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CHANCE OR AGENCY?
A RESPONSE TO “DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND CHANCE
IN THE WORLD”

INTRODUCTION

Dariusz Łukasiewicz begins “Divine Providence and Chance in the World” thus:

The aim of the paper is to defend two theses: first, that the existence of chance events is compatible with God’s existence, and second, that chance might be part of divine providence. (this issue, p. 5)

Łukasiewicz goes on to distinguish six concepts of chance, some (C3, C5, C6) but not others (C1, C2, C4.) compatible with human freedom in the robust (“libertarian”) sense. In this paper, I argue in two ways that theists should reject ontological chance (C1) and rely instead on irreducible agency when considering events that are providentially not predestined by God.¹ My arguments depend on a univocal understanding of the assertions that God is a loving agent and that, at their best, human beings are loving agents. Implicit in Łukasiewicz’s paper, is the objection that this an improper anthropomorphism. I am an unashamed anthropomorphist and will defend univocity.

Before I present the arguments, I shall make it clear that by providence I mean loving particular providence, and that I am discussing the compatibility of chance with providence thus understood. I then present my arguments. The first is that we should not add ontological chance to irreducible agency because to do so multiplies mysteries. The second argument is that agency provides a better, albeit partial,

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¹ Strictly speaking by “irreducible” here I mean “not reducible to ontological chance.” The reduction of agency causation to axiarchic explanation is another, more difficult topic.

understanding of evil than the author's suggestion of a providential reliance on ontological chances. This second argument relies heavily on the providential reliance on C6 coincidence: "causal chance: a coincidence of two or more causal chains."

One final preliminary: although I differ from Łukasiewicz in preferring creaturely agency to ontological chance, I agree entirely with his criticisms of the traditional conception of providence as requiring divine authorship of every detail of the Universe.

1. LOVING PROVIDENCE

Łukasiewicz goes to some trouble to place his discussion of providence within the Christian tradition. Therefore, without restricting what I say to this tradition, I feel free to assume something that I hold is compatible with, but goes beyond the requirement of reason, the thesis that God is loving, expressed so strikingly but somewhat gnomically by St John's dictum "God is love." Within this tradition we have the Parable of the Prodigal Son, notable for the way the father does not allow pride or propriety to get in the way of parental love, but runs to throw his arms around his son the moment he awkwardly begins his avowal of repentance. Some five or so hundred years earlier we have what is, to my mind, one of the great moments in the history of religions. Paraphrasing somewhat, and hoping I am not being sexist, Hosea has a beautiful young wife who, lured by gifts and the "good times" is an enthusiastic amateur prostitute.² Hosea takes her to the wilderness where they have a second honeymoon and they come back to town arm in arm like young lovers. The people jeer at them: "A real man would have given her a good thrashing," the men say. "A man of honour would have divorced her," the women add. The priest caps it off: "A God-fearing man would have had her stoned to death for adultery." Hosea turns on them, saying: "We are the foolish whores, and the words of the prophets are God's love songs in the desert."

Reason does not, then, compel us to believe that divine providence is loving, and there is no incoherence in considering a morally righteous providential god who does not love us, and indeed has no desire to form any kind of community with us, so this is an unargued assumption within the scope of which I am arguing as a philosopher.

² Hoping not to be sexist, because some allowance has to be made for culture. For all I know, Hosea was a control freak or failed to notice that his wife was not merely beautiful, but had made original contributions to Babylonian mathematics.

2. THE ARGUMENT FROM INTELLECTUAL ECONOMY

1. We should not posit both ontological chance and irreducible agency.
Therefore,
2. Theists should posit irreducible agency rather than ontological chance.

THE PREMISE

There is a Humean anti-metaphysics that cheerfully accepts the chance occurrence of events, relying perhaps on our daily experience of things we cannot explain, like the way all the cans of anchovies have disappeared in the pantry to be replaced by sardines. (They have grown up, maybe?)³ Both Łukasiewicz's paper and my reply are, however, based on an acceptance of the scientific method as an, albeit fallible, guide to the truth. This method requires not only respect for the empirical data but repugnance for mysteries. I take it, then, that if we can posit neither ontological chance nor irreducible agency we should do so. But if, as I hold, we cannot avoid one or the other, then we should try to avoid positing both.

My proposal is to replace ontological chance by *coincidence* (C6) and, in particular, by the coincidence of causal chains arising from agency. These are not only unintended but can only be predicted with a more or less precise probability.

Quantum Theory might seem to imply that there are ontological chances associated with observations, as in the "Collapse of the Wave Packet." When considering the way contemporary physics might seem to imply that there are ontological chances, Łukasiewicz has in mind such a Collapse Theory, according to which:⁴

1. The quantum state specifies probabilities of the results of various observations.
2. If an observation is made, the state transitions into an eigenstate corresponding to the result of the observation (Ghirardi 2018).
3. If the observation is repeated, the state is not altered so the same result occurs with a probability of 100%.

To avoid ontological chances we must rely instead upon a No Collapse theory, either Many Worlds (Vaidman 2018) or Many Minds (Albert and Loewer 1988.) What these have in common is that when an observation is made it is as if the universe fissions into branches in each of which just one of the possible results of observation occur. In the simplified case in which we observe which slit (A or B)

³ Example due to Dominica Roberts.

⁴ For instance, "[I]t is possible that there are chance events in the world, as the modern science claims (e.g., on the quantum level, there is a radioactive decay of atoms" (Łukasiewicz 2020, 15).

the electron goes through, it is as if the universe fissions into two branches, in one of which the electron goes through A and in the other it goes through slit B. If the observer also undergoes fission then it seems to an observer in a given branch, say the A branch, that by chance the corresponding result, going through the A slit, has occurred. It is then a deterministic process that the universe evolves in this way that results in as if fission. No Collapse theories eliminate ontological chance but apparently at the cost of the morally obnoxious consequence that everyone undergoes fission repeatedly into many successors: if tempted to do wrong, then the gravity of your struggle would be undermined by the thought that you will split into a moral hero and a depraved weakling. Irreducible agency may, however, be used to avoid this consequence. Consider the process by which as a result of very many rapid fissions you are splitting into almost identical copies. I submit that they are all the same person, just occupying many worlds or having many minds, but that there will come a stage sooner or later in which the person has to decide which “branches” to choose to occupy. For example, the scientist might spend a day making various quantum mechanical observations. This results in a deal of morally irrelevant fission. But if the same scientist then decides to report a colleague for falsifying data this is a morally relevant choice, that expunges those branches in which no report is made. On this way of interpreting Quantum Theory without ontological chance, coincidences result from the unintended interaction of decisions. God might foresee that if the scientist reports a colleague for falsifying data and the scientist’s cousin resists the temptation to cheat on income tax expenses then, through no one’s fault, their grandmother dies of pneumonia. In such cases we would say that her death by pneumonia was by chance (C6). Assuming, which I know is controversial, that God cannot foresee the result of an act that is a free choice, it follows that God could not have foreseen her death by pneumonia any more than had it been by ontological chance. The other way of avoiding the Morally Obnoxious Conclusion is to permit the “Collapse of the Wave packet” as an ontological chance. If we are to avoid multiplying mysteries, we would then treat any non-determined free acts as just one species of ontological chance.

DERIVING THE CONCLUSION: NO BEST DIVINE CHOICE

Given a choice between irreducible agency and ontological chance, theists should, I say, prefer agency. The first argument for this is based on the thesis that among decisions as to what to create, if anything, there is no best possible, so God

has to make a choice.⁵ That arises not merely from the conceivability of an infinite sequence of better and better possible decisions, but also from the way values are partially rather than totally ordered. For instance, it would seem God has to “weigh up” the joys of creatures versus their suffering, the glory of significant individual and collective creaturely freedom versus the risk of disastrous choices, and the aesthetic value of a Universe governed by simple elegant laws versus laws with many ad hoc exceptions designed to prevent horrendous evils.⁶ In these cases there is no obvious ranking of one value versus another. The atheologian may well insist that there is an objective fact as to the ranking of values and that the Universe is manifestly not the result of an act of creation based on the correct ranking. The theist would do well, however, to allow that God, in choosing freely if and how to create, ranks various values in ways that human beings do not always accept. If that choice and that ranking is an ontological chance, then theists would reach two unpalatable conclusions. The more obvious is that this does not just concern *details* being left to chance, something that Łukasiewicz (and Peter van Inwagen, 1988) are comfortable with, but God would leave to chance the *type* of Universe we inhabit, which detracts from the grandeur of God. The less obvious is that if the decision is itself a case of ontological chance it sets no precedent either for us or for later divine acts. Although not a necessary condition for theism itself, our loving trust in loving providence requires that both we ourselves and God conform our future desires to a divine ranking of values. That, in turn, requires that choices tend to rank otherwise incommensurable values, which in turn sets precedents for future choices.

DERIVING THE CONCLUSION: MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Most theists hold that we are morally responsible for at least some of our choices. Partly this is because of the teaching of theistic religions, but it also a corollary of various solutions to the Problem of Evil, such as the Free Will Defense. But, I say, moral; responsibility is incompatible with reducing agency to ontological chances (in the brain or elsewhere).

It could be objected that there is a strong compatibilist tradition both within theism and in non-theistic philosophy of holding that moral responsibility is consistent with determinism. I have two replies to this. First, the case for the compatibility

⁵ In recent times this has been discussed by Ahern (1963), Rowe (2004) and Kraay (2010), among others.

⁶ The “weighing up” metaphor is misleading because it suggests a total ordering, namely that unless X and Y are of exactly the same value one is better than the other.

of freedom with determinism is stronger than the compatibility of freedom with ontological chance. This point, made by R. E. Hobart in the section “Self and Character” of his article (1934), concerns the non-rational, and so less than ideal character of arbitrary choices. An arbitrary choice due to ontological chance might be said to be free in some sense but not in the sense that gives us human beings dignity and which is being assumed when responding to the Problem of Evil.

This Hobartian case against calling chance choices free is based on the way our free decisions are often determined by rationality if we are sane, and hence if we are free. An example is a decision with a strong case for one choice and none for the other. Consider the way a choice between job offers might be based on work conditions, colleagues, salary, place of work and not having to re-locate. Usually these considerations point in different ways—that the dream job is in a distant place where you have no friends while the job close to home has various drawbacks. If the decision is free in that case, then it is also free in the happy case in which the dream job is within walking distance from where you already live. In the happy case we are free, but our choice is determined by our rationality.

My other reply to the compatibilist objection is that theists stress moral responsibility rather than freedom as such, which is relevant largely as a pre-condition for freedom. This is illustrated by the way many otherwise worthy theologians such as Aquinas and Calvin think they can combine moral responsibility with predestination. None of these theologians aim to combine moral responsibility with chance decision-making.

3. MODERATING DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HORRENDOUS EVILS

The assumption that God’s providence is loving leads, of course, to the Problem of Evil. A survey of proposed solutions is clearly beyond the scope of this paper. Hence in this and the next section, I merely invite readers to judge my remarks on the Problem of Evil in the context of whatever beliefs they have about the range of proposed solutions. In this section I argue that irreducible agency “justifies God’s ways to Man” more than ontological chance.

There is an intuitive difference between permitting evil and bringing it about, and this distinction is relevant to the Problem of Evil. Admittedly we might have trouble comprehending what could be good enough for a loving God to permit horrendous evils—they would not be horrendous otherwise. But we probably grant, with some reluctance, that there could be such reasons. Forced to choose, a loving God would *permit* horrendous evils if, in the circumstances, that was the best means to a Heavenly community of God with human beings. Most of us

reject, however, the Utilitarian thesis that sometimes a morally good agent would *cause* horrendous evils for the sake of some good enough goal. I shall assume, therefore, that theists have good reason to avoid ascribing direct responsibility to God for horrendous evils, and instead ascribing them either to chance or the agency of creatures. Compare, then, two scenarios, involving the current (as I write this) corona virus pandemic. In the first, the Government has insufficient resources to treat all the sick and makes a random choice (an ontological chance) as to whom to save and whom to let die. In the second, hospital treatment is available on a first-come, first-served basis, so the pattern of arrivals and departures of patients at the hospital is in principle explained by when individuals get sick, where they live and how seriously they take their symptoms. This is a case of causal chance (C6). In terms of outcomes the two scenarios are equivalent. Applying this to divine responsibility, compare two scenarios concerning some given horrendous evil in which a psychopath, whose own freedom is limited, is democratically elected and engages in genocide. I assume that no one person caused this evil. On the first scenario, Sheer Bad Luck, we suppose the horrendous evil is due to ontological chance—had the “roll of the dice” been different then there would have been no genocide. On the second, *Cruel Coincidence*, the evil resulted from very many freely made decisions but without any idea of just how bad it would get. My intuition is that God bears some responsibility for the horrendous evil in both cases and less on either of these than if it were God’s decision. Now consider the division of these two scenarios into morally neutral and vicious versions. In the latter, the horrendous evil would not have occurred if there had not been many morally wrong decisions. In the former, the horrendous evil occurs without any preponderance of wrong. On the Sheer Bad Luck scenario the wrong decisions are themselves yet more bad luck, so the two versions are morally equivalent. By contrast, on the Cruel Coincidence scenario the morally neutral version reflects rather poorly on God, whereas the vicious version largely exonerates God.

4. UNIVOCITY

Implicit in Łukasiewicz’s paper is the objection that my conception of God is anthropomorphic. For he writes: “We try to understand God’s nature through various analogies” (pp. 26–27).⁷ This would provide an objection to my argument that we must choose between agency and ontological chance, for if analogy is invoked,

⁷ Łukasiewicz’s application of analogy confuses me, however. He suggests that in the human case we can only ensure an outcome by controlling the details. I disagree: if a government wisely

then divine “agency” is something unknown to us, neither ontological chance nor of the same type as human agency. Likewise, recourse to analogy affects the intuitive evaluation of the Sheer Bad Luck and the Cruel Coincidence scenarios in their morally neutral and vicious versions. In addition, analogical discourse tends to trivialize considerations of compatibility. If I said with excitement that I saw something uniformly red and uniformly yellow, you might well wonder whether that is possible. But if I then qualified my assertion by saying that I saw something rather like red but also rather like yellow, you would be underwhelmed and wonder why I had never seen orange before.

To reply to this objection from analogy I argue that God is an agent in precisely the same sense as we human beings. This discussion of analogy might seem to readers to be a somewhat lengthy digression, but my aim is to concentrate on the univocity of the phrase “loving agent.”

Consider, then, the predicate “is a loving agent.” There are three ways we might use this predicate by analogy. First, we might mean that God is like a loving agent; second, that God causes effects like those of a loving agent (Ashworth 2017); or thirdly, that “God is a loving agent” is a metaphorical statement, intended to draw our attention or point to something we cannot put into words.⁸

Because analogical discourse is not the primary topic of this paper, I shall not attempt an exhaustive refutation. Instead, all three of my arguments for univocity are audience specific. That is, I invite defenders of analogy to consider why they hold this position and judge whether the arguments I provide holds in their cases, with their preferred theory of analogy.

The phrase “by analogy” is an *alienans* qualification like “decoy” in “decoy duck,” when describing a model of a duck put in a pond to attract wild ducks to it: a decoy duck is not a kind of duck. But we might use a tame duck in the same way and call it a decoy. In this concrete context there is no confusion. But we are easily confused in more abstract contexts. It is all too easy to think of “by analogy P” as a sense of P, albeit an extended one. To avoid confusion, I introduce the operators AN and ANUNI, where AN(p) means: “by analogy p but not literally p,” and ANUNI(p) means: “either AN(p) or literally p,” where I stipulate that the literal meaning is univocal between the divine and human case. For simplicity, we may suppose that AN only operates on literal truths, so we do not consider

introduces a carbon tax, they can be confident it will reduce CO₂ emissions, while leaving the details to the workings of a free market.

⁸ It is puzzling how metaphor works (see Hills 2017). I assume, though, that whatever the mechanism a (live) metaphor draws our attention to something not (easily) put in words.

AN(AN(p)).⁹ In addition, I stipulate that by *theism* I mean theism understood as the thesis that there is a God who is literally an agent in the sense a human being is an agent. So, theism is univocal theism, and *anatheism*, that is, AN(theism), is incompatible with theism.

UNDERCUTTING THE CASE FROM INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

The naive version of the Case from Incomprehensibility resorts to the assertion that the finite cannot contain the infinite. This is a spatial metaphor and illustrates the unreliability of reasoning using metaphors. As a general principle, it was clearly refuted by Gregor Cantor when he discovered non-trivial results about transfinite numbers.

The case from Incomprehensibility may be stated in a less naive way by appealing either to religious experience or spiritual maturation to conclude that we do not, and in this life, cannot, know what God is like. (Often reference is made to a childish belief in God as “a man in the sky with a long white beard.”) I hope I do not have to say that much talk about God is misleading and excessively anthropomorphic: the idea of God as “He” rather than “She” is a case in point.

To undercut the Incomprehensibility Argument, I note a familiar point concerning the phenomenology of colour. It is plausible enough that a thoroughly colour blind person does not know what colour is like. Nonetheless, Frank Jackson’s Mary, the brilliant scientist living in a black and white environment, knows a lot more about colour than I do (Jackson 1982, 1986). Moreover, she shares my knowledge that there is no such shade as greenish red, but that there is a bluish red (a purple shade). Applying this to the case of God: I make no claim to know what it is like to be God (excepting, that is, God incarnate) but there is much we can know about God. For instance, to those who deny univocity I ask: Which part of “that than which no greater can be conceived of” do you not understand?

ANALOGY AND IDOLATRY

Consider that tedious trope: the idolatry of univocity. On the contrary, I say, idolatry is worshipping that which is not worthy of worship. Hence, it is indeed idolatrous to worship a god conceived of morally righteous in a cold unloving utilitarian fashion, taking a good enough end to justify horrific means. It is also

⁹ In a more comprehensive treatment of analogy, I would have to consider the idea that the three suggested explications of analogy themselves only hold by analogy of analogy.

idoltrous to worship a god who has abdicated so much power as to be nothing more than, in Whitehead's phrase, "the fellow-sufferer who understands" (1985, 351). Granted, then, that idolatry is not restricted to golden calves and so on, I invite readers to further grant that to worship something whose nature you are ignorant of is as idoltrous as worshipping something you know to be unworthy.

THE ARGUMENT FROM TRIVIALIZATION

This argument for univocity requires the premise that we can reasonably argue for theism. I begin with a defence of this premise, I concede that for many, perhaps most, theists their belief in God is basic in the sense of not being the conclusion of an argument. That this is warranted has been defended by reformed epistemologists such as Alvin Plantinga (1983) and Nicholas Wolterstorff (1976). Now, the grounds that it is the circumstances that warrant the basic belief, may often be explicated as an argument. Consider, for example, John Newton's famous conversion recounted in his hymn "Amazing Grace": "'Twas Grace that taught my heart to fear/and Grace my fear relieved." We may suppose his faith was grounded in that experience. The associated argument—and maybe it is an argument actually made at an unconscious level—is that both the sense of guilt and of forgiveness may reasonably be interpreted as divine communication. Although the degree of conviction expressed by his belief might well exceed the probability of the associated argument, the warrant of that belief is correlated with the reasonableness of the associated inference. This correlation is shown by considering a Catholic curmudgeon who insists that instead of being divine communication it was just as likely that Satan was lulling repentant sinners into a false sense of security to prevent them engaging in the mortifying "works" of penance required for salvation. If you accepted that Objection from Satanic Influence, then you would find the associated argument unpersuasive. Likewise, you would deny that the belief was properly basic. If, instead, you judged that there was need for the "discernment of spirits" you would use the holiness of Newton's later life as reply to the Objection from Satanic Influence. Likewise, his holiness defeats that objection's capacity to undercut the grounds for Newton's belief. This case illustrates, then, the thesis that we may often explicate grounds as associated arguments, whose probability is correlated with the warrant provided by the grounds. Those who hold a properly basic belief in God should therefore grant that it would be reasonable to base that belief on the argument that explicates the grounds.

The audience to whom I address the Argument from trivialization are, then, those who grant the propriety of a faith in God based in part on an argument. ("In

part” because I do not exclude the role of grace.) My claim is that these are arguments for theism but not for ANUNI(theism) Hence, these are arguments against atheism. The case for my claim is that replacing theism by ANUNI(theism) trivializes the argument on which faith could be partially based. A clear example, but not one I endorse, is Paley’s version of the Design Argument (1802). Paley describes in detail the various astounding adaptations living organisms exhibit and infers the conclusion: Designed by God. Suppose you interpreted that as an inference to: ANUNI(Designed by God) and hence to ANUNI(theism) rather than theism. This would be trivial because an evolutionary naturalist such as Richard Dawkins could easily accept that life is as if designed and that the cause of this is something that warrants awe and is in that sense like God. Such a naturalist might even be comfortable with a metaphorical understanding of the following lines from the hymn “How great Thou art” (Stuart Hine’s version).

I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
 Thy power throughout the universe displayed
 Then sings my soul, ...
 How great Thou art, how great Thou art.

A successor to Paley’s Design Argument is Best Explanation Apologetics. Theism best explains a combination of facts including the suitability of the universe for life, its abundance of beauty and the imperious character of moral duty. These explananda may be summed up as ANUNI(theism), provided we explicate analogy as asserting a similarity of effects. In that case the conclusion is the same as the premise. The inference is likewise trivial if we interpret analogy as metaphor, drawing our attention to something. For then the conclusion ANUNI(theism) merely emphasizes and emotionally intensifies the premise.

I anticipate the objection that I am ignoring the most obvious version of atheism namely asserting that there is something that is not God but similar. Then, it could be pointed out, the inference to the conclusion that there is something similar to God is not trivial. I shall reply, but first I discuss a different *prima facie* exception to the triviality of ANUNI(theism), namely, the First Cause Argument, whose non-trivial conclusion—that there is an uncaused cause—is consistent with atheism). My response is a dilemma: if our conception of a cause is the current one then a first cause is an interesting metaphysical thesis, but of little religious significance and perfectly compatible with the rejection both of theism and atheism. For the uncaused cause might, for instance, be an initial state in which Space was just a single point. In that case the argument associated with theistic belief will be one which takes as a premise that there is an uncaused cause and then,

as a further step, seeks to show that this cause has divine attributes. My claim that analogy trivializes argument will then apply to that further step, rather than to the initial argument to the bare conclusion that there is an uncaused cause. On the other hand, if you embed the thesis of an uncaused cause in an Aristotelian Four Causes theory of explanation you will assume that the first cause is the first efficient cause and that it is accompanied by an associated final cause. This is interesting because asserting that there is a final cause of the Universe does provide a non-trivial explication of atheism as there being something similar to God.¹⁰ For a combination of efficient and final cause is similar to an agent. The problem with it, though, is the assumption that a first efficient cause is accompanied by a final cause. That Aristotle, who we should not forget was a brilliant biologist as well as a philosophical genius, should think of causation this way is, I submit, outmoded by evolutionary theory. In our current intellectual situation, we should consider irreducible agency not teleology as the most probable addition to mere efficient causation.

ANALOGY AS SIMILARITY?

The most obvious interpretation of analogy is similarity, understood as the sharing of many properties. This resists the Argument from Triviality, as is shown by the Design Argument that David Hume (1947) puts into the mouth of Cleanthes. He argues using the principle that like effects have like causes to the conclusion that there is something that resembles a human intelligence for the Universe. (This is a conclusion that Philo, perhaps standing for Hume himself, thinks needs qualifying when he says the cause *remotely* resembles human intelligence.) My response is that we know perfectly well what resembles agency causation, namely the combination of efficient and final causation that I have argued is outmoded. My confidence in this regard is based on a literal understanding of similarity as sharing properties. For if we know of x and assert that y resembles x, then we are asserting that y has some of the very same properties as those we know that y has.¹¹ To be sure, x may have in addition many properties we know nothing of, but that

¹⁰ A recent development of a teleological atheism is the *euteleology* of John Bishop and Ken Perszyk. See, for instance, their "Alternative Concepts of God: Essays on the Metaphysics of the Divine" (2016).

¹¹ There are various ways nominalists attempt to analyze properties in terms of resemblance not vice versa. I am here assuming that the only ones with any plausibility are those in terms of exact resemblance of parts (the "tropes"). This does not affect my response.

is not here relevant. In this case the relevant property concerns axiarchism in John Leslie's sense, that is, explanation in terms of the value of the outcome (1973).

To those who think that similarity is less precise than sharing properties, I suggest they are thinking of similes. Most similes are disguised metaphors, not statements of similarity. When Robbie Burns says "My love is like a red, red rose," he does not mean it literally: she is somewhat more like a baboon. As far as content rather than metre is concerned, he could have avoided simile and said, "My love is a red, red rose."

AND LOVE?

Because Łukasiewicz argues for the role of chance in the context of divine providence, I must defend not merely univocal theism but the further thesis that we may univocally say of God and we humans—at our best—that we are loving agents. Call this Loving Theism. The case *for* AN(Loving Theism) is undercut in the same way as the case for AN(Theism). The case *against* AN(Loving Theism) is not that the conclusion to ANUNI(Loving Theism) is trivial but that AN(Loving Theism) is incompatible with the human condition, while Loving Theism is not so much incompatible as problematic in a way that invites a commitment constrained by but going beyond the requirements of reason (Forrest 2019).

If we explicate AN(Loving Theism) as saying that God's acts are like those of a loving agent, the obvious response is that the horrendous evils show they are not. Theodicians argue that in spite of appearances God really is loving, but AN(Loving Theism) explicated in this way concerns precisely those appearances, not underlying motives. If instead we explicate AN(Loving Theism) as saying that God is not exactly loving but similar to loving then, then—far from being vague—we know precisely what it is to be like loving but not loving: it is to be morally righteous. I reject AN(Loving Theism) thus explicated for two reasons. The first is that if God is morally righteous rather than loving, the suggestion that we may therefore call God loving is deceitful. For we do not need any recourse to analogy. All we should do is reject the Judaeo-Christian tradition of loving providence. My second response is that the horrendous evils some suffer are best excused by theodicians on the grounds that God has a loving plan involving a joint divine-human community and that this is such a splendid outcome that a loving God risks both human and divine suffering to achieve it. But such a theodicy of glorious love is only available to those who claim God is loving: an unloving but morally righteous God would not permit horrors. Or so I say. For here, again, readers must judge for themselves.

Yet again, we might explicate AN(Loving Theism) as a metaphor drawing our attention to the joyous character of life. That “happy clappy” message would be fine except that joy is fleeting. By contrast, the avowal that God is loving, typically combined with loving trust in that God, is—I submit—a permissible reaction to the ambivalent human condition.

CONCLUSIONS

I have argued, first, that physics can be understood using irreducible agency instead of ontological chance, and that, second, theists should hold that God’s loving providence is better understood in terms of agency. Finally, I have explained why when I talk of God’s love and God’s agency the words are to be used univocally of God and human beings.

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CHANCE OR AGENCY?

A RESPONSE TO "DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND CHANCE IN THE WORLD"

Summary

Dariusz Łukasiewicz distinguishes six concepts of chance, some (C3, C5, C6) but not others (C1, C2, C4) compatible with human freedom in the robust ("libertarian") sense. In this paper, I argue in two ways that theists should reject ontological chance (C1) and rely instead on irreducible agency when considering events that are providentially not predestined by God. My arguments depend on a univocal understanding of the assertions that God is a loving agent and that, at their best, human beings are loving agents. Implicit in Łukasiewicz's paper, is the objection that this an improper anthropomorphism. I am an unashamed anthropomorphist and will defend univocity.

Keywords: Dariusz Łukasiewicz; chance; agency; providence; anthropomorphism; univocity.

PRZYPADEK CZY SPRAWCZOŚĆ?

ODPOWIEDŹ NA „DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND CHANCE IN THE WORLD”

Streszczenie

Dariusz Łukasiewicz wyróżnia sześć pojęć przypadku, spośród których jedno (C3, C5, C6) są spójne z ludzką wolnością rozumianą po libertariańsku, a inne nie (C1, C2, C4). W tym eseju argumentuję na dwa sposoby, że teiści powinni odrzucić przypadek ontologiczny (C1) i odwołać się zamiast tego do nieredukowalnej sprawczości w odniesieniu do zdarzeń, które nie są opatrnościowo wyznaczone przez Boga. Moje argumenty zależą od jednoznacznego rozumienia twierdzeń, że Bóg jest kochającym sprawcą oraz że istoty ludzkie, w swoim najlepszym zachowaniu, są kochającymi sprawcami. Łukasiewicz zakłada milcząco, że takie twierdzenia cechuje niewłaściwy antropomorfizm. Opowiadam się za antropocentryzmem i będę bronić jednoznaczności.

Słowa kluczowe: Dariusz Łukasiewicz; przypadek; sprawczość; opatrność; antropomorfizm; jednoznaczność.