

# A handful of compossibles

*Or: Molinism, libertarian free will, evil, a sin-free heaven, a maximally great (omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent) God, this being the best of all possible worlds, heinous suffering, and no-one unjustly suffering are all compossible.*

**J. A. Durieux**

## 1 Introduction

Religious world-views tend to make a many claims that non-believers tend to find contradictory. A well-known pair is God's absolute goodness and the existence of intense evil. This paper shows the compossibility of a largish number of such claims, by a constructive existence proof: a possible world in which they all are actualised.

This possible world does not reflect my beliefs, and it may well have properties that make it unsuitable as part of a practical belief system. All it intends to do is to show compossibility.

## 2 The world

Let's suppose a certain (maybe infinite) number of potential souls, whom God has given both freedom (i.e. they rather than God are the ultimate source of their choices) and the right to be actualised.

God Himself is completely free, as there is literally nothing to constrain Him (hence the omnis). He freely chooses to be good, just, loving, and so forth - which is why these traits are laudable in Him.

Initially, souls are only constrained by Him, so freedom of will merely means that God refrains from steering. Many of these souls would never reject Him, but a finite number would, given the chance (they are free, after all, so their behaviour is not deducible from external factors). Of this second group, some would repent under certain circumstances, but others wouldn't. God, of course, knows this in full detail.

(God's having middle knowledge means that there is a function from situations to creature choices. This does not thwart freewill, though, as correlation does not imply causation).

God is glorified in souls freely choosing for Him, and in His love He wants every soul to find eternal bliss, so His aim is as many as possible of those, that is: all the non-sinners and all those who may repent. He intends to grant those a heavenly paradise.

Being perfectly good, God can't be in communion with sinners; being perfectly just, would never allow a non-sinner other than Himself to suffer; and being perfectly loving, would minimise the suffering even of sinners.

So what does He do: He plans an initial stage, which He organises so as to make it the best of possible worlds.

1. All souls are actualised, as denying actualisation to some souls would be unjust.
2. The non-sinners are actualised (as angels) in heaven, but the sinners are actualised (as angels or humans) in another realm, the universe - so that no non-sinner unjustly suffers under the effects of the sins of the sinners.
3. The universe is temporal, which takes away the power really to choose - they can only choose "for now". This prevents sinners from really choosing against God: even if they choose against Him now, at some later point they may still change their choice.
4. All potential repentors do undergo the circumstances (including the call of the Holy Spirit) under which they will, in fact, repent - thus maximising the number of enjoyers of the infinite bliss He has in store for repentors.
5. Beyond that, He uses some just measure (is the suffering of repentors worse than the suffering of non-repentors?).

After this initial stage, the non-repentors are moved to a space outside of all communion with God, and the repentors, having actualised their repentance, are moved into heaven.

### 3 The compossibles

#### 3.1 Molinism and libertarian freewill

A simple model showing how God can have middle knowledge without infringing on the freedom of the souls is as follows: logically prior to any actualisation, all souls make a free choice for every possible situation. God can use His knowledge of those choices in His logically posterior actualisation decisions.

#### 3.2 Evil and God's goodness

Obviously, God is good towards all who choose the good – they are in heavenly bliss. It is part of God's goodness to allow souls to exist even if they choose against the good. He even saves all that are potentially saveable, by putting them in precisely those circumstances that would make them choose for the good.

God is also clearly not responsible for any evil, and none who chose the good are subject to any evil. Those who choose against the good do so in full freedom, and are fully responsible.

#### 3.3 Freewill and fallenness

How can it be given that all men will sin if they have free will? The answer here is like the marksman who drew a bull's eye wherever his bullets had hit the wall: only souls that will sin become men. And Adam sinned before procreating, because God chose a soul that would be Adam. If He had chosen a soul that would first have procreated, there would have been a mix of fallen and unfallen people on this earth, and the unfallen ones would have suffered unjustly.

#### 3.4 Freewill and heaven

How can people with free will go to heaven without them endangering heaven's goodness? This hinges on the notion of choice. Unless banned from heaven, souls have the possibility to make true, eternal/timeless, choices. God Himself is perfectly good in all freedom because He timelessly chooses to. This is why His goodness is laudable – because it is His free choice.

Souls at the final judgment will regain this ability, and those that choose for the good will end up in heaven, and be freely, eternally, good there. Those who definitely choose against the good will be fully separated from it, according to their wish.

#### 3.5 Suffering and justice

Souls that choose against the good have chosen evil, and suffering is part of that. All the good that is still here is unmerited grace for them. None who chose the good suffer – they are not in this universe.

(And just a thought: maybe in order to create a situation in which anyone saveable would in fact be saved, God added zombies to the mix, people without qualia. Their seeming suffering (even in perdition) would not be real.)

#### 3.6 Suffering and this being the best of all worlds

While this universe is far from the best of all possible universes, it is the best universe in which repentors can live, and together with heaven it makes for the best possible world. For non-repentors, each day here is a day of unmerited bounty, as some of God's goodness reaches them indirectly through the repentors.

So, doubting that this is the best of all possible worlds would be like inmates doubting that they lived in the best of all possible worlds – whereas the existence of their prison would precisely be what made the world optimal.

### 4 Conclusion

I am definitely not claiming this scenario as truth – for one thing it makes God improbably anthropomorphic; to constitute a proof of compossibility it merely needs to be possible. In being possible it shows

the compatibility of Molinsim, libertarian free will, evil, a sin-free heaven, a maximally great (omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent) God, and this being the best of all possible worlds. On top of that it partially explains divine hiddenness: why show oneself to those who would not repent - James 1:6.

One open issue is the problem of those who claim they would much rather not exist. If that claim is true, it is unclear why God, knowing their wish through His middle knowledge, still brought them into existence.