Why an unsurpassable being cannot create a surpassable world

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Abstract: **Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder suggest that it is possible for an
omnipotent being, Jove, to create randomly a world from a continuum of ever more
perfect possible worlds. They then go on to argue that Jove could be characterized
as morally unsurpassable despite creating a surpassable world. I raise a number of
problems for the view that Jove could be characterized as morally unsurpassable
when he creates (randomly or not) a surpassable world.**

Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder suggest that it is possible for Jove,
a being who is essentially omnipotent, to select randomly one of an infinite
number of possible worlds for actualization.[1] They claim that Jove could employ
a device that would provide him with such a random selection. The Howard-
Snyders then go on to make a number of arguments in support of the position
that Jove is morally unsurpassable, even when: (1) there is no best possible
world since for any possible world, there is a better; and (2) the world that Jove
randomly creates is (as is unavoidable) a surpassable one.

Stephen Grover has recently raised a number of powerful objections to the
Howard-Snyder's arguments regarding Jove's moral unsurpassability, and has
discussed some problematic issues surrounding Jove's employing a random
selection device to create a possible world.[2] For example, Grover discusses
some puzzling issues regarding the relationship between the device and Jove's
omniscience (e.g. it seems that Jove would know the outcome of the device before
he used it, and so it is difficult to make sense of it supplying Jove a random
selection), and Jove's omnipotence (e.g. Jove would be impotent with regard
to the outcome of the device, but this seems incompatible with his being all-
powerful).[3]

In this paper I will grant for the sake of argument that the issues raised by
Grover can be dealt with satisfactorily, and that Jove could employ a device ran-
domly to select a possible world for creation. I will review some of the arguments

offered by the Howard-Snyders in support of the position that Jove is morally unsurpassable even when he randomly creates a surpassable world, and then I will provide a number of thought-experiments that challenge this position. Following this, I will argue that no matter how Jove creates a surpassable world, he could not be characterized as morally unsurpassable. I will draw a moral from the thought-experiments discussed in the previous section, and I will argue that there could not be an agent who creates a surpassable world who is morally unsurpassable. In the end, I hope to show that the position that Jove (or, once we remove the disguise, God) could be morally unsurpassable and create a surpassable world is untenable.

Consider the Howard-Snyders' first thought-experiment: suppose that Jove is omnipotent and desires to create a possible world. Suppose further that for each possible world there is a better. Imagine that Jove could rank all the possible worlds with positive value, assigning each of them a positive natural number, such that the number 1 is assigned to the possible world with the lowest positive value, 2 for the next lowest, and so on *ad infinitum*.[4] Next, imagine that Jove creates a random-selection device that could provide him with a random number. Using this device, Jove could randomly select a possible world and then create it. For example, suppose that Jove uses the device and randomly creates world 777.

The question here is whether Jove can be characterized as morally unsurpassable, even though the world he creates is surpassable. The Howard-Snyders claim that, although world 777 (or any other world Jove might randomly create) is surpassable, this in no way impugns Jove's being morally unsurpassable.[5] They suggest that when we consider other thought-experiments in which an agent uses a different procedure for selecting a world such that the world that this agent creates is *better* than the world Jove creates, it cannot be shown that this agent is *morally better* than Jove. That is, they argue that even though an agent may create a better world than Jove's, this agent has not done anything to impugn Jove's moral unsurpassability.

In order to support this claim, the Howard-Snyders offer the following thought-experiment in which an agent uses a different procedure for selecting a better world than Jove's. Another omnipotent agent, Thor, finds himself in the same predicament as Jove (i.e. he desires to create one of an infinite number of ever more perfect possible worlds). But, instead of employing a device randomly to select a possible world, Thor simply selects a world to create, and he creates world 888. The Howard-Snyders do not specify how Thor selects world 888, but presumably the fact that he selects it non-randomly is sufficient for the thought-experiment.

It might appear that Thor is morally superior to Jove since he created a better world. However, the Howard-Snyders deny this intuition and argue that Thor's supposed moral superiority cannot simply consist in his creating a better world

than Jove.[6] To demonstrate this, they imagine Juno, another omnipotent being confronted with the same predicament as Jove and Thor, employing a random device and creating world 999. The Howard-Snyders argue that Juno is not morally better than Jove, even though she creates a better world. They claim that this is because, 'factors outside of one's control can make a difference to how much good one brings about *without* making a difference to how good one is'.[7] That is, because the worlds that Juno and Jove create depend upon the number generated by their respective devices, which worlds they create are out of their control. As such, the fact that Juno creates a better world than Jove does not show that Juno is morally better than Jove. The Howard-Snyders go so far as to posit that Juno and Jove would, *ceterus peribus*, be morally on a par, even though Juno creates a better world than Jove. But, if Juno and Jove are morally equivalent, Thor could not be better than Jove in virtue of creating a better world, since the world Thor creates is *worse* than the world created by Juno. That is, if Juno and Jove are morally equivalent, Thor cannot be morally better than one of them and morally worse than the other.[8]

Granting that Juno and Jove are morally equivalent, and that Thor's creating a better world than Jove does not *in and of itself* provide evidence that Thor is morally better than Jove, I think that once these thought-experiments are described more fully, it can be seen that Thor is morally superior to Jove. This can be accomplished by providing a salient detail of the selection procedure that Thor employs to create a possible world, and by comparing this procedure with the procedure Jove employs.

In order to highlight the aforementioned salient detail, we might fill out the thought-experiment involving Thor in the following way. Assume that Thor wants to create a possible world and recognizes that he could not create the best possible world. In deliberating about how to go about deciding upon which world to create, imagine that he considers picking one randomly like Jove, but dismisses this possible selection procedure as he sees that this would allow for the creation of a world that is relatively low on the scale of worlds from 1 to infinity (e.g. he might randomly create world 4).[9] Suppose that Thor would like to create a world relatively high on the scale of worlds from 1 to infinity, and would prefer to exclude the worlds at the lower end of this set of possible worlds. As a result, Thor decides not to use a random-selection procedure like Jove's.[10] Suppose further that Thor realizes that if he selected a world to create based on a procedure or principle like, 'never create a world if there is a better world that you could create', he would not create *any* world.

In the face of this, imagine that Thor opts to non-randomly select a possible world for creation in order to avoid the possibility of creating a minimally acceptable world, and yet to enable him to create a world.[11] Suppose he does this by first selecting a relatively high number and then randomly picking a number above this self-imposed minimum standard of creation. We might imagine

that Thor selects this cutoff non-randomly by arbitrarily picking a relatively high number. That is, rather than giving each possible cutoff *an equal chance* of being picked (e.g. 4 as likely to be picked as 999 for the cutoff), Thor excludes the potential cutoffs of low positive value from being selected, and just picks a relatively high number. By 'arbitrarily' I mean that Thor doesn't have any principled reason for selecting, for example, 10,001 as his cutoff as opposed to 10,002 (but he does have a reason to pick *some* high number). In other words, Thor arbitrarily picks a high number off the top of his head.

Now suppose that Thor, after non-randomly choosing a cutoff in this way, uses his random device and selects a world to create above that cutoff. Suppose further that Thor does this because he recognizes that non-randomly creating a relatively good (though surpassable) world in this way would be better than (a) using a simple random selection procedure which might result in his creating a minimally acceptable world; and (b) his selecting a world to create only if it is the best world he could create, as this would lead to his creating no world at all.

As a result of using this sort of (partially) non-random procedure, Thor has succeeded in excluding minimally acceptable possible worlds from being created. As noted above, a random selection procedure like the procedure employed by Jove would not exclude these worlds. As a consequence, I would urge that such a non-random selection procedure constitutes a *better procedure* than a (purely) random procedure like Jove's, in that the non-random selection procedure provides a greater likelihood of creating a better possible world. Given this, when confronted by the sort of situation under discussion, it would be *morally better* for an agent to employ a non-random selection procedure like Thor's than to employ a random selection procedure like Jove's. What I am suggesting is that Thor's non-randomly choosing to create a world over randomly choosing to create a world (in the way that Jove does) should be seen as positively reflecting upon Thor's moral character. Conversely, Jove's choice of a simple random-selection procedure over a non-random selection procedure like Thor's should be seen as negatively reflecting on Jove's moral character. As such, Thor should be seen as morally better than Jove. To be clear, Thor morally surpasses Jove, not because he creates a better world, but because he employs a morally better *selection procedure*. In the end, the position that Jove could remain morally unsurpassable while randomly creating a surpassable world in the way described above is not tenable.

In light of the above, one might suggest that Jove could employ a random-selection procedure that is more like Thor's procedure. For example, Jove might randomly select a minimum cutoff using his device, and then randomly select a world over this cutoff for actualization. Jove's revised random procedure, so the line would go, eliminates minimally acceptable possible worlds just as Thor's procedure does (and remains entirely random). As a result, one might argue,

Thor's decision procedure is not better than Jove's revised random procedure, and so Jove can be plausibly said to be morally unsurpassable.

There are a number of problems with this suggestion, however. First, if Jove randomly selects a cutoff, he might select world 3. As a result, this sort of procedure would *not* eliminate minimally acceptable possible worlds (as Jove might then randomly select world 5 for creation). Second, we could easily imagine another agent who employs a better procedure than Jove's revised random procedure. Suppose Jennie, another omnipotent being, randomly selects a number using her device, *doubles* this number, and then used the product as her minimum cutoff. If Jennie were to select a world to create above this cutoff (randomly or not), her procedure would constitute a better procedure than that used by Jove, since her procedure would be disposed to create a better world than his procedure. As a result, if Jove were to employ the revised random procedure described above (or, as will be argued below, *any* other sort procedure), he would thereby show himself to be morally surpassable.

Interestingly, at the end of their paper, the Howard-Snyders discuss Jove's creating a world non-randomly. However, they do not specify how he goes about doing this (i.e. what selection procedure he uses). They go on to suggest peculiarly that if Jove non-randomly creates world 777, 'so doing would not … reflect badly on him in any way'.[12] This implies that the discussion of Jove employing a random selection procedure was not essential to making a case for Jove's unsurpassability when he creates a surpassable world. As Grover notes, the Howard-Snyders hold that the random-selection device is 'merely a narrative device, serving to illustrate the point that Jove can choose amongst acceptable worlds without moral defect'.[13] So the Howard-Snyders are arguing that what world Jove creates (whether he selects this world randomly or not), cannot impugn his moral unsurpassability.

In response, Grover rhetorically asks, when Jove non-randomly creates a world 'what are the ''factors beyond Jove's control'' that allow him to create a world worse than Juno, without thereby being judged to be less good?'.[14] His point is that if Jove non-randomly creates a world, which world he creates is within his control and, as such, he is responsible for which world he creates. This is apparently because when Jove non-randomly creates a world, which world he selects does not rely on an independent method of choice (e.g. a random-selection device), but rather can be seen as being a result of *his* choice. In this event, it seems that Jove is accountable for which world he non-randomly creates. What presumably enables the attribution of moral unsurpassability to Jove when he randomly creates a world in the face of Juno creating a better world is that when Jove creates randomly, what world he creates is out of his control (just as the world created by Juno). When Jove creates non-randomly, however, the world he creates *is* within his control, and so this manoeuvre to preserve Jove's moral unsurpassability is no longer available.

In addition, the thought-experiment involving Jennie points to a very serious problem for the view that Jove could create a surpassable world (randomly or non-randomly), while remaining morally unsurpassable. The crux of the problem is that, if there is no best possible world, then for *any* selection procedure, there will be a better selection procedure. For example, Jennie's procedure is worse than one in which an agent quadruples the initial number generated by their random device, and then selects (randomly or non-randomly) a world above that minimum cutoff for creation. It should be clear that such efforts at improving the likelihood of the creation of a better possible world can continue *ad infinitum*. This is because,

> (1) For any selection procedure for the creation of a possible world, there is a better selection procedure (i.e. when it is employed by an agent, the agent is disposed to create a better world).

Note that two morally relevant features that contribute to the assessment of the comparative moral worth of agents confronted by Jove's sort of predicament are: (a) which world the agent creates; and (b) how the agent decides upon creating that world.[15] Recall that the Howard-Snyders deny that the former can be used as a gauge for an agent's moral worth. Even accepting this, I have urged that we should (also) examine the sort of selection procedure used by an agent to determine his/her comparative moral worth. Which selection procedure an agent picks is surely within her control. What I am suggesting is:

> (2) What selection procedure an agent uses to create a possible world reflects upon his/her moral worth (i.e. when an agent uses a better selection procedure than another agent, the former is morally better than the latter).

From (1) and (2) it follows that:

> (3) There could not be an agent (confronted by the sort of predicament in regard to creating a possible world in which Jove finds himself) that is morally unsurpassable.

Another way of putting this problem is that, assuming there is no best possible world, for any agent x that uses any selection procedure p, there is another (possible) agent y that uses a different procedure q, where q is a better procedure than p. If it is the case that the selection procedure an agent uses reflects his/her moral worth, then it follows that for any agent x who creates a surpassable world, there is a (possible) morally superior agent y. Therefore, a being that creates a surpassable world (using *any* selection procedure) could not be morally un-surpassable. So my point is that a *morally unsurpassable being* (confronted by the sort of predicament in which Jove and the others find themselves) is really a illusion much like *the largest possible object*.

In response to my argument, one might question why an agent's employing a selection procedure that is more likely than another agent's to yield the creation of a better world makes the former *morally better* than the latter. Such a line of inquiry might be seen as an attack on (2) above. I think that this claim can be straightforwardly justified by at least two traditional moral theories. First, one might suggest (*à la* Rowe) that the mere fact that an agent like Thor excludes certain worlds via a self-imposed minimum standard of creation shows that such an agent is not willing to settle for worlds that an agent like Jove is willing to settle for.[16] Accordingly, an agent like Thor displays a better *character* for using a selection procedure that eliminates these worlds, and in so doing shows himself to be more morally praiseworthy than an agent like Jove, who does not eliminate those worlds. This moral intuition is captured by Aristotelian views of ethics. That is, the claim that Thor's display of a better character as evidenced by his *choosing* to employ a better selection procedure (i.e. one that increases the likelihood of creating a better world), and his reasons for choosing such a procedure, entails that he is a morally better agent than Jove, seems to be rooted in a view that moral praiseworthiness is to be found in the agent's virtuousness, as reflected in how the agent is disposed to act because of his/her character. So, (2) can be bolstered by appeal to the view that at least part of what makes for moral praiseworthiness lies not just in *what* an agent does, but in *how* and *why* the agent goes about doing it. This line is obviously not only wedded to an Aristotelian theory of ethics, but I think such a view lends itself very plausibly to capturing such powerful intuitions regarding moral behaviour.

Alternative support for (2) can be found in a consequentialist theory of ethics. So, for example, Thor might be seen as more morally praiseworthy than Jove (and thus morally surpassing Jove) because his selection procedure is *apt to produce better consequences* than Jove's procedure. According to this view, since greater overall perfection is more likely to result from using Thor's selection procedure than Jove's, using Thor's selection procedure is morally preferable. In virtue of this, Thor again may be said to be more morally praiseworthy than Jove. To sum up, I think (2) can be motivated on both Aristotelian and consequentialist grounds.

By way of another response to my argument, one might suggest that, just as no-one is obliged to do that which is impossible, no-one's moral worth is diminished in failing to do that which is impossible. That is, if there are an unbounded number of selection procedures, then for any one that an agent employs, there will be a better procedure. As such, so the line goes, failing to employ a selection procedure of which there is no better diminishes no-one's moral worth. Relying on this point, one might go on to argue that Jove cannot be blamed for failing to use a better selection procedure than the one he does use because, no matter which selection procedure he uses, he can still be blamed

for not using a better one. This sort of response has its roots in Schlesinger's discussion of the problem of evil, in which he argues that,

> God's inability to create the greatest state of happiness is seen to be no different from his inability to create the greatest integer. Neither diminish His might, if we agree that He need not accomplish what is logically impossible … and when He does not do what is logically impossible, there just is no feat which we can say He failed to accomplish.[17]

From this, together with the intuition that an agent's moral worth is not diminished when they fail to do something impossible, Schlesinger concludes that, 'the amount of pain and joy present in the world is entirely irrelevant and cannot be introduced as evidence concerning the moral nature of God'.[18] So, putting this point in terms of the present discussion, there seems to be a good reason to think that Jove is not blameworthy for using the selection procedure that he used since, no matter which procedure he used, he would always be blameworthy. If this is right, then it appears that (2) is false, and so Jove can be characterized as morally unsurpassable despite creating a surpassable world *and* despite employing a surpassable selection procedure.

Although I think that it is right to say that Jove does not have an obligation to use the very best selection procedure (since he couldn't employ such a procedure because no such procedure exists), I think sense can still be made of Jove being morally surpassed by any agent that employs a better selection procedure.[19] First, it *is* possible for Jove to use Thor's procedure (or, for that matter, any other procedure), so it's not at all clear how the dictum, 'one is not blameworthy for failing to do the impossible' will help preserve Jove's moral unsurpassability.[20] Second, it is not clear why we should think that, just because Jove could always be blamed for using a sub-optimal procedure, that he is freed from blame for using whichever procedure he uses. What I am suggesting is that the fact that we can always ask of Jove why he does not employ a better procedure does not constitute evidence that what procedure he uses is morally irrelevant; rather it constitutes evidence that Jove could be morally bested no matter which procedure he uses – and I think that this *is* relevant in assessing Jove's comparative moral worth, especially with regard to his moral unsurpassability.

In addition, I would argue that there is a wedge to be driven between an agent's *satisfying an obligation* and an agent's *doing something that is morally praiseworthy*. To further motivate this response, consider supererogatory acts. If sense can be made of acts that are encouraged by morality but not required by it, we could make sense of acts that are morally praiseworthy and yet not obligatory. Thus, we could characterize an agent as being more morally praiseworthy than another agent, even though both agents have satisfied all of their obligations (or neither agent has failed to satisfy an obligation). So, even granting that neither Jove nor Thor had the obligation to use the very best selection procedure, and

even granting that they cannot be blamed in the sense of failing to live up to an obligation for which selection procedure they use, I think sense can be made of Thor being a morally better agent than Jove in virtue of his using a better selection procedure.[21] It is important to note that I am not arguing that Jove or Thor's creating a world is an example of a supererogatory act. Rather, I am simply appealing to the notion of supererogatory acts to motivate my claim that we can drive a wedge between *obligation* and *moral praiseworthiness* or between acts that are required by moral rules and acts that are encouraged by moral ideals.

Now if you think that sense cannot be made of the wedge between an agent's satisfying an obligation and doing something that is morally praiseworthy, and you insist that which world Jove creates and which selection procedure he employs is irrelevant to assessing his moral worth, you might be saddled with an unpalatable consequence – it seems that Jove would not be the sort of thing to which moral properties could apply. It might be argued that once we admit that Jove is not blameworthy for using the procedure that he uses (and for which world he creates), he is not praiseworthy for it either. Shea offers a response along these lines when criticizing Schlesinger's argument.[22] He writes,

> … Schlesinger's position makes God as little adorable and morally praiseworthy as He is blameworthy. If He cannot be blamed for not creating more happiness than He did create, on the ground that otherwise no matter how much happiness He created He could still be blamed for not creating more of it, then it seems to me He cannot be praised for having created any happiness at all.[23]

With respect to Jove, then, it seems that if we say that which world he creates, and which procedure he employs are morally irrelevant, then we have no way of ascribing any moral predicates to him because he cannot be morally evaluated in any way. So, it might be said that Jove is morally neutral (at least with respect to the case at hand, where the only action taking place is creating a world and the only apparent morally relevant details here are which world he creates and how he creates that world).

If this is right, then perhaps there is a vacuous sense in which Jove is morally unsurpassable. That is, there is no other (possible) agent in this sort of predicament who is comparatively morally better than Jove, since Jove is not the sort of being with whom we could compare morally. In other words, in virtue of being beyond moral evaluation, Jove is not morally comparable, and so he is not morally surpassable. But, in this case, Jove is morally unsurpassable not because of how wonderful or admirable he is, but because there is no way to make sense of an agent in this situation doing anything that is *comparatively* morally better than him. But this vacuous sense of moral unsurpassability seemingly leads to us being forced to deem other sorts of morally neutral things like paintings and hydrogen molecules as morally unsurpassable. In addition, Jove's moral unsurpassability can be preserved only at the expense of removing him from being morally

praiseworthy – and this concession is too hard for any theist to swallow once we strip off the disguise and put God in Jove's place.[24]

Notes

1. Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder 'How an unsurpassable being can create a surpassable world', *Faith and Philosophy*, **11** (1994), 260–268; repr. in E. Stump and M. Murray (eds) *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 35–41. Page references are to (1994).
2. Stephen Grover 'This world, ''Adams worlds'', and the best of all possible worlds', *Religious Studies*, **39** (2003), 145–163.
3. *Ibid.*, 149–150. Grover also considers problems associated with Jove creating one device over another, and whether there could be a 'best randomizer'. I will not here review these problematic issues or those just mentioned above.
4. These worlds (i.e. worlds 1 through infinity) have alternatively been dubbed 'Adams worlds'. Grover characterizes these worlds as 'possible worlds that contain no creature whose life is not worth living or whose life is overall worse than in any other possible world in which it would have existed'; Grover 'This world, ''Adams worlds'', and the best of all possible worlds', 145. I will not get into this issue here, but it is peculiar to talk of there being a possible world with the *lowest* positive value (i.e. world 1). Just as we are imagining that for any possible world, there is another possible world that is slightly better, it seems we should also be able to imagine that for any world with very low positive value, there is a possible world with less positive value. In addition, perhaps natural numbers do not provide a large enough set for proxy indicators of possible worlds. Maybe the set of real numbers is adequate.
5. Howard-Snyders 'How an unsurpassable being can create a surpassable world', 261.
6. *Ibid.*, 264.
7. *Ibid.*, 263.
8. Edward Wierenga 'The freedom of God', *Faith and Philosophy*, **19** (2002), 432, concurs with the Howard-Snyders that Jove and Juno are morally on par and claims that, 'These deities can create worlds of differing value without thereby differing themselves in goodness.'
9. As Grover points out, randomly selecting a world would even allow for creation of 'the very worst of acceptable worlds'; Grover 'This world, ''Adams worlds'', and the best of all possible worlds', 150. Acceptable worlds are simply 'Adams worlds' (see n. 4).
10. William Rowe 'The problem of no best possible world', *Faith and Philosophy*, **11** (1994), 270, hints at this sort of line against the Howard-Snyders when he suggests that Thor, by ruling out worlds 1–777, demonstrates himself to be morally superior to Jove. However, Rowe does not say what exactly makes Thor better. Further, Rowe suggests that Thor employs the following selection procedure to create world 888: 'Thor's degree of moral goodness is such that he is not prepared to settle for world 777 *unless* he is unable to create a better world'; *ibid.*, 270. But, if Thor were to abide by this principle, Thor would not create any world (since Thor is omnipotent and can create any possible world). The Howard-Snyders make this point when they say that 'Any being who accepted the principle in its full generality would be led never to create, given (as we are supposing) that for each world there is a better'; Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder 'The real problem of no best possible world', *Faith and Philosophy*, **13** (1996), 423. In the end, the Howard-Snyders accuse Rowe of presenting an incoherent story about how Thor goes about selecting a world to create. I would argue that Thor's selection procedure, as I will soon finish describing it, is coherent and that, since Thor is not abiding by a principle like 'only create a world if you cannot create a better world than it', he is *not* bound to create no world at all.
11. Of course, world 4 is not 'minimally acceptable' relative to the set of all possible worlds. It is probably a pretty good world relative to that set. However, world 4 is minimally acceptable relative to the set of acceptable worlds (i.e. worlds from 1 to infinity). See nn. 4 and 8. As will become clear, Thor's selection procedure will actually only be *partially* non-random.
12. Howard-Snyders 'How an unsurpassable being can create a surpassable world', 266.
13. Grover 'This world, ''Adams worlds'', and the best of all possible worlds', 150. Again, 'acceptable worlds' are just 'Adams worlds' (see nn. 4 and 9).
14. Grover 'This world, ''Adams worlds'', and the best of all possible worlds', 150.

15. There may be other morally relevant features than these, but it seems that these are the two most important for assessing comparative moral worth in these sorts of cases.
16. Rowe 'The problem of no best possible world', 270.
17. George Schlesinger 'The problem of evil and the problem of suffering', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, **1** (1964), 246.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Although I think an agent is not obliged to use *the very best* selection procedure (because she is unable to do so), it still may be that an agent is obliged to use *a better* procedure than she in fact uses – at least when employing such a procedure *is* within her power.
20. Keith Chrzan 'The irrelevance of the no best possible world defense', *Philosophia*, **17** (1987), 161–167, makes a slightly related point in responding to Schlesinger. He suggests that what Schlesinger needs to do is demonstrate that God cannot make an evil-less world, but that what he actually shows is that God cannot make a perfect (i.e. a maximally excellent) world; *ibid.*, 163. From this, Chrzan concludes that all Schlesinger's argument does is to 'excuse our world for not being the best possible; it cannot possibly demonstrate that evil must exist in our world'; *ibid.* The point with regard to the present discussion is that all this sort of response does is remove Jove from being obliged to create the best possible world or use the best possible procedure to select a world; it does not remove Jove from being obliged to create a better world than he created or use a better procedure than he employed (see n. 19). So although I admit that Jove is not obliged to use the very best selection procedure, I think sense can be made of Jove being obliged to use a better procedure than he in fact uses (and this is the case no matter which procedure he uses). That is, when Jove uses selection procedure *p*, there is some better procedure *q* that is a possible procedure that Jove ought to have used.
21. To be clear, I am merely granting for the sake of argument that Jove is not obliged to use a better procedure than he does in fact use (*contra* what I say in n. 20 above). Even granting this, I think Jove is morally surpassable.
22. W. Shea 'God, evil, and Professor Schlesinger', *Journal of Value Inquiry*, **4** (1970), 227.
23. *Ibid.*
24. I am grateful to Stephen Grover and Alan Steinberg for their insightful and invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I am also grateful to those at the Australasian Philosophical Association Conference in 2004 for a penetrating discussion regarding this paper.