ideas sleeping furiously. Here we assume that if there were a way in which ideas could do something that would count as sleeping furiously, we would see that that was so. Our inability to see any such possibility is a reason for thinking there is none.

Metaphysically interesting issues about possibility and necessity are much more baffling. We cannot reasonably assume that if there are possible phenomenal colors, very different from orange, that would fall between red and yellow on a spectrum, we would see that that was so. And we cannot reasonably assume that if there is something that keeps travel to the past, or the nonexistence of God, from being possible, we would have discovered it. Therefore I think we should be very suspicious of any presumptive argument on these matters.

Presumptions of possibility or contingency should normally be replaced by broader theoretical considerations in dealing with metaphysical issues about modality. It will generally be wiser to remain agnostic about such issues unless one or another answer is implied by, or more convenient for, a theory that is otherwise attractive. Consider the situation in the 19th century when it had been discovered that the axiom and postulate sets of several non-Euclidean geometries are formally consistent. Should it have been believed metaphysically possible for there to be, for example, a "curved," Riemannian physical space that would satisfy the theses of Riemannian geometry? The metaphysical possibility of such a space does not follow from the formal consistency of the axiom and postulate set. In the absence of proof, should the possibility of curved physical space have been accepted on the ground that there is a presumption in favor of possibility?

I think that would have been an implausible way of deciding the issue.⁴ The alleged possibility of non-Euclidean physical space is one that has at least an initial appearance of oddity. Many have been tempted to think they could just "see," intuitively, that space *must* be Euclidean. Some (including Kant) have succumbed to the temptation. These intuitions also do not amount to proof, and perhaps they never justified anyone in believing that there could not be a physical space that would satisfy the consistent axioms and

postulates of a non-Euclidean geometry. But in a situation like this presumptions of possibility do not cut much ice. For there are obviously opposing considerations that go at least a little ways beyond presumption. And given the history of the subject, anyone who affirms the possibility of non-Euclidean space must be quite distrustful of our ability to recognize possibility and impossibility in this matter, and is therefore not in a strong position to support presumption with the claim that if there were something impossible about non-Euclidean space we would probably have discovered it.

If the majority opinion today is that curved space is metaphysically possible, the principal reason for this belief is surely not a presumption of possibility, but the fact that the actuality (and hence the possibility) of Riemannian space is implied by otherwise attractive theories in physics. This kind of broader theoretical consideration seems an eminently reasonable basis for deciding issues about metaphysical possibility.

Are there theoretical considerations of this sort bearing on the issue of a Necessary God? In particular, are there attractive theories that work best (or only) with a necessarily existing deity? I think so. There is not room here to develop such a theory in detail, but I will mention two obvious candidates.

The cosmological argument directs us to one of them, which is a theory of creation. One of the oldest theoretical functions of belief in God is to provide an explanation of the existence of the world. Belief in a Necessary God has the advantage that the regress-threatening question, 'But who made God?', does not arise, or receives the speedy answer that God's existence has an explanation in its necessity. This answer is not as satisfying as it would be if we understood what makes God's existence necessary. But it is at least a way in which we can say that there *is* an explanation, and one that does not generate an infinite regress. It is also a way in which we can believe in a principle of sufficient reason that implies that there is an explanation of why there has ever existed anything contingent at all. I doubt that such a principle can be *proved* true, but I think it is attractive; and to that extent it affords, not a proof, but a theoretical attraction, of the existence of a Necessary God. If so, it also provides a reason for believing in the possibility of a Necessary God.⁵

The other theory to be mentioned here is a theological theory of the ontological status of the objects of logical and mathematical thought. Both "Platonistic" and constructivist theories in this area have a certain plausibility. On the one hand our thinking in logic and mathematics seems not to be sheer creation, but the discovery of something that is fixed by the strongest sort of necessity. It is

therefore natural to think that the objects of our thought—the truths, possibilities, forms, structures, relations, propositions, properties, natures, numbers, or whatever it is that we are investigating—possess necessarily whatever ontological status they have, and would still be there even if no human beings had ever existed. On the other hand, many of us find it hard to see how such objects could be there except insofar as they are thought or understood by some intelligent being. Both of these intuitions are strongly appealing. Can they be reconciled? Can we maintain *both* that these objects are there necessarily and that they cannot be there except insofar as some intelligent being thinks or understands them?

We can if we suppose that there is a God who necessarily exists and eternally and necessarily thinks or understands all the truths of logic and mathematics, and/or all the structures, relations, properties or the like on which those truths are based. Such a theistic theory is not the only conceivable supposition that would reconcile the apparently conflicting intuitions. One could hypothesize a plurality of intelligent necessary beings, none of them individually omniscient, that would divide among them the task of understanding, and thus sustaining, the possibilities and necessary truths. An alternative supposition would be that though it is necessary that at every time there be some omniscient being, there is an eternal succession of such beings, none of them individually immortal. On any hypothesis that would reconcile the intuitions, however, it must be a necessary truth that there exists at least one intelligent being, and that every idea involved in a truth of logic or mathematics is understood by some intelligent being. And the necessary existence of a single intelligent being, necessarily omniscient with respect to such truths, is arguably the simplest such hypothesis. These considerations seem to me to add to the theoretical attractiveness of assuming the actuality, and hence the possibility, of a necessary being that would have at least an important part of the intellectual attributes of a God.⁶

It is controversial, of course, how attractive either of these theological theories is. But it is on such points that controversy deserves to be focused. Presumptions of possibility cannot be expected to lead to a reasonable decision in a matter of this sort.⁷

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NOTES

¹Such as Malcolm (1960), pp. 45-51, Hartshorne (1962), pp. 50-52, Adams (1987), ch. 15, Plantinga (1974), ch. 10, and, with some qualifications, Lewis (1970) and Mackie (1982), pp. 55-63.

²For a similar objection to appealing to a similar principle in defense of the possibility premise of a modal version of the ontological argument, see Lewis (1970), p. 182f.

³This example is Richard Swinburne's. I am not convinced that his argument against the logical necessity of God's existence in Swinburne (1977), p. 265, is a presumptive argument; but if it is, it follows an indirect strategy similar to those I am about to discuss.

⁴Perhaps it was a good idea, heuristically, to *take seriously* the hypothesis that curved physical space is metaphysically possible. But that is different from believing on presumptive grounds that it is possible.

⁵The idea of using the cosmological argument as an argument for the possibility of a Necessary God is not new. See Leibniz (G IV), p. 406, and Hartshorne (1962), p. 52.

⁶This sort of argument for theism also has a history. One classic text for it, though not the oldest, is Leibniz's *Monadology*, sections 43 and 44.

⁷I am indebted to my colleague Donald A. Martin for helpful discussion of some points in this paper, though he bears no responsibility for anything I say here.