

Four Views on the Axiology of Theism

On Discovering God in the Pluriverse

2

On Discovering God in the Pluriverse

Michael Almeida

1. Introduction

One approach to assessing the value of theism focuses on the comparative value of theistic worlds. On the epistemic conditional approach, the question is whether it would be better *if we learned* that our world includes a God than if we learned that our world does not include a God.¹ These hypothetical possibilities are each ways the world might *actually be* rather than ways the world might have been. The comparison is between discovering that our world includes a God and discovering that our world does not include a God. Each of these discoveries is possible, for all we know, or at least for all we know for certain.²

The epistemic conditional approach might also ask whether it would be better if we learned that *the pluriverse*—the vast totality of metaphysical space—includes a God than if we learned that there is no God or no pluriverse or both.³ The question about God and the pluriverse invites a variety of responses. There are, for instance, confirmed atheists who have insisted on the existence of many gods in the pluriverse. David Lewis, to take one example, was both an unwavering atheist and a polytheist:

As Peter Forrest has pointed out, I am perhaps the most extreme polytheist going.

If, as I suppose, a being does not have to satisfy some inconsistent description to be a god, then I take the number of the gods to be at least \aleph_2 . Unlike most

polytheists, however, I think of this world we live in as entirely godless. (Lewis 1983, xi)⁴

There are \aleph_2 gods in the pluriverse, on this account, but disappointingly there's not one god in our particular region of the pluriverse—not one actual god. The greater disappointment on this view is that there is no maximally great being anywhere in the pluriverse.⁵

Of course Lewis's views on the nature of the pluriverse are not the last word. We might discover that Lewis was just mistaken about the nature of the gods in the infinite regions of metaphysical space. We might discover, for instance, that a maximally great being—an Anselmian God—exists *from the standpoint of* every world in the pluriverse. We could discover, for instance, that the best solution to the most persistent and intractable problems in philosophical theology includes the combined ontology of Ludovician realism and Anselmian theism. Those are the best theoretical reasons for commitment to an ontology.⁶ The discovery that an Anselmian God exists from the standpoint of every world is just the discovery that theistic modal realism is true. And theistic modal realism offers us theoretical advantages unmatched by the discovery of a host of lesser gods scattered throughout the pluriverse.

Among those theoretical advantages, theistic modal realism affords an absolute explanation for the totality of creation. The unique virtues of absolute explanations are completeness and ultimacy. The virtue of completeness ensures that every part or constituent of metaphysical reality is explained. Since explanation goes all the way down, there are no brute facts.⁷ The virtue of ultimacy ensures that explanation terminates in a self-explained being, an unmoved mover, a necessary being, God. Ultimacy ensures that the *whole or totality* of metaphysical reality is explained, and not merely the proper parts, regions, or constituents of

reality. Absolute explanations are theistic explanations that exemplify both completeness and ultimacy.

In Section 2 I introduce theistic modal realism and provide the theistic modal realist's explanation for the pluriverse. Absolute explanations—what Swinburne calls “the best sorts of explanations”—provide an explanation for everything, every region in the pluriverse, every possible world, and all possibilities. In Section 3 I consider Jonathan Bennett's modal fatalism objection. Bennett's intriguing proof purports to show that absolute explanations are too costly. Absolute explanations entail that there are necessarily no contingent objects, properties, events, propositions, or facts. Both Jonathan Bennett and Peter van Inwagen concur that the total loss of contingency is simply unacceptable. Theistic modal realism provides a simple solution to the modal fatalism objection.

In Section 4 I consider a recent objection to absolute explanations from the impossibility of divine ultimacy. I show that the objection from the impossibility of divine ultimacy fails assuming any logic as strong as S4. In logics as strong as S4, iterated explanations of ultimate objects are reducible—as they should be—to first-order explanations.

In Section 5 I consider a fascinating challenge from moral indifference according to which the total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse is necessarily unalterable. I argue that the objection wrongly infers that the total amount of good and evil is *permanent* from the fact that the total amount of good and evil is metaphysically necessary. Necessarily existing evils are certainly unpreventable, but they are nonetheless eliminable.

I conclude in Section 6 that theistic modal realism affords unmatched advantages that are easily worth the well-known ontological costs. Theistic modal realism permits an absolute explanation for the pluriverse that avoids the cost of moral indifference and the cost of modal

fatalism. Theistic modal realism can also accommodate libertarian free will the deliverances of modal imagination, and indeterminate quantum effects.

The discovery that the pluriverse includes an Anselmian God would be particularly welcome news. The Anselmian God provides explanatory completeness and intelligibility in the pluriverse. It is good news that there is an Anselmian God in what Klaas Kraay has called the *narrow impersonal* sense.⁸ Everything that exists, occurs, or obtains in the pluriverse does so as a matter of divine necessity. The pluriverse—including our world—is the manifestation of the glory of the divine creator who creates in accordance with the principle of plenitude: everything that could exist does exist somewhere in metaphysical space. Most fundamentally, we have an explanation for everything that exists, occurs, or obtains in the entire pluriverse without any loss in freedom or contingency.

2. Theistic Modal Realism

Theistic modal realism envisages the totality of metaphysical reality as a vast concrete pluriverse. Possible worlds in the pluriverse are understood as causally and spatiotemporally closed or isolated individuals. Worlds are the mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. Worlds are not containers holding those individuals or substantive locations of those individuals. The mereological sum is itself a large individual, a world.

Not everything that exists in the pluriverse *exists in* a possible world. Theistic modal realism maintains that God exists *from the standpoint of every possible world* analogous to the way numbers, properties, propositions, and events exist from the standpoint of possible worlds. Each exists in the pluriverse; none exists in any possible world.⁹ God is no doubt a concrete individual—unlike properties and propositions—but an individual that does not exist in any possible world. God's omnipresence is understood as presence throughout the pluriverse—

existing from the standpoint of every possible world—without having any more specific spatial or temporal location.

What there is, in the most inclusive and least restrictive sense, is the pluriverse and all of its inhabitants. Everything that exists in the absolutely unrestricted sense *necessarily exists*.¹⁰ It is true in every possible world that the very same things exist unrestrictedly. From the point of view of each world, the entire pluriverse is the widest, most inclusive domain of quantification: the content of the pluriverse is *what there is*. Indeed the pluriverse itself exists necessarily.¹¹ It is false that anything might have been different if we take “reality” to be the entire pluriverse—literally all of metaphysical reality. There are no grander and grander pluralities.¹² The totality of metaphysical reality exists necessarily.

Theistic modal realism takes as the object of God’s creation *the totality of metaphysical reality*, all actualia and all possibilia. To the question, what did God create, the answer is *everything unrestrictedly*. Everything in the pluriverse—all of divine creation—is a vast concrete reality, and it all exists in exactly the same way. What exists could not be more plenitudinous than divine creation is—the glory of God is manifested in the vast creation of the pluriverse.

According to theistic modal realism, God *necessarily creates* the pluriverse. It is not a contingent matter that we have the pluriverse we have. It could not have been any different from the way it is. In particular, possible worlds could not have included any other individuals than those they do include. Nothing could have exemplified any properties other than the properties it does exemplify. Everything necessarily stands in the relations it does stand in. There is no alternative pluriverse—differing even slightly in the properties exemplified, objects existing, events occurring, facts obtaining, etc.—to the created pluriverse.¹³

If everything in the pluriverse really does supervene on the vast mosaic of point-sized objects and properties in worlds—perhaps it does—then theistic modal realism maintains that God necessarily creates the vast mosaic of point-sized objects, each *necessarily* exemplifying the properties they in fact exemplify and *necessarily* standing in the relations they in fact stand in. No part of that mosaic could have been even slightly different from the way it in fact is. There just is no alternative pluriverse that might have been created instead.

The account of divine creation in theistic modal realism is not vastly different from the accounts found in Spinoza and Leibniz. According to both Spinoza and Leibniz, the object of God's creation is the totality of metaphysical reality. Similarly, for Spinoza and Leibniz, the totality of metaphysical reality necessarily exists.¹⁴ The difference between the existence of divine creation and the existence of God, on this account, is that God exists as a matter of *intrinsic necessity* and divine creation exists as a matter of *extrinsic necessity*. Theistic modal realism maintains similarly that God necessarily exists—exists from the standpoint of every world—and is essentially uncreated whereas the totality of created reality necessarily exists and is essentially created.

The argument that God—the maximally great being—provides the absolute explanation for the pluriverse is Leibnizian. But it does not depend on the contingency of the pluriverse or its inhabitants. In *On the Ultimate Origination of Things* and the *Monadology* Leibniz famously developed a version of the cosmological argument.¹⁵ And in the *Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason*, Leibniz offers a defense of that argument:

The sufficient reason for the existence of the universe cannot be found in the series of contingent things, that is, in the series of bodies and their representations in souls. . . . Thus *the sufficient reason*, which needs no other reason, must be

outside this series of contingent things, and must be found in a substance which is its cause, and which is a necessary being, carrying the reason of its existence with itself. Otherwise, we would not yet have a sufficient reason where one could end the series. And this ultimate reason for things is called *God*. (Leibniz 1714, 210ff)

There are, no doubt, various ways to formulate the argument that Leibniz suggests in this and other passages. But, restricting attention to contingent beings, the general form of Leibniz's argument proceeds from (P) there is a maximal, finite or infinite, collection of contingent beings to (C) there is a necessary being that is the sufficient reason for the maximal collection of contingent being (Oppy 2006, 119ff) According to theistic modal realism, all that is required in Leibniz's argument is an inference from (P') there is a maximal, finite or infinite, collection of *essentially created beings* to (C') there is an intrinsically necessary being that is the absolute explanation for the maximal collection of essentially created beings.

Essentially created beings might be contingent beings, but they might also be extrinsically necessary beings. As we noted above extrinsically necessary beings exist as a matter of metaphysical necessity, but they are also essentially created beings. Some essentially created beings are necessarily created. That is the account of divine creation defended in theistic modal realism. The pluriverse—the totality of actualia and possibilia—exists as a matter of metaphysical necessity and the pluriverse is also essentially created.

3. The Challenge of Modal Fatalism

Peter van Inwagen and Jonathan Bennett have argued for the intriguing thesis that absolute explanations entail that, necessarily, there are no contingent objects, properties, events, propositions, or facts. The total loss of contingency is the cost of absolute explanation. The

arguments are deceptively simple. Jonathan Bennett's version assumes that P is the largest contingent conjunction verified in the actual world. ¹⁶

The question, "Why is it the case that P?" cannot be answered in a satisfying way.

Any purported answer must have the form "P is the case because Q is the case";

but if Q is only contingently the case then it is a conjunct in P, and the offered

explanation does not explain; and if Q is necessarily the case, then the explanation

. . . implies that P is necessary also. But if P is necessary then the universe had to

be exactly as it is, down to the tiniest detail—i.e. this is the only possible world.

(Bennet 1984, 115)

Many responses to van Inwagen and Bennett's argument focus on the nature of explanation.

Some current responses, for instance, argue that since $p, q, r, \dots \vdash P$, or alternatively p, q, r, \dots

together ground P, the individual contingent propositions together to the left of the turnstile

explain the conjunction P. So the explanation of P need not be a proposition that is not conjoined

in P. p, q, r , etc. are all conjuncts of P, but taken together as unconjoined contingent propositions

they explain P. Other responses deny that there could be an infinite conjunction of contingent

propositions. But responses of this kind are, to say the least, explanatorily unsatisfying. What we

expect from an explanation of P—the totality of metaphysical reality—is an answer to the

question why P is true given the infinite number of alternatives P' that *everyone agrees* might

have been true. What we expect is what Swinburne calls "the best kind of explanation":

An *absolute explanation* of E is an ultimate explanation of E in which the

existence and operation of each of the factors cited are either self-explanatory or

logically necessary. Other explanations cite brute facts that form the starting

points of explanations; there are no brute facts in absolute explanations—here everything really is explained. (Swinburne 2004, 97ff)

Absolute explanations are *not* causal explanations. In absolute explanations, C does not stand in any causal relationship to E.¹⁷ The relation between explanans and explananda in absolute explanations is not fundamentally a logical relation, either. Absolute explanations do not claim that there's some modal system in which it is a theorem that $\vdash (C \rightarrow E)$ or that $\vdash \Box C$.¹⁸ Rather, the relationship between C and E is a metaphysical relationship. The metaphysical relationship between C and E guarantees that there's no possible world in which it is true that C and $\sim E$. Absolute explanations include the further metaphysical thesis that there's no possible world in which it is true that $\sim C$.

Bennett's argument above depends on both metaphysical theses. If Q is the absolute explanation for P, then Q's metaphysical relationship to P ensures that $\Box(Q \rightarrow P)$ and $\Box Q$. Bennett points up the fundamental feature of intensional operators to be closed under implication (Bennett 1984, 111).¹⁹ So we arrive at the conclusion that Q is an absolute explanation for P only if $\Box P$. Since P is a maximally consistent set of propositions describing the totality of metaphysical reality, Bennett concludes that all of metaphysical reality is necessarily as it is. Paraphrasing Bennett, . . . if P is necessary then the universe had to be exactly as it is, down to the tiniest detail—that is, our world is the only possible world.

The argument from modal fatalism shows that the theoretical costs of absolute explanation is the total loss of contingency. There are no contingent objects, properties, events, propositions, or facts. The argument assumes of course that the proper explananda of Q is the actual world—every actually existing thing, every true proposition, every obtaining states of affairs, etc.—that requires an explanation.

In fact the proper explananda of absolute explanation depends entirely on one's ontological commitments. Most discussions of divine creation—including the discussion of Bennett and van Inwagen—simply assume that the proper explananda are contingent actualia of one sort or another. But theistic modal realists urge that the proper object of absolute explanation is the pluriverse as a whole. On this view, the ontological totality requiring explanation includes all actualia and all possibilia.

But if there is an absolute explanation for the pluriverse, then Bennett and van Inwagen would urge, the pluriverse and everything in it exists as a matter of metaphysical necessity. And indeed it does. The pluriverse and everything in it necessarily exists, there is no alternative pluriverse distinct from the pluriverse that in fact exists. And of course it follows that, since the actual world is one region of the pluriverse, the actual world and everything in it necessarily exists.

Given that the pluriverse exists necessarily and that, therefore, the actual world exists necessarily, how *could* theistic modal realism preserve contingency? There simply seems no room for contingency in the pluriverse at all and that seems to be the problem that van Inwagen and Bennett are so worried about.

On theistic modal realism, every world is necessarily the way that it is, but this is consistent with contingency in the pluriverse. The Eiffel Tower, to take an example of one part of our world, is necessarily as it is in the sense that nothing meeting the strictest or most rigorous standards of similarity to the Eiffel Tower could fail to have any of its actual properties. Nothing meeting the strictest standards of similarity to the Eiffel Tower could fail to have even its most minor and insignificant properties. In this sense, the Eiffel Tower has all of its properties essentially. When the standards of similarity are high—when we are speaking in the strict and

philosophical sense—nothing in the pluriverse counts as being the Eiffel Tower except the Eiffel Tower.²⁰

Nonetheless, we can truthfully say that it is a contingent fact that the Eiffel Tower is made of iron. We can truthfully say that it is a contingent fact that the Eiffel Tower is made of iron because we are prepared to accept lower standards of similarity according to which a tower made of plastic—a strictly nonidentical counterpart of the Eiffel Tower—in some region of metaphysical space counts as being the Eiffel Tower in that region.

All contingency arises from the accommodation of assertions that presuppose less than perfectly strict standards of similarity in the selection of counterparts. Our counterparts are our representatives—just those beings in metaphysical space that count as being us under some standard of similarity. Could Hubert Humphrey have been a poached egg? According to some extremely loose standards of similarity, there exist poached eggs in some regions of the pluriverse that count as being Humphrey. You accept that Humphrey might have been a poached egg only if you are prepared to accept such loose standards. But you don't have to accept those standards—and most folks are just not *that* accommodating. Could Socrates have been an alligator? Plantinga, for one, seems to think the answer is yes (Plantinga 1974a). With sufficiently low standards on similarity, there's a vast amount of contingency in the world. Those low standards are indeed what make contingent statements true.²¹

Having an absolute explanation does entail that the totality of metaphysical reality—including our region of metaphysical reality and everything in our region of metaphysical reality—is necessarily as it is. In the strict and philosophical sense, nothing could be even slightly different from the way it is. But absolute explanations do not entail that there is no

contingency in the pluriverse. Contingency arises in the pluriverse—as it does for any view on the nature of metaphysical reality—from lowering the standards on representation.

As we noted above modal fatalism is not a problem for theistic modal realism. There is an absolute explanation for the pluriverse and so the pluriverse exists necessarily and is necessarily as it is. There is a necessarily true proposition—the proposition that God necessarily manifests his glory in the creation of the pluriverse—that entails the existence of the pluriverse and everything in the pluriverse. It is also true that the actual world necessarily exists and is necessarily as it is, since the actual world is one region of a necessarily existing pluriverse. But there is also a vast amount of contingency in the pluriverse. Virtually everything in the pluriverse could have been different in countless ways.

4. Can There Be Ultimate Explanations?

Steven Maitzen and John Morreall offer a fundamental objection to absolute explanations. Absolute explanations essentially terminate in a self-explanatory explanans but, according to Maitzen and Morreall, *nothing could be self-explanatory*. Maitzen argues as follows:

Suppose that N is necessary rather than contingent, and suppose that E, the explanans for N, is the fact that N had to obtain, occur, or exist. Now, E—the fact that N had to obtain, occur, or exist—is one explanation, maybe the strongest possible explanation, for why N does obtain, occur, or exist. . . . Nevertheless, E must be distinct from N. Even if N and E are both necessary, they remain distinct, for E is a fact about N, whereas N can't be a fact about N even if N is itself a fact. To repeat: nothing succeeds as its own explanation, so any finite, noncircular explanation contains something unexplained. (Maitzen 2013, 252–71)

According to Maitzen, if E explains why N must exist, then E must be diverse from N. Further, E will require its own explanation E' such that E' is diverse from E, and so on. If the sequence of explanation is finite and noncircular then something is left unexplained. Morreall offers an analogous argument against a self-explanatory being:

Postulating a metaphysical principle in God called his essence, which includes or causes existence, only push the request for explanation back one step further. It cannot be an ultimate answer to the question “Why does this thing have p?” “Its essence includes p” or “Its essence causes it to have p,” for we can immediately ask, “Then why does this particular thing have this particular essence?” (Morreall 1980, 206–14)

According to Morreall, if the explanation for the necessary existence of an object a is that a essentially or necessarily exists, we still do not have an answer to the question of why a essentially or necessarily exists.²²

Suppose we aim to explain why a proposition p is necessarily true or why some object G necessarily exists. There are of course modal and non-modal analyses of essential properties, and so modal and non-modal analyses of the natures of objects. Maitzen argues here that, as a matter of explanatory principle, if E explains a necessarily existing object N, then $E \neq N$. But this proposed principle is false. Consider the proposition $\Box p$. What explains the truth of $\Box p$? According to Maitzen, “The fact that N had to obtain, occur, or exist is . . . maybe the strongest possible explanation, for why N does obtain, occur, or exist.” So, it is plausible to answer that $\Box \Box p$ explains $\Box p$ —the *necessity of* $\Box p$ explains $\Box p$. What explains the fact that p is necessary, then, is that p is *necessarily* necessary. That consequence in fact follows axiomatically from any logic as strong as S4. It is just a theorem for metaphysical necessity that $\vdash \Box p \rightarrow \Box \Box p$. But it is

also a theorem of S4 that $\vdash \Box\Box p \leftrightarrow \Box p$. This theorem tells us that $\Box\Box p$ and $\Box p$ are logically equivalent formulas. Under standard assumptions about meaning and logical equivalence, the proposition expressed by $\Box\Box p$ is identical to the proposition expressed by $\Box p$. So, though $\Box\Box p$ explains $\Box p$, it is also true that $\Box\Box p$ and $\Box p$ express identical propositions. So, the proposition expressed by $\Box p$ is explained by the proposition expressed by $\Box\Box p$, and since those propositions are identical, we should conclude that $\Box p$ explains itself.

Note that the very same argument offered against Maitzen above holds, with suitable modifications, against Morreall. Essential properties are typically expressed as a narrow scope necessities, or necessities within the scope of quantifiers, as in $(\exists x)\Box Fx$. On the modal analysis of essential properties, this proposition says that there's some x that is necessarily F or essentially F . The proposition $(\exists x)\Box(\exists y)(x = y)$ is the typical way to express the proposition that x has the property of existing essentially. The proposition states that there is some x such that necessarily x is identical to something—in other words, x exists in every world.

Now, suppose $x = \text{God}$ and that God essentially or necessarily exists. It follows by the S4 axiom noted above, $\vdash \Box p \rightarrow \Box\Box p$, that $\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ if and only if $\Box\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$. So, we have the fact that $\Box\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ explaining the fact that $\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$. But there is again the logical equivalence in S4 that $\Box(\Box\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)) \leftrightarrow \Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$. So, we know that the proposition on the left side of that biconditional is identical to the proposition on the right side of that biconditional. The right conclusion is that necessarily existing objects explain their own existence.

That's a consequence we might have expected. The essential properties of God—in particular, the essential property of necessarily existing—require further explanation only if God

might have lacked that essential property. But it is necessarily false that $\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ & $\Diamond\sim\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ unless we assume some logic weaker than S4. In fact, the logic generally regarded as capturing metaphysical necessity is the stronger logic S5.²³

Steven Maitzen and John Morreall argue that absolute explanations are impossible since nothing could be self-explanatory. Recall that Maitzen argues that E explains N only if E is diverse from N:

Whatever it is E that explains why N must exist must be diverse from N and such that E will require its own explanation E' such that E' is diverse from E, and so on. (Maitzen 2013, 256)

But this is false. We know that $\Box\Box p$ explains $\Box p$ and, in the logic governing metaphysical necessity, $\Box\Box p$ and $\Box p$ are logically equivalent. These sentences express the same proposition. This is best interpreted as entailing that explanations for necessarily true propositions are redundant. The proposition $\Box p$ is self-explanatory; it is equivalent to its own necessitation.

John Morreall argued that if the explanation for the necessary existence of an object a is that a essentially or necessarily exists, we still lack an answer to the question of why a essentially or necessarily exists. But this also is false. $\Box\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ explains $\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$. The fact that God necessarily exists is explained by the fact that God *necessarily, necessarily* exists. But the additional explanation is redundant since $\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ and $\Box\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ express the same proposition. The proposition $\Box(\exists y)(\text{God} = y)$ is self-explanatory; it is equivalent to its own necessitation.

5. The Challenge of Moral Indifference

Theistic modal realism provides an absolute explanation for everything in the pluriverse without any cost in contingency. Discovering that the pluriverse includes a maximally great being would certainly be theoretically advantageous. But there remains an ingenious challenge to the value of a theistic pluriverse that has its initial formulation in Robert M. Adams:

We may be moved by the joys and sorrows of a character known to be fictitious; but we do not really believe it is bad that evils occur in a non-actual possible world, or good that joys occur in a non-actual possible world, though of course it would be bad and good, respectively, for them to be actual. I think that our very strong disapproval of the deliberate actualizing of evils similarly reflects a belief in the absolutely, and not just relatively, special status of the actual as such. Indeed, if we ask, “What is wrong with actualizing evils, since they will occur in some other possible world anyway if they don’t occur in this one?”, I doubt that the indexical theory can provide an answer which will be completely satisfying ethically. (Adams 1974, 211–31)²⁴

Adams’s question concerns what is wrong with actualizing an evil under the assumption that the very same evil must be actualized somewhere in the pluriverse. There are credible answers to Adams’s question. Let’s focus instead on whether we have any reason to *prevent or eliminate* evils in the circumstances Adams envisages. The circumstances are analogous to those that arise for (at least some) multiverse theories of creation.²⁵ Multiverse theories offer a solution to a host of difficult problems in philosophical theology on the assumption that God *necessarily* creates every on balance good universe. On this view, God necessarily actualizes the best possible world, which of course contains a multitude of universes.

Since everything in the multiverse exists necessarily, we know that every instance of good and evil exists necessarily. But not only is existence necessary; every property of every existing object is necessary. No actual event, object, or state of affairs—whether it is good or evil—could have been otherwise. It is a consequence of the multiverse account of creation that there is exactly one possible world, so there is no modal distinction between what is the case and what is necessarily the case.

Consider whether we should prevent or eliminate evil in the multiverse. There are at least two reasons why the answer is no. First, every evil in the multiverse is necessary to the greatest good—the greatest possible good is the total good in the multiverse. Second, every instance of evil exists necessarily. There's nothing we could do about the evil in the multiverse in any case.

We might discover that a maximally great being exists in the multiverse and necessarily created all of the on balance good universes. The moral indifference objection suggests that this discovery would be very bad news. If we discover that the actual world is the way multiverse theorists describe it, then there is no ridding the world of the vast amounts of evil we find in it. All injustice and all wrongdoing, large and small, are evils we are permanently saddled with. It is impossible for things to get any better, since the total amount of evil exists necessarily. The prevention of evil is impossible.

There are equally good reasons for lamenting the fact that every instance of good in the actual world exists necessarily. The world cannot get any better than it is. We cannot add to the total amount of existing good—we cannot add to the good in our own lives or to the good in the lives of others—since the total amount of good that exists does so necessarily.

Theistic modal realism also faces the challenge of moral indifference. Every instance of good and evil in the pluriverse, speaking unrestrictedly, exists necessarily. There is a total

amount of good and evil in the pluriverse—all possible goods and all possible evils—that also exists necessarily. Of course, it's not true that all evil is actual evil. A great deal of existing evil is located in non-actual regions of the pluriverse—some of those regions are near the actual world and some of them are very far from the actual world.²⁶ But good and evil do not gain or lose value as a function of their location in the pluriverse. It does not make an evil worse that it has the property of being actual, and it does not make an evil less bad that it has the property of being merely possible.

We might discover that a maximally great being exists in the pluriverse and necessarily created all of metaphysical reality. The moral indifference objection suggests that this discovery would be very bad news. If we discover that the pluriverse is as theistic modal realists describe it, then there is no ridding the pluriverse of the vast amounts of evil we find in it. Every instance of evil in the pluriverse exists necessarily—there is nothing we can do about it. It is impossible for things to get any better in the pluriverse. The prevention of evil is impossible. But what about discovering that every instance of good in the pluriverse exists necessarily? This again would be very bad news. The pluriverse cannot get any better than it is. We cannot add to the total amount of existing good in the pluriverse, since the total amount of good that exists does so necessarily.

The challenge of moral indifference presents a fascinating problem for theistic modal realists. There's an immediate response to the problem according to which we have no moral reason to prevent or eliminate evil that is not actual. What we have moral reason to do, on this account, is see to it that evils do not occur in our particular region.

The problem of course is that requirements of impartiality and neutrality constrain what counts as a moral reason. There are no impartial or neutral reasons for eliminating evil in our region rather than eliminating evil in other regions of the pluriverse. The moral indifference objection is

that, no matter what we do, the totality of metaphysical space will include the same amount of good and evil. The moral reasons we have to eliminate evil impartially are self-defeating. The pluriverse is unchanged in overall value whether we impartially eliminate evil or not. In short, we cannot act in ways that improve the pluriverse, we have simply to acquiesce in the good and evil that exists.

There is another response available to theistic modal realists. It is true that every instance of good and evil in the pluriverse exists necessarily, but it does not follow that every evil in the pluriverse exists *permanently*. Permanentism is the temporal view that it is always the case that everything is always something (Deasy 2009, 2073–89). According to permanentism there is no time at which anything comes into, or goes out of, existence. Impermanentism is of course the negation of permanentism. It is the view that things sometimes come into and sometimes go out of existence.

The theistic modal realist response to the problem of moral indifference is that the good and evil in the pluriverse exists necessarily, but it does not exist permanently. There is a total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse, but it is not true that there is a permanent amount of good and evil in the pluriverse. The total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse at t need not equal the total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse at t' . Instances of evil are in fact eliminable despite the fact that every instance of evil is necessary. If, for instance, someone falls and breaks an arm at time t , it is true that the total amount of suffering in the pluriverse at t includes the suffering endured from a broken arm. That suffering in fact had to occur somewhere—indeed, in many places—in the pluriverse, but it does not have to occur permanently in the pluriverse. Mending the broken arm can reduce the overall suffering in the pluriverse at time t' .

Compare a Spinozistic, impermanentist world. In Spinozistic worlds—perhaps including the actual world, as Spinoza thought—the total amount of evil at one time is not equivalent to the total amount of evil at another time. Instances of evil come into existence and go out of existence like most other things in Spinozistic worlds. But every instance of evil in Spinozistic worlds exists necessarily—exists in every possible world. Instances of evil exist in every possible world since, if Spinoza is right, the actual world is the only possible world.

According to the moral indifference objection, it would be bad to discover that we inhabit a theistic pluriverse. If theistic modal realism is right, then every instance of evil in the pluriverse exists necessarily—there is nothing we can do about it. But the moral indifference objection is mistaken. It is true that the total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse is necessary. But it is false that the total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse is permanent. We can act in ways that add to the total amount of good in the pluriverse at a given time, and we can act in ways that reduce the total amount of evil. And that is consistent with the fact that the total amount of good and evil is necessary. It's a very useful heuristic to take seriously the idea that our world might well be a Spinozistic world. If so, then the actual world is the *only* possible world. It follows immediately that everything that happens here does so necessarily. Nothing could be otherwise since there are no other possibilities. But everything would appear just as it does to us right now if we indeed discovered that our world was Spinozistic. We could still eliminate evils, reduce suffering, and increase happiness, despite the fact that all the good and evil that occurs, exists, or obtains does so necessarily. The goods and evils are all necessary, but they are not *permanent*. We can alter the total amount of each at any moment. The same is true of the pluriverse. There is a unique total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse, but there need not be the same amount of good and evil at each moment.

6. Conclusions

Theistic modal realism permits an absolute explanation for the pluriverse that avoids the cost of modal fatalism and the cost of moral indifference. According to theistic modal realism there exists a maximally great being that is the ultimate explanation for everything in the pluriverse. As we should expect, the totality of modal space is necessarily as it is—this is indeed true on every account of modal space. Contingency in modal space is a consequence of the representation of objects, events, and states of affairs across possible worlds. Theistic modal realism licenses various, more or less strict, standards of representation and correspondingly various degrees of contingency.

The moral indifference challenge affirms that the total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse exists necessarily—there is nothing we can do to increase the total amount of good or decrease the total amount of evil. According to the challenge, discovering that theistic modal realism is true is bad news. It requires that we acquiesce in the amount of good and evil we find in the pluriverse. But the moral indifference challenge is mistaken. The total amount of good and evil in the pluriverse is necessary but not permanent. We can act in ways that add to the total amount of good in the pluriverse, and we can act in ways that reduce the total amount of evil. And that is consistent with the fact that the total amount of good and evil is necessary.

Discovering that there exists an Anselmian God in the pluriverse is good news in the narrow impersonal sense.²⁷ The Anselmian pluriverse is the manifestation of the glory of the divine creator who creates in accordance with the principle of plenitude. Everything that could exist does exist. In the Anselmian pluriverse we have an absolute explanation for everything that exists, occurs, or obtains in the entire pluriverse without any loss in freedom or contingency.²⁸

Bibliography

1. Adams, Robert M. (1974), "Theories of Actuality," *Noûs* 8 (3): 211–31.

2. Almeida, Michael. (2017a), "Theistic Modal Realism I: The Challenge of Theistic Actualism," *Philosophy Compass* 12: 1–14.
3. Almeida, Michael. (2017b), "Theistic Modal Realism II: Theoretical Benefits," *Philosophy Compass* 12: 1–17.
4. book Bennett, Jonathan. (1984), *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
5. Cameron, Ross P. (2009), "God Exists at Every (Modal Realist) World: Response to Sheehy," *Religious Studies* 45: 95–100.
6. Chalmers, David. (2002), "Does Conceivability Entails Possibility?" in *Conceivability and Possibility*, edited by Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
7. Deasy, Daniel. (2009), "The Moving Spotlight Theory," *Philosophical Studies* 172 (8): 2073–89.
8. *Does God Matter?: Essays on the Axiological Consequences of Theism*. (2018), Klaas Kraay (ed.). London: Routledge.
9. Earman, John. (1986), *A Primer on Determinism*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing.
11. Garcia, Laura. (1986), "Can the be a Self-Explanatory Being?" *Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXXIV (4): 479–88.
10. Griffin, Michael V. (2013), *Leibniz, God, and Necessity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Leibniz, Gottfried. (1697) [1989], "On the Ultimate Origination of Things," in *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, edited by R. Ariew and D. Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
13. Leibniz, Gottfried. (1710) [1996], *Theodicy*. La Salle: Open Court Press.
14. Leibniz, Gottfried. (1714) [1973], "Monadology," in *Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, edited by G. H. R. Parkinson. New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield.
15. Leibniz, Gottfried. (1714) [1989], "Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason," in *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, edited by R. Ariew and D. Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
16. Lewis, David. (1970), "Anselm and Actuality," *Noûs* 4 (2): 175–88.
17. Lewis, David. (1978), "Truth in Fiction," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1): 37–46.
18. Lewis, David. (1983), *Philosophical Papers I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
19. Lewis, David. (2001), *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
20. Lewis, Stephanie. (2015), "Where (in Logical Space) Is God?" in *A Companion to David Lewis*, edited by Barry Loewer and Jonathan Schaffer. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
21. Mackie, John (1982), *The Miracle of Theism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
22. Maitzen, Stephen. (2013), "Questioning the Question," in *The Puzzle of Existence: Why Is There Something Rather than Nothing?*, edited by Tyron Goldschmidt, pp. 252–71. London: Routledge.
23. Morreall, John (1980), "God as Self-Explanatory," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (120): 206–14.

24. Oppy, Graham. (2006), *Arguing About Gods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
25. Salmon, Nathan. (1989), "The Logic of What Might Have Been," *The Philosophical Review* 98 (1): 3–34.
26. Skyrms, Bryan. (1976), "Possible Worlds, Physics and Metaphysics," *Philosophical Studies* 30 (5): 323–32.
27. Swinburne, Richard. (2004), *The Existence of God*, 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
28. van Inwagen, Peter. (1983), *An Essay on Free Will*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
29. van Inwagen, Peter. (2009), *Metaphysics*, 3rd edn. Boulder: Westview.

¹ The conditional in these cases is the material conditional, $p \supset q$, and not the counterfactual conditional. We are asking about the epistemic possibility that the pluriverse/world includes a god rather than the metaphysical possibility that the pluriverse/world includes a god. It is common to frame the question as a comparative counterfactual. On the comparative counterfactual approach the question is whether it would be better were God to exist than it would be were God not to exist. But the counterfactual formulation is terribly misleading. If God exists, then there simply is no way things would have been had God not existed. The alleged counterfactual comparison is really a comparison between the value of the way things in fact are and the value of the closest impossible world. It is at least difficult to know what criteria determine the similarity of impossible worlds to the actual world. Do all impossible worlds explode? Is the logic of impossible worlds nonclassical or perhaps not even an extension of classical logic? The logical and metaphysical obstacles to assessing such counterpossibles are, I think, serious enough to undercut any conclusion on the axiology of theism.

² I have in mind here *for all we know a priori*, but this broad notion of epistemic possibility is not required for the argument to follow. We might restrict what is epistemically possible to what is possible, for all we know *a priori* and *a posteriori* or for all we are certain of, or for all we justifiably believe. Compare Chalmers 2002.

³ Metaphysical space includes every possible world and all possibilities. For actualist realism (compare for instance, Plantinga, Stalnaker, and van Inwagen) the totality of metaphysical space includes only actualia, the actual world, and everything in the actual world. For genuine modal realists, metaphysical space includes a vast number of spatiotemporally isolated concrete worlds and everything inhabiting those worlds. It includes in addition ontological items that exist in no possible world at all: numbers, sets, propositions, and, according to theistic modal realists, God.

⁴ It might be worth mentioning a discussion with Peter Forrest on the probability that a god actually exists given Lewis's pluriverse. $\aleph_2 = P(P(\mathbb{N}))$ = the cardinality of possible worlds. We found that, for Lewis, there is about a 1/e chance that there is no actual god. That is, given just the number of gods and the number of worlds, the chances are about 65 percent that one of those gods is actual. There is of course other evidence both for and against the existence of the Lewisian gods.

⁵ It is certainly David Lewis's view that there exists no traditional God. One obstacle for Lewis is that the traditional God would have all of its essential properties as a matter of absolute necessity—God exemplifies the divine attributes in a metaphysically serious way. It is not a contextual matter whether the traditional God exemplifies perfect goodness, for instance. But Lewis also rejects the position that the traditional God can be consistently described. See Lewis 1970; See also Lewis 2015.

⁶ There's an argument for this conclusion in Almeida 2017a,b.

⁷ Compare Earman 1986. According to Earman causal determinism explains physical events all the way down, every single thing that happens, the way it happens, in total detail. Absolute explanations also explain all the way down.

⁸ See Kraay 2018.

⁹ See Cameron 2009: 97 ff.

¹⁰ "Everything" in the unrestricted sense is a quantifier whose domain is the entire pluriverse. So, "everything exists necessarily," when used unrestricted, means everything in the pluriverse—not just everything in our spatiotemporally isolated universe—exists necessarily.

¹¹ I'm noncommittal on the issue of whether the pluriverse is itself an individual, another concrete mereological sum. I'm also noncommittal on the issue of whether there are individuals that are sums of worlds w and w' that are smaller than the pluriverse but larger than individual worlds. But there are metaphysical uses for both views.

¹² Bryan Skyrms offers a regress argument that there must be larger and larger pluriverses. See Skyrms 1976. Compare Lewis 2001: 101 n. 1.

¹³ This can seem more radical than it is. There is no coherent account of possible worlds according to which the totality of possible worlds might have been different from the way it is. The most widely accepted account of the nature of possible worlds maintains that possible worlds are abstract objects of some kind, either states of affairs or propositions or properties, or the like. Suppose we take possible worlds to be maximally consistent states of affairs. Could any possible world be any different from the way it is? No, every possible world exists necessarily—every possible world exists in every other possible world—and has all of its states of affairs essentially. So, every possible world is necessarily as it is, it could not be any different. Further, it is not possible to add or subtract from the number possible worlds that exist.

¹⁴ Both Leibniz and Spinoza were necessitarians, on the reading I am proposing. Both maintained that the actual world was the only metaphysically possible world and that the only intrinsically necessary being was God. Possible, non-actual worlds, for Leibniz, are intrinsically possible, but metaphysically impossible objects. For Leibniz this amounts to the view that there is no internal contradiction in the proposition that some other possible world is actualized, but those worlds are inconsistent with the existence of God. See Griffin 2013.

¹⁵ See Leibniz 1697; Garber 1989. See also Leibniz 1710, 1714.

¹⁶ Peter van Inwagen comes to the same conclusion in a very similar argument.

Someone might suggest, for example, that the actual future became actual not for any reason to be found in the natural world but rather because God chose that it should, God's choice being in that case the sufficient reason demanded by (the principle of sufficient reason [PSR]). However, PSR must be rejected, for it has an absurd consequence: the collapse of all modal distinctions. See van Inwagen 1983, 202–4, 2009, 150ff.

¹⁷ The relationship between C and E is fundamentally a metaphysical relationship. C metaphysically necessitates E, whether or not there are any causal laws. So C does not cause E.

¹⁸ For fascinating discussion of fallacious ways of reasoning about what might have been, Salmon 1989, 3–34. Salmon's arguments are largely aimed to show that true metaphysical theses—theses concerning material composition, for instance—are violated in some familiar modal logics. But of course it is also true that some necessary metaphysical theses are not provable in some widely accepted, sound, and complete modal logics.

¹⁹ What follows from something necessary is itself necessary, which is the most fundamental theorem of any modal logic. David Lewis makes a similar observation about closure governing intensional operators in 1978, 39ff. I have already noted that truth in a given fiction is closed under implication. Such closure is the earmark of an operator of relative necessity, an intensional operator that may be analyzed as a restricted universal quantifier over possible worlds.

²⁰ But why is this the strict and philosophical sense? It is the only sense which strictly observes Leibniz's laws. Leibniz's laws entail that, for any x, y , $x = y$ only if Fx iff. Fy . No object y could have properties diverse from x and also be such that $x = y$. No account of "change" over time or across worlds can violate Leibniz's laws.

²¹ For further references to this phenomenon see Lewis 1979, 1986. Many thanks to Mark Johnston and Wolfgang Schwarz for valuable discussion of these points.

²² For similar arguments against self-explanation, see Mackie 1982, 84ff. For an interesting discussion of Mackie's objections see Garcia 1986, 479–488.

²³ There are important exceptions. See Salmon 1989, 3–34.

²⁴ Lewis offers one response to this objection in 1986, 123ff.

²⁵ It is important to keep in mind that theistic modal realism is not a multiverse theory. On multiverse theories, God creates every on balance good universe, but God creates only one possible world. On theistic modal realism, God creates every possible world.

²⁶ I use "near" and "far" metaphorically here. The near worlds are the most similar worlds and the worlds farther away are the less similar worlds.

²⁷ See Kraay 2018.

²⁸ It is worth noting briefly that theistic modal realism also avoids any cost in libertarian free will, indeterminate quantum effects, or modal imagination. The fact that everything in the pluriverse exists, occurs, and obtains necessarily is consistent with the existence of worlds w and w' that are exact duplicates until their divergence at a time t . It's possible that in w at t A occurs and in w' at t $\sim A$ occurs, or in w at t S does A and in w' at t S 's counterpart does $\sim A$. Indeterminism and libertarian free will are consistent with the absolute explanation of the

pluriverse. There is also no imaginable world—imagine, for instance, lawless worlds in which objects come into existence uncaused or completely random worlds in which there are not even statistical laws or worlds featuring both meticulous providence and significantly free moral agents who always do what’s right—that is inconsistent with the absolute explanation of the pluriverse. Theistic modal realism offers unmatched theoretical advantages at extremely reasonable costs. The discovery that the pluriverse includes an Anselmian God should be particularly welcome news.