Theistic Modal Realism I: The Challenge of Theistic Actualism

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1. Theistic Modal Realism?

Genuine modal realism does not appear congenial to traditional theistic belief.[1] Almost no contemporary philosopher believes that traditional beliefs can be made to fit comfortably with the conception of metaphysical reality found in genuine modal realism. The thought is that theists who endorse modal realism would probably have to abandon at least some of what John Mackie called 'the essential parts of most theological positions'.[2] Since the view is so unwelcoming for traditional theists, why would a theist be a genuine modal realist?

There is a certain irony in the view that there is a tension between genuine modal realism and theistic belief. David Lewis himself was among the most extreme polytheists.

> 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 $\beth_2$. Unlike most polytheists, however, I think of this world we live in as entirely godless.[3]

Still, there is apparently no room for a traditional God among the $\beth_2$ existing gods that Lewis acknowledges.[4] There are plenty of gods in the vast regions of Ludovician reality, but there are no maximally great beings in any region. Many seem to share Lewis's uncharacteristically impoverished view of the divine inhabitants of his pluriverse – plenty of gods, but no perfect beings. We're told that the principle of plenitude guarantees no gaps in metaphysical space, but that infinitely large space nonetheless does not include a traditional God.

Of course, there are other sources of resistance to the metaphysics of genuine modal realism. Primary among these concerns is the ontological extravagance of the view.

> … although [Lewis] modestly calls his view just 'modal realism', it would be better termed 'Mad-dog modal realism', … his shocking main thesis is that 'other possible worlds' are just that, other flesh- and-blood worlds; they are not this-worldly mockups or substitutes such as stories, big sets, mental constructs, or other abstractions doing duty for 'worlds' in modal theory. Nonactual possibilia exist, in just the same sense as we and our friends and our familiar possessions exist. This is why Lewis qualifies as an extremist ….[5]

Virtually every philosopher has found the ontological costs of 'mad dog' modal realism unacceptable.[6] Theistic philosophers are no exception. The dominant metaphysical position among philosophical theists is the so-called 'safe and sane' ontology of *actualist realism*. Actualist realism is in fact the position that every prominent theist in the field has taken. In addition to Alvin Plantinga Robert M. Adams, we should list prominent actualists as Chris Menzel, Peter

van Inwagen, Roderick Chisholm, and Thomas Jager.[7] Actualism is also implicit in almost all of the literature in the philosophy of religion.

Lewis of course recognized that genuine modal realism required a commitment to a vast ontology of worlds just as mathematics required a commitment to a vast ontology of sets. But just as set theory was the promised paradise for mathematicians, so genuine modal realism is the promised paradise for philosophers.[8]

But for all of the theoretical benefits forthcoming for parts of our total theory – in particular for the philosophy of mind, philosophy of logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, and metaphysics – genuine modal realism seems to offer no comparable benefits for those whose total theory includes theistic commitments. Theistic philosophers have found little or no reason to accept the extravagant ontology of genuine modal realism whose costs seem to significantly outweigh its benefits.

The main aim in the forthcoming discussion is to contrast theistic modal realism and theistic actualist realism. Actualist realism is the dominant view among theists and presents the most serious challenge to theistic modal realism. In Section 2, I discuss various prominent forms of theistic actualist realism. I offer reasons for rejecting the view of metaphysical reality that actualist realism affords. In Sections 3 and 4, I discuss theistic modal realism and show that the traditional conception of God is perfectly consistent with the metaphysics of genuine modal realism. Indeed theistic modal realism is more suited to traditional theism than is any version of actualist realism.

2. Theistic Actualist Realism

Genuine modal realism is usually contrasted with the reasonable realism defended in actualist realists such as Alvin Plantinga, Robert Adams, and Robert Stalnaker. Indeed, actualist realism is certainly the most widely held view on the metaphysics of possible worlds. But one could immediately quibble about whether the ontology of actualist realism lives up to the description 'safe and sane'. Genuine realism has an ontology of individuals and sets and an ideology that includes a few primitive relations. The ontology of actualist realism, on the other hand, includes irreducible properties (including modal properties), propositions, and states of affairs in addition to individuals and sets. There are in addition, according to many actualist realisms, infinitely many *unrealized entities*, proxy objects and such, existing in every possible world.[9]

Nonetheless, what is most appealing about actualist realism is its intuitive and commonsensical ontological commitments. Unrestrictedly, everything – including every possible world – that exists *actually exists*. There is no metaphysical distinction to be made between existing things and actually existing things. So, necessarily, something exists if and only if it actually exists.[10]

The actual world includes the sum total of metaphysical reality. It is ontologically exhaustive. Every (merely) possible world *exists in* the actual world, but no non-actual world is instantiated in the actual world. There is one distinguished world that is instantiated or concretized and that is the actual world. On actualist realism, it is impossible that more than one possible world should be instantiated, though an uncountably infinite number of possible worlds necessarily coexist.[11]

It is fundamental to actualist realism that possible worlds are not the objects of God's creation. Possible worlds are abstract objects – maximal sets of sentences or propositions, for instance, or states of affairs or properties – and exist necessarily.[12] These are the entities existing in each world to which possible worlds are identical.

The ontological commitments of actualist realism – however safe and sane they might be – make it impossible that more than one possible world should be actual. A fortiori, it is impossible

that the entire pluriverse – the collection of all worlds, all actualia and all possibilia – should be concretized. So, of course, it is impossible that God should create the entire pluriverse. It is necessary on actualist realism – at least on the more common *soft core* forms of actualist realism – that uncountably many possible worlds in the plenitudinous pluriverse remain uninstantiated: they constitute nothing more than a collection of abstract objects existing in the actual world.

Actualist realists of course agree that possible objects exist *in* non–actual, possible worlds. And, though all possible worlds actually exist, no possible object existing in any non–actual world exists. Instead of possibilia, some actualists argue that there are individual essences or qualitative haecceities which stand for objects. A qualitative haecceity is a set of qualitative properties that exactly one possible individual could instantiate. There is of course some dispute about whether there are such qualitative haecceities, but some actualists find them obvious.

> Each of Socrates' world–indexed properties … is essential to him. Now let P be a property that he and he alone has – *being married to Xantippe*, for example, or *being the shortest Greek philosopher*, or *being A.E. Taylor's favorites philosopher*; and consider the world–indexed property *having-P-in-α*. I think we can see that this property is an essence of Socrates.[13]

God's creation of you is God's instantiation of your qualitative haecceity or individual essence. Other actualists have argued that there are neither possibilia nor qualitative haecceities. Instead, there are *suchnesses* or qualitative non–individuating properties of possible objects.

> I suppose that God, in deciding whether and how to create a world, knew all the kinds of things that could have existed or happened. That is, he had before His mind a complete array of all the suchnesses or purely qualitative properties that could possibly have been exemplified. But did He also have before His mind an infinite array of merely possible individuals, or thisnesses of them, or singular propositions about them …? I think not.[14]

In divine creation, God has at his disposal a rich variety of suchnesses. God knows *what* he will create, but he has no idea *who* he will create. The particular world that follows the instantiation of these suchnesses is not an intended object of creation. The resulting world is no less a surprise to God than it is to the rest of us. The qualitative haecceities – and perhaps the suchnesses – constitute the infinitely many unrealized entities existing in every possible world.[15]

Theistic actualist realisms vary on their commitment to *existentialism*.[16] On existentialist actualist realisms, there are singular propositions in addition to purely qualitative propositions that are true in some possible worlds. It is distinctive of singular propositions that they depend ontologically on the objects they are directly about. Singular propositions do not exist in worlds where the objects they are about do not exist. Since the only objects that exist are actual objects, theistic actualist realisms that endorse existentialism argue that there exist no singular propositions that include reference to, or are directly about, anything that does not actually exist. There are no singular propositions stating that some possible, non–actual object has some property or other. So there are no possible worlds that include objects that do not actually exist – worlds that include Socrates's twin sister, say. On these forms of theistic actualist realism, which possible worlds constitute the totality of metaphysical reality is a *contingent* matter. It is actually true, as it happens, that there are no possible worlds that include Socrates's twin sister, since Socrates did not actually have a twin sister.[17]

Existentialist actualist realism entails some peculiar consequences for divine creation. Since there is no twin sister of Socrates, there is no possible world in which Socrates's twin sister exists. It is, indeed, impossible that Socrates's twin sister exists. There is also no possible world in which God *creates* Socrates's twin sister. So it is also impossible that God creates her. Nonetheless, we

are told that nothing prevents God from creating someone who turns out to be Socrates' twin sister. In particular, the impossibility of God creating Socrates' twin sister does not prevent God from creating her. We are told that, after divine creation, it is possible that Socrates's twin exists and it is possible that God creates Socrates's twin.

On the other hand, talk of non-actual, possible worlds is just a manner of speaking on *hard-core actualism*.[18] To say that some proposition p is possibly true is not to say that p is true in some possible world. It is rather to say that some actual object has the power or disposition to bring it about that p. To say that some object might have existed is just to say that some actual object has the power to create that object. Hard-core actualist realism assimilates possibility to actualizability. Possible worlds are just actualizable worlds.[19]

It is possible that buildings might not have existed since we might not have exercised the power to create them. It is possible that every contingent being might fail to exist, at least for theistic hard-core actualists, since God might not have exercised the power to create any of those contingent objects.

> So, if, for example, the world was created in seven days by an omnipotent God, that God would also seem to have the power to create a world that does not contain any of the actual contingent beings or that of creating no world at all (independently of whether or not such God would or could exercise that power).[20]

As with all forms of actualism, hard-core actualism maintains that the actual world is the sum total of metaphysical reality. The most that God could create is a single possible world.

There is a kind of modal voluntarism in hard-core actualism that entails that there are no non-trivial limits to possible objects. It is true that x is possible if and only if God can create it. But the limit to what God can create is not set by the limit of what is metaphysically possible. Rather the limit of what is metaphysically possible is set by what God can create. So there is no answer to the question of what God can and cannot create. There is no answer to the question of why God creates some objects contingently and other objects necessarily. These are just brute facts.

But, as we have noted, there is a limit to the number of possible worlds that could exist. Hard-core actualism entails that it is not possible that there exists more than one possible world. It is not merely the case that exactly one world could be actual, it is that exactly one world could exist. Possible worlds are created objects for the hard-core actualist. God cannot create several possible worlds. God cannot create a pluriverse. Indeed, God can create exactly one world.

On the most natural interpretation of hard-core actualism, metaphysical reality consists in a relatively small part of all that might have been. The vast variety of divinely creatable beings does not exist. So, of course, the general principle of plenitude is not satisfied in theistic actualist realism.[21]

There are some forms of theistic actualist realism according to which the magnitude of God's creation is somewhat greater. It might be the case that, in divine creation, God does not exemplify individual essences and God does not exemplify suchnesses. Perhaps all concrete objects are contingently non-concrete and perhaps every possible world includes the same abstract and non-abstract objects.

> Actualists mistakenly think the distinction between abstract and concrete is one of category, that whatever is abstract or concrete is essentially so. On our view, this is unjustified. We see no reason not to recognize entities that are contingently nonconcrete, that is, objects that are in fact nonconcrete but which at other worlds are concrete. We suppose that there are nonconcrete objects which, at other worlds, are (variously) fat men, b's sister, and million carat diamonds. They are not, of course, fat men, b's sister, etc., at our world, but they exist and are actual. We can assert this because the actualist's

existentially loaded quantifier doesn't carry any spatiotemporal connotations, for otherwise they would not be able to use it to assert the existence of abstract objects. BF [Barcan formula], we claim, requires only the existence of contingently nonconcrete objects.[22]

According to typical forms of theistic actualist realism, for each possible world, there is an object or entity in each possible world to which that possible world is identical. Possible worlds exist necessarily, if at all. But for theistic actualists that allow for contingently non-concrete objects, it is true that, for each possible object, there is an object or entity in each possible world to which that possible object is identical. All objects − whether abstract or concrete − exist necessarily if at all.

If all possible objects exist necessarily, then every possible object exists in the actual world. This form of actualist realism better approximates satisfaction of the principle of plenitude.[23] Necessarily, all possible worlds and all possibilia exist − there are no non-existent concrete or abstract objects. It remains true, nonetheless, that only some of those possible objects are concretized and only one possible world is actualized.

3. Theistic Modal Realism

Theistic modal realism envisages the totality of metaphysical reality as a vast concrete pluriverse. Theistic actualist realism, by contrast, has the peculiar implication that either all possible worlds − *including the actual world* − are abstract objects or that the actual 'world' is not a possible world at all.

> There is also the option of reducing possible worlds to maximal consistent 'books' of propositions.… But is this reductive option credible? I find it absolutely incredible that our actual world is a maximal consistent book of propositions! … I thought that was enough to settle the matter, but Hartry Field and Robert Adams and someone I believe to have been David Kaplan have led me to think again. What you must do to maintain the reduction of worlds to books is … to declare that the actual world is not a possible world.[24]

For theistic modal realists − for genuine modal realists generally − possible worlds are not understood as maximally consistent sets of propositions or as maximally consistent states of affairs or as maximal properties or the like. Possible worlds are not abstract objects that might be instantiated or concretized. Possible worlds are instead causally and spatiotemporally closed or isolated individuals.

> A possible world has parts, namely possible individuals. If two things are parts of the same world, I call them worldmates. A world is the mereological sum of all the possible individuals that are parts of it, and so are worldmates of one another. It is a maximal sum: anything that is a worldmate of any part of it is itself a part.[25]

Worlds literally are the mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. They are not containers holding those individuals or locations of those individuals. The mereological sum is itself a large individual.

One upshot is that, if there are no individual parts, then there is no world: There are no empty or partless worlds. There may be almost empty worlds, however: Worlds in which there is only a single lonesome atom. But every world must include some part.

Worlds are concrete objects, on any (or virtually any) way we might distinguish the abstract and the concrete.[26] Worlds are concrete objects but this does not entail that, necessarily, every part of a possible world is a concrete object. There are spirit worlds, for instance.

> … I can even allow marvelous Spirits who are spatiotemporally related to other things by being omnipresent – for that is one way among others to stand in spatiotemporal relations.[27]

Spirit worlds might not be non-vaguely concrete worlds, assuming there are possible spirits that are non-concrete or inefficacious. There exists an infinite plurality of possible worlds in the pluriverse, and no possible world stands in any causal or spatiotemporal relation to any other possible world or to any part of any other possible world. Possible worlds (or their parts) stand in spatiotemporal and causal relations to themselves (or their parts) alone. This is not to say that there are no logical relations between what is true in one possible world and what it true in other possible worlds. If in fact we choose to prevent certain evils in our world, for instance, then we know for certain that those evils will *not* be prevented in some other spatiotemporally isolated region in the pluriverse. If we choose not to prevent certain evils, then we know for certain that those evils will be prevented in another region of the pluriverse.[28]

Theistic modal realists typically take individuals to be world-bound. To be world-bound is to be such that no part of you exists in more than one possible world. But there are also individuals and non-individuals that do not *exist in* any possible world. Genuine modal realists quantify over those individuals and non-individuals – they exist in the pluriverse and so they are part of their ontology – but there is no world in which they exist. Theistic modal realists might find it ontologically congenial to include these non-individuals in their normal domain of quantification. In addition to the individuals that exist in possible worlds, there are cross-world sums – individuals that have parts in many worlds but do not exist wholly in any possible world. There are also non-individuals that exist in no possible world at all and do not have parts in any possible world – indeed they lack parts simpliciter.

There might be good theological reason to maintain that a maximally great being exists in the pluriverse but does not exist in any possible world. Perhaps God's omnipresence is best understood as being present throughout the pluriverse without being wholly present in any possible world in the pluriverse. Perhaps it is not possible that God should be wholly present in any possible world since no possible world could fully manifest the glory of a maximally great being. Perhaps God is among the cross-world sums that have parts in every possible world but do not exist wholly in any possible world. Of course talking of God as having parts is repugnant to most classical views of God on which God's perfection depends on divine simplicity. Divine simplicity entails – or seems to entail – that God has no parts at all.

Still there might be good theological reason to maintain that a maximally great being exists in the pluriverse but does not exist in any possible world. [29] God might exist *from the standpoint of every possible world* in exactly the way that numbers, properties, propositions, and events exist from the standpoint of possible worlds.[30] God is no doubt a concrete individual – unlike properties and propositions, which are reducible to sets – but an individual that does not exist in any possible world. Theistic modal realism might have God simply exist in the theistic pluriverse.[31] God's omnipresence is then understood as being present throughout the pluriverse – existing from the standpoint of every possible world – without having any more specific spatial or temporal location. God exists in the pluriverse without existing in or being a part of any possible world in the pluriverse.

Alternatively, theistic modal realists might resist the ontological restriction that all individuals are world-bound. There is no argument against the possibility of worlds overlapping with

respect to objects whose intrinsic properties are essential. Lewis urged that immanent universals, for instance, have all of their intrinsic properties essentially and so exist across possible worlds.[32]

But does God have his intrinsic properties essentially? If God has his intrinsic properties essentially, then there is no difficulty in God *existing in* every possible world. Ross Cameron urges that God indeed does have his intrinsic properties essentially.

> Likewise, what contingent, non-relational property of God could we put in place of the shape of the coin? If God has His intrinsic nature essentially, as I think is overwhelmingly plausible, then there is none.[33]

But there seems to be a conflation here of intrinsic properties and intrinsic nature. God might have his *intrinsic nature* essentially – God's nature is just the set of his essential properties – but not every intrinsic property of God is a part of his intrinsic nature. Certainly, in some possible worlds, God believes it valuable to create a six foot tall prophet, for instance, and in other worlds he believes it valuable to create a six foot, two inch prophet instead. Those beliefs are intrinsic properties of God on any criterion of intrinsicality we might choose. And they are intrinsic properties that cannot be consistently coexemplified. It is not difficult to locate other intrinsic properties of God that are not part of his nature: in some possible worlds, God aims to create a world that displays maximal diversity and in other possible worlds God aims to create an ontologically minimal world. None of those aims depends on anything other than God alone and perhaps some necessary truths about value. The Leibnizian problem that Lewis describes rearises in the case of God: We stubbornly ask what beliefs and aims God has and insist that those beliefs and aims are not relations to worlds.

The Leibnizian problem is easily avoided on the view that God exists from the standpoint of every possible world. It is perfectly possible that God consistently believes that it is valuable to create a six foot tall prophet *over there* in that region of the pluriverse and God believes it is valuable to create a six foot, two inch prophet *over here* in our region of the pluriverse. It is perfectly possible that God aims for maximal diversity in one region of the pluriverse and God aims for ontological minimalism in another region.

Theistic modal realism rejects the thesis that the actual world and its contents comprise the totality of metaphysical reality. There is much more to metaphysical reality than what we find in actuality. Possible worlds – including the actual world – are just particular regions of the much larger pluriverse. Actuality is just the region of metaphysical reality that the speaker happens to inhabit.[34]

Part of the confusion about Lewis's view of actuality is due to an equivocation on restricted and unrestricted quantification. Idioms of quantification may be used to range over everything without exception – everything in the pluriverse – or they may be tacitly or expressly restricted to parts of the pluriverse – to regions of the pluriverse or to possible worlds, or planets, or cities, or people, or leptons, and so on.

In the most obvious instance, quantification is expressly restricted to specified domains as we find in classical logic. But tacit restriction of existential quantifiers is commonplace. In everyday discourse, existential quantification is typically restricted to our world and what it includes, even more typically to a much more narrow domain of objects. When we take quantification as restricted in this way, it is true that nothing exists but our world and its inhabitants.

The absolutely unrestricted use of existential quantification – quantification that takes as its domain all of the pluriverse – does have logical implications that are unusual.[35] If we are not restricting our quantifiers to some possible world or to some particular place or to some individual or the like, the modal operators collapse, as we would expect to happen if there were a single possible world. Possibly some swans are blue if and only if some swans are blue if and

only if necessarily some swans are blue. Whatever is possibly true is necessarily true is true. It is useful – though strictly speaking a useful fiction – to think of unrestricted quantification as taking all of metaphysical reality as a single possible world. All of metaphysical reality constitutes the domain for the absolutely unrestricted quantifier.

Unrestrictedly, it is possible that there are unicorns entails that *there exist unicorns*. It is possible that there are flying pigs entails that there exist flying pigs. So yes, theistic modal realists do want to say that there exist flying pigs, talking donkeys, literate wombats, and the like. But we do not want to say that there *actually* exist flying pigs, talking donkeys, and literate wombats. What exists unrestrictedly corresponds to what all of creation includes – what exists in some part or other of the vast regions of metaphysical reality. What actually exists – what exists restrictedly – corresponds to what our particular corner of reality includes. Theistic modal realists hasten to add that, in every ordinary circumstance, we implicitly restrict our quantifiers and say truthfully that there are no literate wombats: That is, there are none *here*.

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*. In every possible world the very same things exist unrestrictedly. Indeed the pluriverse itself exists necessarily. 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.[36] The totality of metaphysical reality exists necessarily.[37]

Theistic modal realism takes as the object of God's creation *the totality of metaphysical reality*. In direct contrast to theistic actualist realism, theistic modal realism makes it possible that God creates more than one possible world. Indeed, theistic modal realism maintains that God necessarily creates every possible world, the entire pluriverse, and everything in the pluriverse.

According to theistic modal realism, the entire pluriverse exists – it is the totality of metaphysical reality. And the totality of metaphysical reality is the object of God's creation. All possibilia exist in exactly the same way that all actualia exists. Possibilia do not exist vicariously via proxies – individual essences or suitable qualitative descriptions – in the actual world. Nor do possibilia exist as contingently non-concrete objects. And possible worlds do not exist as uninstantiated maximal sets of sentences or the like. Rather, all possible worlds and possibilia exist as parts of the concrete totality of metaphysical reality. Unicorns exist not as concepts in the mind of God or abstract objects, but as concrete objects in the pluriverse. Similarly for the talking donkeys, the flying pigs, the literate wombats, the learned moles and all other possible objects.[38] To the question, what did God create, the answer is *everything unrestrictedly*. What exists could not be more plenitudinous than divine creation is – the glory of God is manifested in the vast creation of the pluriverse.

4. Conclusion

The safe and sane ontology of actualist realism is the dominant view among theists. It's the view explicitly endorsed and defended among the most prominent theists in philosophy – including Plantinga, Adams, van Inwagen, Chisholm, Hasker, and Menzel – but also the view implicitly assumed among theist philosophers generally.

Theistic modal realism requires a commitment to a vast ontology – the totality of divine creation – but we have found that it easily accommodates the traditional God. It also offers a solution to all of the most difficult problems of philosophical theology. The theoretical benefits of theistic modal realism are well worth the tradeoff in ontological commitment.

No version of theistic actualist realism can satisfy the principle of plenitude and no version of actualist realism can satisfy the principle of sufficient reason.[39] The totality of God's creation cannot be proportionate to its source, as A. O. Lovejoy phrases the problem.

Failing to satisfy the principles of plenitude and sufficient reason yields additional worries.[40] Theistic actualist realism cannot solve the less-than-best problem, the problems of evil, the problem of no best world, the problem of arbitrariness, the paradox of sufficient reason, or the problem of divine freedom among many others. Indeed, it is the commitment to actualist realism that makes these problems intractable.

Short Biography

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Notes

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[1] A referee observes that theistic modal realists could just suppose that, in each world, there is exactly one God, and that, under natural ways of determining counterparts, these Gods are counterparts of one another. It's an interesting suggestion, but there are non-natural counterpart relations that arise in reasonable contexts and under which it is true to say that God is nearly omnipotent and nearly omnibenevolent. Indeed these would invariable arise in discussion of a number of the problems of evil. But the suggestion that God might be less than perfectly good and powerful is unacceptable to traditional theists. The traditional God exemplifies the divine attributes as a matter of absolute necessity, and not in a way that is sensitive to contextual or pragmatic pressures. There is the additional worry that, speaking unrestrictedly, there exists a world-bound God in each possible world that plays the same role as our God in the actual world. At a minimum, traditional theists would require that possible worlds overlap with respect to the traditional God. But for reasons discussed below, this option is not especially viable. But the most important problem is that theistic modal realists maintain that God satisfies a general version of Lovejoy's principle of plenitude according to which God creates the entire pluriverse, all possible worlds and all possibilia. It is this feature of theistic modal realism that is central to the solution to so many intractable problems in philosophical theology. It's not a thesis that theistic modal realism can abandon. See Ross Cameron 'God Exists at Every (Modal Realist) World: Response to Sheehy' *Religious Studies*, 45, (2009) 95–100. Mike Almeida, 'Theistic Modal Realism?' in Jon Kvanvig (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* Vol. 3 (2011) 1–15. For a philosopher who believes that modal realism is compatible with an alternative concept of God, see Yujin Nagasawa 'Modal Panentheism' in *Alternate Concepts of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 91–105.

[2] See John Mackie 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind* (1955) p. 200.

[3] See David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. xi. It might be worth mentioning a discussion with Peter Forrest on the probability that a god actually exists given Lewis's pluriverse. $\beth_2 = P(P(\mathbb{N})) =$ 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% that one of those gods is actual. There is of course other evidence both for and against the existence of the Lewisian gods.

[4] It is certainly David Lewis's view that there exists no traditional God that is necessarily existing. 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 his 'Anselm and Actuality' *Noûs*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1970) 175–188. See esp. section 8. See also Stephanie Lewis, 'Where (in Logical Space) is God?' in Barry Loewer and Jonathan Schaffer (eds.) *A Companion to David Lewis* (Malden; Wiley-Blackwell, 2015). For some familiar objections from traditional theists, see Paul Sheehy 'Theism and Modal Realism', *Religious Studies*, 42 (2006), 315–328. See also Yishai Cohen 'Theistic Modal Realism and Gratuitous Evil' (unpublished manuscript), and Richard Davis, 'God and Modal Concretism', *Philosophia Christi* Vol. 10, No. 1 (2008) 57-74.

[5] See William Lycan, '*On the Plurality of Worlds* by David Lewis', *Journal of Philosophy*, 85, (1988) 42–47. I'm not attributing to Lycan any theistic views; I do not know his views on that topic.

[6] Among the theistic philosophers who have concerned themselves with the metaphysics of modality I include Saul Kripke, Hilary Putnam, Alvin Plantinga, Robert M. Adams, Chris Menzel, and Thomas Morris. Each has endorsed a form of actualist

realism on the promise, in part, of its 'safe and sane' ontology. 'Mad dog modal realism' is not counted among the safe and sane ontologies.

[7] A short list of theistic and non-theistic actualists would have to include Nathan Salmon 'Existence,' in *Philosophical Perspectives* 1, J. Tomberlin (ed.), (Atascadero: Ridgeview Press, 1987), Bertrand Russell, 'On Denoting', *Mind* 14 (1905): 479–493, Arthur Prior, *Worlds, Times, and Selves*, (Amherst: University of Masssachusetts Press, 1977) Arthur Prior, *Time and Modality*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), Arthur Prior, 'Modality and Quantification in S5', *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 21 (1956): 60–2, Alvin Plantinga, 'Actualism and Possible Worlds', *Theoria* 42: (1976) 139–60; reprinted in Michael Loux (ed.) *The Actual and the Possible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 253–73, Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), Peter van Inwagen, P., 1986, 'Two Concepts of Possible Worlds', *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, XI, P. French, T. Uehling, and H. Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 185–213, Thomas Jager, 1982, 'An Actualist Semantics for Quantified Modal Logic', *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 23/3 (1982): 335–49, Christopher Menzel, 'Actualism, Ontological Commitment, and Possible Worlds Semantics', *Synthese* 85 (1990) 355–89, and his 1991, 'The True Modal Logic', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 20: (1991) 331–374, Robert M. Adams, 'Theories of Actuality', *Nous* 8: (1974) 211–31; reprinted in Loux (1979), pp. 190–209, and his 'Actualism and Thisness', *Synthese* 49: (1981) 3–41, Roderick Chisholm, *Persons and Objects* (La Salle: Open Court, 1976), Robert Stalnaker, 'Possible Worlds', *Noûs*, 10(1): (1976) 65–75. Bernard Linsky and Edward Zalta, 'In Defense of the Simplest Quantified Modal Logic', James Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives* 8: *Logic and Language*, (Atascadero: Ridgeview Press, 1994) 431–458.

[8] See David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1986) p. 4

As the realm of sets is for mathematicians, so logical space is a paradise for philosophers. We have only to believe in the vast realm of possibilia, and there we find what we need to advance our endeavours. We find the wherewithal to reduce the diversity of notions we must accept as primitive, and thereby to improve the unity and economy of the theory that is our professional concern – total theory, the whole of what we take to be true.

[9] It is an interesting and important question why there seem to be no extravagance objections to very large ontologies that are mainly abstract entities. Why do such large numbers of abstract objects pass commonsense muster?

[10] Here 'actually' is used in its 'shifty' non-rigid sense. See David Lewis, 'Anselm and Actuality' in *Philosophical Papers Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). p. 19ff.

[11] There is, however, hard-core actualism, which denies the existence of possible worlds other than the actual world. The view is discussed below. See Gabriele Contessa 'Modal Truthmakers and Two Varieties of Actualism', *Synthese* 174 (2010) 341–353.

[12] One could also advance a version of conceptualism. Conceptualism maintains that possible worlds and possibilia are ontologically dependent on God. They exist in the mind of God, though they are not the objects of God's creation. Possible worlds and possibilia might exist in the divine intellect. For a discussion of conceptualism and divine aseity, see for instance, J.P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove; Intervarsity Press, 2003) 504ff.

[13] See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) pp. 71–2.

Our question, then, is whether Socrates has an essence in the sense of (2) – a property that is essential to him and such that in every possible world, everything distinct from him has its complement. But clearly he *does* have such a property; *Socrateity*, the property of being identical to Socrates …

[14] See Robert M. Adams, 'Actualism and Thisness', *Synthese* 49 (1981) pp. 10–11.

[15] It does not affect the discussion to think of these suchnesses as existing in the mind of God, if you prefer, rather than being abstract objects.

[16] See Alvin Plantinga, 'On Existentialism' *Philosophical Studies* 44: 1–20. Plantinga is a non-existentialist. Existentialism is at least the view that singular propositions about an object cannot exist unless that object does. Existentialism is also the view that certain properties – non-qualitative haecceities – cannot exist uninstantiated.

[17] Part of what results is the rejection of the S5 axiom that $\Diamond\Diamond p \rightarrow \Diamond p$. What is possibly possible is not, in general, possible.

[18] See Gabriele Contessa 'Modal Truthmakers and Two Varieties of Actualism', *Synthese* 174 (2010) 341–2.

There are some forms of theistic actualism according to which metaphysical reality is considerably more restricted. The ontological parsimony of *hard-core actualism*, for instance, includes the rejection of all possible, non-actual worlds. The actual world is not merely the only concretized possible world, it is also the only existing possible world. Hard-core actualism is realistic with respect to the actual world – there does exist an actual world – and so it might be called hard-core actualist realism. But it is not realistic concerning the existence of other possible worlds, individual essences, non-individuating descriptions, etc. Hardcore actualists … disagree with both possibilists and softcore actualists in taking

talk of possible worlds no more seriously than a (very useful) fiction and reject any analysis of modality based on the Leibnizian biconditionals. Hardcore actualists think that what makes modal propositions true are irreducibly modal features of the actual world (such as laws of nature, dispositions, or essences.

For the terminology of hard and soft actualism, see Robert M. Adams, 'Theories of Actuality' *Noûs*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1974) p. 224ff.

[19] Alvin Plantinga is keen to reject the identification of possible worlds and actualizable worlds. There are, according to Plantinga, possible worlds that are possibly not actualizable. See Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[20] See Gabriele Contessa 'Modal Truthmakers and Two Varieties of Actualism', *Synthese* 174 (2010) 343. See also Ross Cameron, 'Truthmakers and Modality' *Synthese*, 164 (2008) 261–280.

[21] But hard-core actualist might argue that God does create every possible object. If so then all of the actual objects just are all of the possible objects. The general principle of plenitude, it could then be argued, is satisfied. All possibilia and all possible worlds exist, since there exists exactly one possible world and the set of all possibilia is identical to the set of all actualia. Of course, this is just to take the skeptical modal position that the hard problem rejects. It is to take the position that there does not exist a possible world for every way that things non-skeptically might have been.

[22] See Bernard Linsky and Edward Zalta, 'In Defense of the Simplest Quantified Modal Logic', *op. cit.* p. 25.

[23] There is some dispute concerning whether views such as Zalta and Linsky's are indeed actualist theories. It seems plain to me that they are. For a nice discussion of the distinction between actualism and possibilism, see Ross Cameron, 'On Characterizing the Presentism/Eternalism and Actualism/Possibilism Debates', *Analytic Philosophy* Vol. 0 (2016) 1–31.

[24] See David Lewis, 'A Reply to Dana Scott: 'Is There Life on Possible Worlds?' in Barry Loewer and Jonathan Schaffer (eds.) *A Companion to David Lewis* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015) pp. 19–20.

[25] See David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) p. 69ff.

[26] See David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). Lewis offers four ways to make the abstract/concrete distinction: the way of example, the way of conflation, the negative way and the way of abstraction. On any way to make the distinction – and these do not in general agree on what counts as concrete – possible worlds are concrete objects. See section (1.7), p. 81ff.

[27] *Ibid*. p. 73

[28] *Ibid*. p. 123ff. Lewis discusses the 'road to indifference' that these logical relations seem to entail. We discuss this problem further below.

[29] David Lewis, 'Counterpart Theory and Quantified Modal Logic', *op. cit.* p. 40ff.

[30] See Ross P. Cameron, 'God Exists at Every (Modal Realist) World: Response to Sheehy', *Religious Studies* 45, (2009) p. 97ff.

[31] It might be urged that God cannot exist from the standpoint of every world and that possible worlds are causally isolated. As we noted above, causal isolation entails that no possible world stands in any causal or spatiotemporal relation to any other possible world or to any part of any other possible world. Possible worlds (or their parts) stand in spatiotemporal and causal relations to themselves (or their parts) alone. Does causal isolation entail that nothing that is not in a world can be causally efficacious? I take the restriction to state that there is no inter-world causation. No events in world w have causal effects in world w'. If so, then God's causal action in w does not violate the restriction. It has no effects in w'.

Does it mean instead that there can be nothing that stands in causal relations to both w and w'? If so, then theistic modal realists will abandon the restriction, since God stands in causal relations to all worlds. But it should be noted that Lewis allows that some objects exist in more than one world and have causal effects in more than one world. Compare endnote (15), 'Theistic Modal Realism II'. Lots of things are in more than one world, and many of those things enter into causal relations. Universals can enter into causal relations, since something's being red or yellow, for instance, can cause someone to notice it. But that same universal enters into causal relations in many possible worlds. So the restriction does not seem to prohibit a single object entering into causal relations in more than one world.

Does it mean finally that nothing that exists from the standpoint of a world w can enter into causal relations with anything in w? Paradigmatic among those things that exist from the standpoint of worlds are sets. But it is possible that sets enter into causal relations. For Lewis, events are sets, and certainly, events enter into causal relations.

Is it true that sets or universals cannot enter into causal interaction? Why shouldn't we say that something causes a set of effects? Or that a set of causes, acting jointly, causes something? Or that positive charge causes effects of a characteristic kind whenever it is instantiated? Many authors have proposed to identify an event - the very thing that most surely can cause and be caused – with one or another sort of set. (For instance, in 'Events' I propose to identify an event with the set of spacetime regions where it occurs.) *On the Plurality of Worlds*, p. 83ff.

So it does not appear that objects that exist from the standpoint of possible worlds cannot enter into causal relations with worlds or their parts. But theistic modal realists are prepared to abandon the restriction if it turns out that, in fact, nothing that exists from the standpoint of worlds can enter into causal relations with worlds or their parts.

It is important to underscore that theistic modal realists need not commit to every aspect of Lewis's modal realism. Departures from Lewis's view are indeed inevitable, given their commitment to a traditional form of theism, and many of these departures theistic realists regard as improvements in the view.

[32]   David Lewis, 'New Work for a Theory of Universals', in his *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 11, n. 5.

> If universals are to do the new work I have in store for them, they must be capable of repeated occurrence not only within a world but also across worlds. They would be an exception to my usual principle – meant for particulars of course – that nothing is wholly present as part of two different worlds. But I see no harm in that. If two worlds are said to overlap by having a coin in common, and if this coin is supposed to be wholly round in one world and wholly octagonal in the other, I stubbornly ask what shape it is, and insist that shape is not a relation to worlds … I do not see any parallel objection if worlds are said to overlap by sharing a universal. What contingent, nonrelational property of the universal could we put in place of [the] shape of the coin in raising the problem? I cannot think of any.

[33]   Ross P. Cameron, 'God Exists at Every (Modal Realist) World: Response to Sheehy', *Religious Studies* 45, (2009) p. 100.
[34]   See David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973) p 86ff.

> 'Actual' is an indexical, like 'I' or 'here' or 'now': it depends for its reference on the circumstances of utterance, to wit, the world where the utterance is located. My indexical theory of actuality exactly mirrors a less controversial doctrine about time … It is said that realism about possible worlds is false because only our own world and its contents actually exist. But of course unactualized possible worlds and their unactualized inhabitants do not *actually* exist. To actually exist is to exist and to be located here at our actual world – at this world that we inhabit. Other worlds than ours are not our world, or inhabitants thereof. It does not follow that realism about possible world is false. Realism about unactualized possibles is exactly the thesis that there are more things than actually exist.

[35]   See Cian Dorr, 'How to Be a Modal Realist' (unpublished manuscript) p. 4. Where 'Qu' is an unrestricted quantifier, we find that,

> … the best option for the modal realist is to hold that 'Possibly, Qu Fs are Gs' is equivalent in every case to 'Qu Fs are Gs'. And if we say this, I can see no grounds for resisting the following obvious generalisation: whenever φ is a sentence built up from qualitative predicates, unrestricted quantifiers and truth-functional operators, ⌜Possibly φ⌝ and ⌜Necessarily φ⌝ are both equivalent to φ.

[36]   Bryan Skyrms offers a regress argument that there must be larger and larger pluriverses. See his 'Possible Worlds, Physics and Metaphysics', *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 30, No. 5 (1976) 323–332. Compare David Lewis, 'On the Plurality of Worlds *op. cit.* p. 101, n. 1.

> Skyrms conjures up the spectre of a regress from a plurality of worlds to a plurality of grand worlds to a plurality of yet grander worlds … The regress works by cycling around three assumptions: (1) that 'reality' is the totality of everything, (2) that reality might have been different, and (3) that possible difference is to be understood in terms of a plurality of alternatives. I reply that (1) and (2) aren't both right. Which one is wrong depends on whether we choose to take 'reality' as a blanket term for everything, or as yet another word for the this-worldly part of everything …

[37]   This of course is not to say that the pluriverse as a whole is not apt for explanation. On theistic modal realism, the pluriverse is apt for explanation and is explained theologically. It requires a much fuller discussion, but in sum, the pluriverse is the only suitable manifestation of the glory of God.

[38]   I'm setting aside abstract objects such as sets (or pure sets), events, propositions, numbers, and the like.

[39]   There are several principles that more or less worthily take the name 'the principle of sufficient reason'. The actual principle of sufficient reason requires that (roughly) for every true, contingent proposition *p* there is some (other) proposition *q* such that *q* is true and *q* entails *p*. The general principle of plenitude requires that (roughly) every possible world and all possibilia exist at some time or other. There are good arguments that aim to show that the principles are identical.

[40]   The problems are discussed in detail in the paper 'Theistic Modal Realism II: Theoretical Benefits'.

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