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A BIGGER GOD AND THE PRE-CREATION SITUATION:
SOME REMARKS INSPIRED BY WILLIAM HASKER*

In his excellent book *Providence, Evil and Openness of God*, William Hasker wrote:

It is quite amazing how readily philosophers assume that we can place ourselves in the “creation situation” and figure out what ought to be done in that situation. (HASKER 2004, 177)

To reflect on what God should do in such a situation (e.g., in the “If I were God the Creator, I would...” style) is dangerous “since our grasp on the pre-creation situation is tenuous in the extreme” (HASKER 2004, 184).

Despite these restrictions, while discussing the problem of God’s freedom and goodness, Hasker himself attempted to deliberate the reasons God had for (or against) creating the world. Inspired by Hasker’s remarks, I will undertake a similar task, but on my own account. To achieve my purpose, I will make three assumptions (obvious for a typical theist). Firstly, God is bigger, or greater, than anything which exists (except for him) or can exist (including everything, except for him, that can be thought). Secondly, God created the world we know, but he could have created no world at all or created a world different from the one that actually is. Thirdly, in creating the world (instead of not creating any world at all), God had or considered what may be called—by analogy to a rational and free human subject—reasons. To these assumptions I will add another, less obvious, ontological assump-

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tion: there exists (or has been created) exactly one world (one of possible worlds), and not a certain number of worlds (a certain number of possible worlds). In the context of theistic creationism (understood as a variety of actualism), it would be difficult to conceive that God could have actualized, all at once, several different, mutually exclusive and complete ways things might have been. It would be also difficult to imagine anyone derive intellectual and emotional satisfaction from saying: I am really one of an *all* and my *all* is really one of many *alls*.

TO CREATE, OR NOT TO CREATE?

Let us begin with what may be called—again, by analogy with the human situation—*the first divine dilemma*: to create a world, or not to create any world at all? Hasker (2004) lists and discusses three reasons which might lead God not to create a world:

(R1) ... the life of God is completely rich, fulfilling and satisfying without reference to creation, and therefore that God has no need whatever for a created world in order for the divine life to be complete and perfect. (182)

(R2) ... in deciding to create, God brings about the existence of a realm of *imperfection*, whereas without creation there is only the perfection of the divine life itself. (183)

(R3) ... it is rather plausible that the more valuable sorts of worlds God might have created all involve free and rational creatures—creatures capable of voluntary friendship with God, but also capable of opposing God.... The risk of this [the latter] happening was far from the negligible... (183)

Let us call (R1) the no need reason, (R2)—the imperfection reason, and (R3)—the risk reason. Let us also note that the risk reason is a variety of the imperfection reason: every created world must, if compared to God, involve imperfection, and the imperfection of some of possible worlds consists at least in that their creation entails the risk that free beings God created would oppose him. In that case, only reasons (R1) and (R2) are significant for *the first divine dilemma*. Let us now have a closer look at these reasons. I will return to the issue of risk in the concluding part of the paper.

As to the no need reason, God actually has no personal (contributing to his happiness) or moral need or duty to create any world at all. As no finite quantity can add anything to an infinite quantity, similarly no created entity (however valuable or good) adds to divine *immensity*. It is on the latter attribute of God that Hasker focuses his attention (2019, 429). On the other hand, he is inclined to reject the attribute of divine impassibility, and, in consequence, to claim that “the creation does make possible an enrichment of God’s life” (HASKER 2004, 183). On this view, divine life affected by joys and sufferings of creatures would become personally and morally richer. I do not think that Hasker is right about that. God’s sharing feelings of his creatures (or his responding emotionally to situations in which creatures find themselves) would enrich creatures but would not enrich God in any way. The life of God is or would be characterized by the fullness of happiness and goodness even without such sharing. An access to the fullness benefits creatures but does not change the fullness. After all, what is full cannot be full-filled (neither quantitatively, nor qualitatively).

The imperfection reason seems, *prima facie*, insignificant. A finite quantity can make an infinite quantity neither bigger nor smaller. Thus, no imperfect created entity would take anything away from the boundlessness and perfection of God (just like no excellence of a created being would add anything to his excellence). This truth can be expressed in the form of the following *quasi*-equation:

$$(E) \text{ immeasurable excellence} = \text{immeasurable excellence} + \text{created excellence} = \text{immeasurable excellence} - \text{created excellence.}^1$$

There is, however, another way of understanding the imperfection reason. One can say not only that God has no need to create a world (or that the creation of a world is superfluous), but also that he *ought not* (in a certain sense) to create a world. By introducing imperfection into reality, creation produces a form of contact or relationship of God with what is imperfect (however minimal the relationship, it is nevertheless a real one). The consequence of this must be a (minimal but real) violation of divine holiness. Such a standpoint has been developed also by Mark C. Murphy who wrote:

The holiness framework suggests that the default setting for an absolute perfect being is to *refrain from* creating. For the holiness framework takes there to be requiring

¹ This *quasi*-equation is a paraphrasis and development of an analogous *quasi*-equation formulated by Hasker, from which he distanced himself (2004, 183).

reasons against an absolutely perfect being's entering into relationships of unity with what is deficient, defective, imperfect, limited in goodness. But creation inevitably places God into intimate relation with such limited beings. (MURPHY 2021, 145)

Murphy points here to the attribute of divine omnipresence. However one may conceive this attribute, it is impossible to understand it without an irremovable and intimate relation of perfect God with imperfect creatures. It is true that such a relation takes nothing away from God (similarly, it gives or adds nothing to him), but it is "unfitting" for God:

The "material" that God has to work with in creation ... is so meager in comparison to the creator that there is something unfitting that God would be intimately related to this; but the divine omnipresence ensures such a close and perpetual relationship between God and any creatures. (MURPHY 2021, 147)

One may disagree with Murphy about the importance of the imperfection reason, understood as the unfittingness reason, in *the first divine dilemma*. Is it actually included among "the requiring reasons for God not to create" (MURPHY 2021, 145)? Is it really the case that God's metaphysical and axiological status, that is his holiness, takes or ought to take (*prima facie*, at least) priority among his motives for acting? Even if we answered these questions in the negative, we must not forget that in the history of natural theology there is a strong tendency (dating back at least to Aristotle) to isolate God from the world which—whatever it may be like—is not worthy of him. This tendency was probably shared also by St. Thomas Aquinas who reduced God's omnipresence to the presence through power, knowledge, and causation and stated that the relationship of God to the world is not a real relationship. Obviously, one can assume, with Aquinas, that God knows and loves the world by knowing and loving himself. Such a claim, however, does not eliminate the fact that God enters (albeit in his peculiar manner) into a cognitive and volitional relationship with the world that is unworthy of him. Thus, intellectual efforts to isolate God (motivated by the belief in his holiness or *intangibility*) cannot be fully successful and the world (whatever it may be like) fits God as little as a plebeian button fits a king's coat.

To emphasize the unfittingness reason, let us employ an analogy proposed by Hasker. In his considerations, he uses the analogy with an artist whose *intrinsic goodness* is not a simple function of his *productive goodness* (see HASKER 2004, 169–70). It is possible that a continuing increase (or a lack thereof) in *productive goodness* is no longer important to the *intrinsic good-*

ness of a given artist. Let us add, however, that it is also possible that a (certain degree of) *productive goodness* is unfit or in some way offends the *intrinsic goodness* of that artist. It is unworthy of a great painter to paint pictures that are beneath his talent, although sometimes his circumstances may justify his painting such pictures. A supporter of the argument from unfittingness claims that the absolutely perfect God the Creator finds himself in a similar situation, while the ontic disproportion between immeasurable God and imperfect (of necessity and in every case) creatures makes any created world contrast negatively with the perfection of God.² The fact that there is such a contrast—which in some manner offends God (who, in sustaining an imperfect being in existence, must be in contact with it)—might have been a serious reason against creating any world. However, if the world has nevertheless been created, there must have been reasons which outweighed, or at least counterbalanced, the unfittingness reason. What are those reasons?

In the religious and philosophical traditions of different varieties of theism, two reasons are frequently given (albeit in different forms and often mixed with each other). For instance, the Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes the following statement of the First Vatican Council:

This one, true God, of his own goodness and “almighty power”, not for increasing his own beatitude, nor for attaining his perfection, but in order to manifest this perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel and from beginning of time, made out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal. (CCC 1997, para. 293)

What strikes in the wording chosen by the Council is that God created the world “of his own goodness” and “in order to manifest” his perfection. Developing both ideas and making them more precise, one can state that:

(R4) God is perfectly good, that is, magnanimous, generous or benevolent, which provides him with appropriate grounds for bestowing existence on other entities although they do not *deserve* (in any sense of the word) to exist.³

² Murphy (cf. 2021, 48) emphasizes the connection between absolute holiness and absolute perfection which makes whatever is limited or imperfect unfitting for it.

³ For the benefit of those who believe that saying that what does not exist deserves (or does not deserve) existence makes no sense, one can reformulate the last part of (R4) as follows: although if they existed, they would not deserve existence.

(R5) God is so great or perfect that it would be fitting that his perfection be expressed outside him and, in particular, that it be known and worshipped by other creatures.

What is the relationship between the pair of reasons (R4) and (R5) and the pair of reasons (R1) and (R2)? Actually, the two pairs are in conflict. According to (R1) God has no need to create any world whatever. Reasons (R4) and (R5) does not deny it in principle but point to motives which could make the absence of such a need insignificant. In turn, reason (R2) considers creating a (necessarily imperfect) world as unfitting. It is clearly opposed by reason (R5) which finds a certain fittingness (of a different kind) in the creation of a world: the created world, despite its imperfection, manifests the perfection of God and participates in it. In addition, reason (R4) suggests that the world has been created despite or in defiance of unfittingness indicated in (R2): the imperfect world actually does violate in some way God's holiness, but his gracious love can make him let the world be, even at the cost of his coming into *touch* with imperfection.

As can be seen, *the first divine dilemma*—to create, or not to create—rests, to put it simply, on two questions: Does the absence of need (R1) invalidate the manifestation motive (R5) and the love motive (R4), or, on the contrary, both those motives (or either of them) invalidate the absence of need? Is holiness (R2) more important than love (R4) or manifestation (R5) (or *vice versa*)? It is difficult to give an unambiguous answer to these questions.⁴ Such a situation confirms the traditional belief of most theists (including Hasker) that God had a real choice between creating and not creating, at least in the sense that no reason could have compelled him absolutely either to create or not to create. Moreover, the very fact of creating the world can be considered as revealing God's *preferences*: it is probable that by creating the world, God in some way prefers love or manifestation to the absence of need and to his holiness (in the sense of protecting his intangibility). The choice made by God without any prevailing reasons for his option does not necessarily mean that his decision was arbitrary or random. The world—as opposed to both any world whatever and unactualized possible worlds—was not brought into being out of necessity, nor was it created arbitrarily or using “a randomizer” (cf. HOWARD-SNYDER and HOWARD-

⁴ It is for this reason, among others, that Hasker is right in saying that God's “love for the creatures presupposes his decision to create them,” but “it can't be used to explain that decision” (HASKER 2004, 184, cf. 179). I believe that divine love is the necessary or favorable but not sufficient condition for creating the world.

SNYDER 1994, 266). The world is a work of God who has a definite nature and definite preferences.⁵

WHICH WORLD TO CREATE?

By indicating above that God, making a decision to create a world, had different possible worlds to choose from, we have moved on to *the second divine dilemma*: which or what world to create? What makes solving this problem difficult is the fact that it is unclear what worlds aspired to the honor of being chosen to be created. The following questions arise here: Are possible worlds or sets of worlds commensurable as to their excellence? If this is the case, are commensurable worlds (or sets of worlds) hierarchically ordered by their excellence? If this is the case, is there a top and/or bottom level in the excellence-based hierarchy of worlds (or sets of worlds)? The positive answer to the latter question leads to the problem whether the creation of “*a best creatable world*” or “*the least good world*” is possible (ROWE 2005, 466, 464). The negative answer, in turn, leads to the problem of choosing a world from “an infinite, unending series of *increasingly better* [or worse] creatable worlds” (ROWE 2005, 464).⁶

We do not have to settle these questions. It suffices to address the common core of debates emerging from all, or almost all, ontological options allowed by the questions. That core can be expressed in another question: Are there any appropriate reasons for God, in his making a decision about creating a world (chosen from various possible worlds), to prefer a world or worlds that are (absolutely or in some respect) better to a world or worlds

⁵ In the Thomistic view, the purpose of God’s action is goodness with which he is identical. However, because that good already exists and is of absolute nature, God can achieve his purpose by both not creating and creating any world which “reflects and reveals his goodness” (GARCIA 2009, 235). Norman Kretzmann observes also that “if perfect goodness is an aspect of God’s essence, and self-diffusiveness is essential to goodness, it looks as if creation has got to be an inevitable consequence of God’s nature” (KRETZMANN 1991a, 219). Aquinas’s failing to accept this conclusion is considered by Kretzmann as an inconsistency. Let us note that we need not interpret the creation of the world by God either in terms of free choice or in terms of some kind of necessity, but we can interpret it in terms of natural and, at the same time, free preferences and what fits them. Laura L. Garcia is right that God must be considered from the perspective of “the metaphor of artist, freely choosing the forms and materials that suitably realize his design” (GARCIA 2003, 89).

⁶ Hasker (2004, 181) is inclined to answer the first question in the negative. The positive answer to the second question is a presupposition in most discussions over the pre-creation situation. In this context, one often forgets that there may be more than one hierarchy.

that are (absolutely or in some respect) worse? In other words: Has God reasons to optimize (in the absolute or relative way) creation?

If worlds are incommensurable, the above question takes the following form: Has God a reason to choose a world according to the criterion he believes fitting (or most fitting) and prefer a world or worlds which meet that criterion (to worlds which do not meet it) or meet it better than others?⁷ If other ontological scenarios are valid, the question is whether there are reasons to (as far as possible) simply create better and, in particular, the best of the worlds taken into consideration?⁸

I believe that to effectively address the problem of the optimization of creation, one must distinguish two perspectives: the global metaphysical perspective (accessible directly only to the creator) and the local metaphysical perspective (perceived directly by creatures endowed with consciousness). From the global perspective, the concept of optimization of creation makes no sense as *quasi*-equation (E) makes every world (regardless of how big—however that bigness is understood—it is) equally unimportant if compared to God.⁹ The situation is different, however, when we move from the global perspective to the local one. Then we are not comparing worlds to God (and their coming into existence to nothingness). Instead, we are comparing worlds with one another and the problem of the optimization of crea-

⁷ Hasker, who is inclined to believe that “incommensurable values exist also for God” (HASKER 2004, 181), would probably say that no criterion is more fitting. However, it is certainly not the case that all values and criteria are incommensurable for God. It is more probable that God prefers a certain set of values or criteria. Therefore, even if the elements of the set are incommensurable, each of them may be described as a higher value or a fitting criterion.

⁸ Even if there exists a series of increasingly better possible worlds without the top element, one can consider a certain interval of the series and choose the best world from that interval. I do not discuss here Hasker’s critique—which I believe effective—of Rowe’s *trap*, i.e., the argument which is supposed to show that any choice God makes about creating one of an infinite series of increasingly better worlds would reveal his moral defect. Hasker is right to say (2004, 173, cf. 202–6; 2005, 457–60; cf. HOWARD-SNYDER and HOWARD-SNYDER 1994, 265–67) that “a ‘fault’ that it is logically impossible to avoid is no fault at all; it is not a moral defect.” By the way, it is worthwhile to note Aquinas’s position, as interpreted by Norman Kretzmann: there exists an infinite series of worlds which are theoretically better (in some respects) than our world, but “the actual world considered as a representation of God is as good as possible in the sense that any world better than this one in terms of improved precision of representation would be no better at all in its capacity to represent God to any possible created percipient” (KRETZMANN 1991b, 239). Let us add that it would be unfitting for God to create a world insignificantly or imperceptibly better than our world; on the other hand, it would be unfitting for us to judge God’s choice which of equally or almost equally good worlds to create.

⁹ What is more, for anything created—whether bigger or smaller—to come into being, it is necessary to bridge an equally infinite distance: the distance between nothingness and existence.

tion does arise: Would it not be more fitting—as it were, for the sake of those who inhabit worlds in question—to create a world which (at least in some respect or within a certain interval) is better (or at least not worse) than others?

I believe that God, in choosing a world to create, takes the local metaphysical perspective into consideration and thus follows the (at least generally or minimally conceived) principle of the optimization of creation. Otherwise—to use Hasker’s words—“it would be very difficult to make such a choice on God’s part rationally intelligible” (HASKER 2004, 179). The question arises, however, what the optimization of creation is supposed to consist in. I can see no other possible way to reply than by referring to God’s reasons for creating a world. If those reasons—the love (understood as grace) reason (R4) and the manifestation reason (R5)—exerted a significant influence on the decision to create a world (instead of refraining from creating anything), then it is in these reasons that one must look for the criteria which a created world should meet. Let us, therefore, consider the reasons in question in the context of *the second divine dilemma*.

While explaining what the divine virtue of grace is, Robert M. Adams clarifies, in a way, reason (R4). In his clarification he writes:

A God who is gracious with respect to creating might well choose to create and love less excellent creatures than He could have chosen. It is not to suggest that grace in creation consists in a preference for imperfection as such. God could have chosen to create the best of all possible creatures, and still be gracious in choosing them. God’s graciousness in creation does not imply that the creatures He has chosen to create must be less excellent than the best possible. It implies, rather, that even if they are the best possible creatures, that is not the ground for this choosing them. (ADAMS 1972, 324)

I believe that Adams, in rejecting the claim that “grace in creation consists in a preference for imperfection as such,” adopts the global metaphysical perspective. However, if we changed the perspective to the local one, it would be difficult to avoid the belief that the greater (or more clearly shown) the grace, the less deserving the object on which the grace is bestowed (in the Christian tradition, this insight is expressed in St. Paul’s words: “where sin increased, grace increased all the more”—Romans 5:20). In that case, optimizing creation in the context of (R4) would consist in choosing to create the world that is least worthy of it. Paradoxically, from the vantage point of the reason of gracious love (R4), the best, the optimal, and the most fitting

world should be “*the least good world*.” However, as we have imposed certain limitations on the principle of optimization, it would be more accurate to say that optimization with reference to (R4) consists in seeking worse (in a certain respect or within a certain interval) worlds. Creating any of such worlds would be the best expression of divine grace.

Let us now consider the manifestation reason (R5). This reason, as opposed to the love reason (R4), should give preference to better (in a certain respect or within a certain interval) worlds. From the local metaphysical perspective, such worlds reveal more of God’s perfection and, in the case of worlds involving rational creatures, the divine perfection can be known clearly and worshipped in such worlds.

As can be seen, *the second divine dilemma* rests on a conflict between (R4) and (R5). It seems that a solution to the conflict should consist in seeking worlds which would equally respect—in part—both reasons. Certainly, there are many such intermediate or mixed worlds, and our—the actually created—world (with its different degrees of imperfection and excellence, smallness and greatness, good and evil, etc.) is one of them. The optimization of creation should thus consist in giving preference to a set of worlds which are far from both the least good world and the best world, or in giving preference to a set of worlds in which elements of both extremes coexist and are distributed equally.

One of the consequences of the above solution to *the second divine dilemma* is the claim that God has good reasons for creating the world as—according to Hasker—it actually has been and should be created. According to Hasker, the world meeting the standards of a “bigger God” is a world in which “there shall be certain events that are not positively controlled by him, namely the free choices of the creatures” (HASKER 2004, 127). Moreover, such a world should be given “a genuine though limited autonomy of its own” and, in consequence, should be “an evolutionary universe” which “is in a real sense *self-creative*” (HASKER 2019, 439).

Hasker’s world (or set of worlds), being a world of human freedom and of spontaneous randomness of nature, actualizes reasons (R4) and (R5) equally. In such a world, there is a high probability that signs of grace and signs of manifestation, i.e., evil and goodness, ugliness and beauty, smallness and greatness, suffering and joy, etc., would appear in similar degrees. Assuming that the initial probability of goodness and evil in the acts of will performed by the creatures (or the initial probability of goodness and evil in the random events) is equal, and if regression toward the mean occurs, the distribution of

goodness and evil in a long time interval involving numerous choices (events) should be more or less equal. A similar statement would be valid also for other—opposing—signs of grace (love) and manifestation.

Let us note that an equally distributed actualization of reasons (R4) and (R5) does not need to be only of statistical nature. Both reasons, as they are to exemplify each other in some way, should also modify each other: the grace reason should be specified by the manifestation reason and, conversely, the manifestation reason by the grace reason. This means that the motive to create what is least worthy of being created should be restricted by the motive to make divine perfection manifest in creatures. After all, it is difficult to expect from God to create something so unworthy of being created that, ultimately, it would absolutely deny divine perfection. Similarly, the manifestation motive should be restricted by the grace motive. Creating great and excellent beings, God cannot permit their absolute independence and—in the case of free beings—their absolute hubris and absolute power.

One can confidently say that not only does Hasker's world actualize the statistical equal distribution of reasons (R4) and (R5), but it also shows their *cooperation*. According to Hasker, "God governs the world in terms of *general policies* which overall are wise and beneficial, even though in some instances they may result in serious harm and suffering" (HASKER 2019, 438). In adopting these policies, God lets evil be and, at the same time, transforms it into goodness. Moreover, God guides the world and the history toward their eschatological end where evil is defeated and "not only the overall creation but we ourselves are brought to a completion and fulfillment of unimaginable wonder" (HASKER 2019, 453). In other words, Hasker's world heads toward the state in which grace and manifestation of divine perfection will become fully and jointly apparent. God will triumph over evil whose existence he has permitted, thus manifesting his glory; all the creatures, including all the great powers of this world, will recognize that they exist and act only thanks to God's grace.¹⁰

As can be seen, by considering reasons (R4) and (R5) as reasons for creating a world of a certain type, we have concluded that those reasons co-determine the type of world which may be called Hasker's world. In the light of reason (R4), evil present in this world becomes comprehensible and, in the light of reason (R5), the eschatological triumph over evil seems expected. Therefore, one can say that our considerations have provided us

¹⁰ I have disregarded the details of Hasker's theodicy in my discussion; they are addressed, among others, by Dariusz Łukasiewicz (2019, 492–521).

with a solution not only to the problem of creation but also to the problem of evil. It is worth adding that these considerations also indicate a certain manner of solving the—intensely debated nowadays—problem of (divine) hiddenness. In the argument from hiddenness, the existence of people who do not believe in God (not due to their willful resistance, but because of missing evidence) appears to falsify the existence of God (see SCHELLENBERG 2017, 103). However, in the light of reason (R4), the existence of such people is very much expected. Assuming that a lack of faith in God is an imperfection, it is an act of divine grace to permit the existence of unbelievers (and even their good or happy life). (As a matter of fact, by permitting the existence of numerous other serious imperfections, God *hides* evidence of his existence). On the other hand, reason (R5) requires that believers capable of recognizing and worshipping divine glory should also exist in the world. The principle of the cooperation of reasons makes it possible to hope for the full revelation of God to all people of goodwill in the eschatological dimension. In addition, the principle in question allows us to understand why faith is also a gift of grace and cannot be based only on natural, and thus essentially limited, evidence of the existence of God.

CONCLUSION: IS GOD A PASSIBLE RISK-TAKER
OR AN IMPASSIBLE CAREGIVER?

In the present essay, while entering into discussion with William Hasker, I have addressed two divine dilemmas in “the pre-creation situation.” My considerations focused on the reasons for creating a world—the love (grace) reason and the manifestation reason—which in some way prevailed over the reasons against creating a world; at the same time, the concurrence of the former reasons prompted the image of an (rather relatively) optimal creatable world. It turns out that the latter resembles both our world and the world suggested by Hasker’s theism. In that world God has brought to existence both what is unworthy (thus showing his grace in a special way) and what displays high degrees of excellence (thus manifesting his glory). On this view, the eschatological completion of the world would be the full actualization of divine grace and of the manifestation of God.

At the end, let us return to the risk reason (R3), which has been initially considered as a reason against creating a world (of a certain kind). According to (R3), God could refrain from creating a world involving free and ra-

tional creatures because by creating such a world, God would run the great risk that the creatures might disobey him. Hasker, however, reverses the meaning of reason (R3), making it a reason for creating a world which involves such creatures. To achieve this, he designs a thought experiment in which a parent-to-be is faced with the choice between a child who “will always and automatically do and be exactly what [the parent wants] it to do and be” and a child who “is fully capable of having a will of its own and of resisting [the parent’s] wishes for it” (HASKER 2004, 128, cf. 141). Hasker suggests that in the same way as “it is far better to accept the challenge of parenting a child with a will of its own” (129), the creation of free creatures “is worth the risk it entails” (142).

I agree that God—as the creator of the world inhabited by human beings who may introduce evil into it by their conscious and free actions—is “a risk-taker.” It must be emphasized, however, that the divine risk is a limited one. God resembles a perseverant caregiver or tutor who knows his charges very well and can influence their behavior; he participates in organizing the conditions they need to live and is capable of mending long-term negative consequences of their acts; he accompanies them, supports them, and admonishes them. Not in vain is God called father; he is a real and powerful caregiver, guide, and judge, as well as the one who—sometimes after a long time, but at the appropriate moment and in a consistent manner—metes out justice.¹¹ Coming back to Hasker’s analogy, whoever chooses a child with a will of its own, takes a certain risk, but is also aware of the means he has to make his educational success highly probable (or, should educational efforts fail, to ensure that a child never finds itself beyond its tutor’s control).

According to Hasker, the view which sees God as a risk-taker rejects the doctrine of impassibility (HASKER 2004, 134). As I have already said, even if—as a consequence of the rejection—one allowed for God’s “emotional involvement with the world” (134),¹² this could not enrich God’s life in any way as divine life is already complete without the “involvement.” I would add that I do not believe it is necessary to reject the doctrine of impassibility. It would suffice to interpret it in the spirit of (biblical and extra-biblical) intuitions of open theism. One can claim both that “God is open to us his creatures” (91) and that his inner life is immutable, untouched by any influ-

¹¹ This seems to me to conform with the main ideas of open theism (see HASKER 2004, 97, 161).

¹² It consists in that God has “a wide range of emotional responses” to what happens in the world and in particular to evil which occurs in it (HASKER 2004, 161). Examples of such responses, which make up “the inner life of God,” include: “the anger... against sin” and “the ecstatic joy” because of someone’s conversion (HASKER 2004, 134).

ence of the world, since the essence of divine life is love for all that exists and this love is perceived by the creatures—according to situations in which they find themselves—as anger or joy or sadness, etc. According to a supporter of open impassibilism, “emotional responses” of God to situations of his creatures are particularizations of divine love for them. The particularizations exist on the part of the creatures, yet *cum fundamento in Deo*. And as far as compassion—in the sense of concern for or comfort given to loved ones in their difficult circumstances—is an aspect of love, one can say that “*Impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis*—God cannot suffer, but he can *suffer with*.”¹³

The above view (like open theism) strongly emphasizes divine love but, at the same time, is not liable to the objection of anthropocentrism or anthropomorphism (or, at least, it makes this objection, which is a serious challenge to *passibilists*, weaker). Moreover, the solution I have proposed brings God’s perfection more clearly to the fore and conforms better with our practical intuitions. Given the choice between two equally competent physicians, one of whom feels our suffering (or responds to it emotionally), while the other just understands it (and focuses only on giving help with an appropriate means at an appropriate time), we would choose the latter. Therefore, the bigger God resembles an impassible caregiver rather than a passible risk-taker.

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¹³ These words of Bernard of Clairvaux are quoted by Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spe salvi* (2007, no. 39).

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A BIGGER GOD AND THE PRE-CREATION SITUATION:
SOME REMARKS INSPIRED BY WILLIAM HASKER

S u m m a r y

In the present essay, while entering into discussion with William Hasker, I addressed two divine dilemmas in "the pre-creation situation." My considerations focused on the reasons for creating a world—the love (grace) reason and the manifestation reason—which in some way prevailed over the reasons against creating a world (the no need reason and the imperfection reason) and whose concurrence prompted the image of an (rather relatively) optimal creatable world. It turns out that the latter resembles both our world and the world suggested by Hasker's theism. In that world, God has brought to existence both what is unworthy (thus showing his grace in a special way) and what displays high degrees of excellence (thus manifesting his glory). On this view, the eschatological conclusion of the world would be the full actualization of divine grace and of the manifestation of God. In the final part of the essay, I attempted to show that my view does not entail the rejection of the idea of divine impassibility.

Keywords: God; creation; divine dilemmas; impassibility; open theism; William Hasker.

WIĘKSZY BÓG I SYTUACJA PRZED STWORZENIEM:
UWAGI INSPIROWANE PRZEZ WILLIAMA HASKERA

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W niniejszym eseju autor, dyskutując z Williamem Haskerem, rozpatruje dwa Boskie dylematy w sytuacji przed stworzeniem świata. Centralnym przedmiotem tych rozważań są racje za stworzeniem świata – racja miłości (łaski) i racja manifestacji – które jakoś przeważyły racje przeciw stworzeniu świata (rację braku potrzeby i rację niedoskonałości) i których współwystępowanie wyznaczyło obraz (raczej relatywnie) optymalnego świata do stworzenia. Okazuje się, że świat ten przypomina nasz świat oraz świat teizmu Haskera. W świecie tym Bóg powołał do istnienia zarówno to, co jest jego niegodne (okazując tak w szczególny sposób swoją łaskę), jak i to, co odznacza się wysokimi stopniami doskonałości (manifestując w ten sposób swą chwałę). Eschatologiczne zwieńczenie świata ma być przy tym pełnią realizacji łaski i manifestacji Boga. W końcowej części tekstu próbuje się uzasadnić tezę, że przedstawiona koncepcja nie wymaga odrzucenia idei Boskiej niecierpliwości.

Słowa kluczowe: Bóg; stworzenie; Boskie dylematy; niecierpliwość; teizm otwarty; William Hasker.