

Lewisian Theism

Thesis Consisting of Interrelated Papers

Subject of Thesis: Theistic Modal Metaphysics

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Abstract

Lewis's modal realism is the view that possible worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. Classical theism is the view that God is necessary, unitary, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent, simple, and the creator and sustainer of all existence. Lewisian theism is the conjunction of modal realism with classical theism. In my thesis by interrelated papers, I argue, firstly, that Lewisian theism is consistent, provided certain theoretical revisions are made to modal realism, and, secondly, that Lewisian theism has the resources to solve certain philosophico-theological problems. In the prologue, I introduce the thesis and expound Lewisian theism. In the first substantive paper, I argue that God's necessity is incompatible with counterpart theory; but, in the second, I argue, *contra* the dominant view in the literature, that if we eschew counterpart theory for analysing God's necessity, Lewisian theism is consistent. The third and fourth papers concern material adequacy; the third concerns the existence of evil worlds, wherein I argue that Lewisian theists can non-problematically deny the existence of such worlds; and the fourth concerns the existence of an empty world, wherein I argue that Lewisian theists can supply such a world. The fifth paper concerns Lewisian theism's ability to solve a philosophico-theological problem; herein, I argue, firstly, that a valid version of the contingency argument against divine simplicity can be supplied (*contra* some philosophers), and secondly that Lewisian theism has the resources to render this argument unsound. The last paper contains an abductive argument for the existence of God from modal realism; I argue that the best way to account for the truths of advanced modal claims is to posit the existence of God.

Prologue

Outlining the Thesis and Lewisian Theism

1 Outlining the Thesis

According to David Lewis's (1986) modal realism, possible worlds are concrete individuals, inhabited by concrete possibilia, and are thus ontologically like our universe. According to Classical theism (hereafter: 'theism'), God is necessary, omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipotent, simple, unitary, and the creator and sustainer of all existence. Several authors believe Lewisian theism, the conjunction of theism with modal realism, to be consistent: indeed, Oppy (2009; 1993), Leftow (2012), Cameron (2009), Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) and Collier (2021a) all think that modal realism has the resources to accommodate God's attributes, provided some theoretical revisions are made to the theory. Le Poidevin (1996), Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002), Sheehy (2009; 2006), Davis (2009; 2008), and Vance (2016) all think, however, that Lewisian theism is inconsistent. In my thesis, I argue that Lewisian theism is consistent, provided certain theoretical revisions are made to modal realism, and that Lewisian theism has the resources to solve certain philosophico-theological problems. My thesis constitutes a thesis by interrelated papers, and below is an outline of each paper, and how they fit together and how they relate to theistic modal metaphysics more broadly.

The first paper concerns God's necessity in relation to counterpart theory and transworld mereological sums. Herein, I argue, firstly, that God's necessity cannot be accommodated on modal realism if counterpart theory is used, since either modal

collapse ensues or polytheism results. After exploring God's unmatchability and unsurpassability, and notions of unrestricted quantification, I argue that analysing God's necessity in terms of counterpart theory entails a rejection of monotheism, and thus cannot be espoused by Lewisian theists. Secondly, after examining the doctrine of divine simplicity and the nature of composition, I argue that taking God to be a transworld mereological sum of divine beings entails, amongst other things, a rejection of divine simplicity.

The second paper also concerns God's necessity, but concerns two hitherto hastily rejected options for analysing God's necessity: His existing in worlds in the way that a transworld immanent universal might exist in worlds – i.e. by being wholly present in multiple worlds – and His existing from the standpoints of worlds. I argue that the respective objections raised in the literature against these two options miscarry, but Lewisian theists ought to espouse the second option: the first gives rise to a problem concerning God's particularity, but the second seems not to generate such difficulties, if we accept in the first place that something's existing from the standpoint of a world is a viable way for something to belong to a world – that is, if we accept that it is viable, say, that pure sets belong to worlds by existing from the standpoints of worlds. Thus, if Lewisian theists accept that the standpoints of worlds option is a viable option for something to belong to worlds, then they should espouse this option for God.

Having established the consistency of Lewisian theism concerning divine necessity, I examine, in the following two papers, matters of material adequacy.

The third paper concerns a problem related to the modal problem of evil: the problem of the existence of evil worlds on Lewisian theism. Herein I examine whether an evil world exists within the framework that God exists in all modal realistic worlds.

Amongst other things, I reject Almeida's (2017b; 2011; 2008) view that Lewisian theists should posit the existence of evil worlds, since on such a view the following dilemma is generated: either God is not sovereign and modality is primitive, or He is not maximally perfect. After exploring and rejecting some other options, I argue for Morris's (1987) view that theists should not posit evil worlds, and that such a view is not problematic for Lewisian theists, since the standard objections thereto miscarry.

In the fourth paper, I contend that Lewisian theism has the resources to verify the theistic claim that God need not have created anything concrete; that is, Lewisian theism has the resources to account for a theistic version of metaphysical nihilism. Herein, I revise Baldwin's (1996) subtraction argument to render it consistent with theism, and thereafter examine options for modal realism's accommodation of an empty world. I reject all options for theistic and/or modal realistic reasons, except Rodriguez-Pereyra's (2004) proposal, which I revise to render it theistically consistent. Thus, I argue: if Lewisian theists are to verify the claim that God need not have created concreta, they should espouse a revised version of Rodriguez-Pereyra's proposal.

The fifth paper concerns a problem within philosophical theology: the contingency problem for divine simplicity. This problem, roughly, is that divine simplicity seems to entail a rejection of God's creative freedom; specifically, if God could not will to create otherwise, given His simplicity, then, in the words of Leftow (2015: 48), "there had to be a universe, and this universe". Herein, I argue, *contra* Tomaszewski (2019), that a version of the contingency argument against divine simplicity is valid, and thus theists are committed to demonstrating its unsoundness. Lewisian theism, I argue, has the resources to do just this in a way that does not require – as *per* the dominant strategy in the literature – denying the intrinsicity of God's will. Thus, Lewisian theism provides a way to avoid what Oppy (2014: 99) and

other philosophers take to be “the most apparently intractable problem for the doctrine of divine simplicity”.

The last paper of my thesis constitutes an abductive argument for God's existence from modal realism. Specifically, I argue that the best way to verify the advanced modal claim ‘possibly, many worlds exist’ is to posit a necessarily existent, omniscient being. Herein, I examine the most fruitful attempts to render advanced modal claims true on modal realism; I argue that all attempts in the literature fail, and develop two novel strategies: the first seems initially rather attractive and appeals to sets, but, I argue, ultimately fails; and the second appeals to a classical God-like being, and is ultimately successful. Thus, I argue: if modal realists wish to account for the truths of advanced modal claims, they should espouse a classical God-like being. Roughly, they should be Lewisian theists.

And so, the first two papers principally concern Lewisian theism's consistency; the third and fourth papers, respectively, examine the theory's material adequacy in relation to the existence of evil and empty worlds; the fifth paper demonstrates that the theory has the resources to solve a formidable problem within philosophical theology: the contingency problem; and, lastly, the sixth paper constitutes an abductive argument for the existence of God from the advanced modalising problem.

Herein, I do not contend that, all things considered, one should be a Lewisian theist – although, I admit, I find myself attracted to the theory. Instead, I examine many of the theory's virtues and vices, and argue, firstly, that its chief purported vices, upon closer inspection, are not vices after all, and, secondly, that the theory has both theistic and modal realistic virtues that are hitherto unexplored. Thus, the goal of my thesis is to demonstrate that Lewisian theism should be taken more seriously by theistic modal metaphysicians than has previously been the case.

2 Lewisian Theism¹

Now that I have outlined the thesis, I shall expound Lewisian theism. I shall, firstly, explore modal realism, and, secondly, classical theism.

Possible worlds metaphysically underprop the truth values of modal claims, where such claims are (standardly) analysed through the following biconditionals:

- (1) Possibly, P iff there exists some world w , such that at w : P
- (2) Necessarily, P iff in all possible worlds w : P.

So, take the *de dicto* possibility claim:

- (3) Possibly, ducks exist.

Given (1), (3) will be true iff there exists a world such that it is true therein that ducks exist. But what are possible worlds? Well, possible worlds are maximally inclusive, total ways that the world might have been, and theories concerning the ontology of worlds abound.² Herein, I am exclusively interested in Lewis's modal realism. On modal realism, an infinite plurality of possible worlds exists, where such worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, and are of the same kind as the concrete world in which we reside.

¹ The following is taken, in part, from my Collier (2019b) and my (2021a).

² For an overview of different possible worlds theories, see Menzel (2016).

Now, modal realism's worlds can be characterised formally. That is, the type of entity whose tokens serve as the objects of quantification in (1) and (2) – that is, the worlds that are quantified over to supply 'possibly, P' (in the left-half of (1)) and 'necessarily, P' (in the left-half of (2)) with apposite truth values – can be characterised through a series of ontological postulates.³

Modal realism's ontological primitives are: individuals and sets. These ontological categories are exclusive and exhaustive.⁴ So, for every x , either x is an individual or x is a set (where our quantifier has within its scope the totality of existence (that is, it is unrestricted), and where 'or' is an exclusive-disjunction operator). Given the "unrestricted mereology [Lewis] favour[s]" – that is, given Lewis's principle of unrestricted mereology – rather complex individuals can be constructed from less complex individuals (Lewis 1986: 199). So, for any individuals $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$, a mereological sum of $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$, exists, which is itself an individual.⁵ Worlds, accordingly, are individuals, and can be characterised as follows. For every x , if x is a world, then x is an individual. For any individual x , x constitutes a world iff all of x 's parts stand in spatiotemporal relations to one another, and anything that stands in a spatiotemporal relation to any of x 's parts is itself a part of x . Thence, the spatiotemporal relation is transitive and symmetric, and, any two or more individuals are considered worldmates by being part of the same world, by being spatiotemporally connected. A world for Lewis, is neither spatiotemporally nor causally connected to any other world (that is, worlds fail to overlap). Given Lewis's (1968: 111) "nothing is in two worlds" principle, for any individual x , if x is a part of a world w , then x is a part of w only (that is, individuals are worldbound). Given Lewis's indexical account of

³ This characterisation of modal realism follows Lewis (1986; 1968) and Divers (2002: 45).

⁴ If, however, (immanent) universals exist, this is false (if universals are not individuals (and not sets)). For a discussion of the individual/set distinction, see Lewis (1991).

⁵ Notice that sets do not feature here; Lewis (1986: 172) thinks that mereology does not apply to sets.

actuality, predicating ‘actuality’ of an individual x , or a world w , is not to predicate anything of x or w that distinguishes x or w from other individuals or worlds in terms of ontology; ‘actuality’ terms are indexical, and thus depend, for their felicitous usage, upon the context of a speaker.⁶ On this account, the world in which we live is the actual world, but has no ontologically privileged status just by being so.

And so, for Lewis, by having parts with certain qualitative features, worlds represent possibilities.⁷ Thus, analysed through (1), and using modal realism’s world-ontology, (3) is true iff there is a Lewisian world that has duck-parts. The actual world is a duck-world; but there are infinitely many other worlds that have ducks as world-parts.

But what are the ways that Lewis’s worlds could be? Modal realism’s principle of plenitude states that every way that a world could be configured is the way that some world is configured. This principle ensures that, in logical space, there are no gaps – that is, the total set of possibilities is accounted for. Such a principle, however, does not tell us what is possible and what is not. Thus, we need Lewis’s (1986: 87) “principle of recombination”: any individual x can, and can fail to, co-exist with any other individual y .⁸ This principle can be split in two, and can be stated “in terms of other-worldly *duplicates*” (Menzel (2016)).⁹ For any (finite or infinite) number of individuals $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$, a world exists that contains any number of duplicates of $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$, in any spatiotemporal arrangement that shape and size permits. And, for any world w , and for any (finite or infinite) number of individuals $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$ in w and for any (finite or infinite) number of individuals $y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n$, that are distinct from $x_1,$

⁶ See Divers (2002) and Lewis (1986) for more.

⁷ This is a simplification; it ignores non-world-part inhabitants of worlds – e.g. pure sets, which are not, strictly speaking, ‘parts’ of worlds.

⁸ See Lewis (1986: 86-88).

⁹ I owe the following to Menzel (2016).

$x_2, \dots, x_n$, a world exists composed of duplicates of $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$, but no duplicates of $y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n$.¹⁰

So, we now have modal realism's account of worlds and its analysis of *de dicto* modal claims. But what about *de re* modal claims, of the form 'x is possibly/necessarily F'? Here, modal realism can appeal to counterpart theory to account for *de re* representation; that is, counterpart theory explains and supplies the truth-conditions for *de re* modal predications.¹¹

The counterpart relation is a resemblance/similarity relation. This relation, which need not be transitive nor symmetric, and which respects both intrinsic and extrinsic properties of individuals, is borne (except when being borne reflexively) by numerically non-identical individuals, residing in numerically non-identical worlds. And so, x is possibly F is *de re* represented by a world w, by w's being such that therein there exists an individual y that is F and sufficiently resemblant of x (where this will mean that in w, y is the most resemblant individual of x, given certain contextual conditions). Thus, by having as a part a counterpart of x that is F, a world represents that x is possibly F.

For *de re* modal predications, we thence have the following biconditionals:

(4) x is possibly F iff a world w exists such that in w, x has a counterpart that is F.

(5) x is necessarily F iff in all worlds w, all counterparts of x are F.

¹⁰ These principles, strictly speaking, will be denied by Lewisian theists: for them, the principle of recombination must respect God's individuality, His uniqueness, and His necessary existence.

¹¹ Transworld identity is thence typically not employed by modal realism for analysing the modal properties of individuals. Transworld identity is typically used by actualists: for an example, see Plantinga (1974a). Modal realism, however, when appealing to universals, may employ transworld identity.

And so, take the *de re* possibility claim:

(6) My horse is possibly fat.

Modal realism, by (4), translates (6) into the language of counterpart theory: ‘there exists a world such that therein there is a counterpart of my horse that is fat’. If there is such a world, which may indeed be the actual world, then (6) comes out true. But, assuming my horse is not actually fat, and so (6) is true since there exists a non-actual world that contains a non-actual fat counterpart of my horse, we can ask: is this fat, otherworldly horse invariably my horse’s counterpart? Counterpart theory says no. Whether something stands in a counterpart relation to something else is variable: that is, something in *w* is not, once and for all, a counterpart of something else in another world *u*. To a large degree, the appropriate selection of a counterpart depends upon the production context of a token of a type of *de re* modal claim: indeed, contextual factors, such as speaker-intentions and word-choice, affect not only which resemblance-kind is relevant for the appropriate selection of counterparts, but also the extent to which that resemblance-kind is relevant for the appropriate selection of counterparts. Modal realism’s *de re* modal representation, then, is variable; and this is a virtue of counterpart theory, since what is possibly true of *x* at *w* is, for at least most things, mutable.¹²

Like with modal realism’s worlds, counterpart theory’s postulates can be presented systematically.¹³ No individual resides in anything but a world; no individual

¹² For more on counterpart selection, see Divers (2002: 123) and Lewis (1986: ch4).

¹³ The postulates of counterpart theory assist modal realism in generating principles for translating sentences in quantified modal logic into counterpart-theoretic sentences. For more on this, see Lewis (1986: ch4; 1968).

resides in more than one world; counterparts exclusively reside in worlds; anything that has a counterpart exclusively resides in a world.¹⁴ A reflexive counterpart relation establishes the identity of individuals: for any individual x , if x resides in a world w , then x is a counterpart of itself in w ; and, for any individual x , if x resides in a world w , then x fails to be a counterpart of anything other than itself in w . And so, in w , my horse stands in a counterpart relation to itself (the relation is thence reflexive), and does not stand in a counterpart relation to anything else in w .¹⁵

Now, I have mentioned pure sets and, in a footnote, (immanent) universals; but how are tokens of these entity types to exist in worlds, if such things exist? Let us first look at universals. Universals, assuming they exist, can exist wholly in multiple worlds through “their characteristic privilege of repeated occurrence” (Lewis 1986: 2). But, if universals are to exist in multiple worlds, how should modal realists analyse their *de re* modal properties? As Cameron (2009) notes, to analyse modal predications of entities which fail to have accidental intrinsic properties, Lewis suggests that transworld identity can be employed. Universals, accordingly, seem to lack accidental intrinsic properties, and thus transworld identity is appropriate for *de re* modal analysis. To say of two things x and y that they are transworld identical is to say that there exist at least two numerically distinct worlds w and u such that in w , x wholly exists, and in u , y wholly exists, and x and y are identical; that is, a numerically identical thing exists in numerically distinct worlds. Thus, one and the same universal can wholly exist in multiple non-identical worlds.

But what about sets? First, the universe of sets can be characterised as follows.¹⁶ The empty-set $\emptyset$ exists. For any individual x , a set s exists such that s has x

¹⁴ See Lewis (1968: 111).

¹⁵ See Divers (2002: 123-124) for a neat canonical presentation of counterpart theory’s postulates.

¹⁶ The following is owed to Divers (2002: 46).

as its only element. That is, each individual has its own singleton set (where a set s constitutes a singleton set iff s 's cardinality equals 1). And, each and every set in the standard hierarchy of set theory exists, where sets are formed, iteratively, from singleton sets and $\emptyset$. So, we have pure and impure sets, and so how are they to exist in, or belong to, worlds? For impure sets, Lewis (1986: 83) contends that impure sets exist where their concrete members exist; thus:

...a set of located things does seem to have a location, though perhaps a divided location: it is where its members are. Thus my unit set is right here, exactly where I am; the set of you and me is partly here where I am, partly yonder where you are; and so on.

Impure sets are exploited to deliver modal realism's qualitative ontological parsimony. Indeed, Lewis uses sets and individuals, the two ontological primitives, to deliver an ontologically deflationary account of intensional entities, like propositions, properties, relations, and concepts. For example, (possible) propositions are identified with sets of worlds, and (possible) properties are identified with sets of their instances.

Pure sets, however, do not have concrete members, and thus do not exist where their concrete members exist. Instead, pure sets belong to worlds by "belonging to the least restricted domain that is normally – modal metaphysics being deemed abnormal – appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications" (Lewis 1983: 39-40). Thus, given pure sets belong to the least restricted quantificational domain of some world w , pure sets belong to w .

And so, we have Lewis's respective accounts of worlds and sets, and how modal realism analyses *de dicto* and *de re* modal claims. But what about classical theism? First, it is worth noting the type of theological framework within which I shall

be working: Anselmian perfect being theology.¹⁷ Specifically, I shall take God to be a maximally perfect/maximally great being; thus, the set of God's attributes will be identified with the set of all the compossible great-making attributes, where these attributes will be the attributes that classical theism typically predicates of God. The attributes that classical theism predicates of God are, amongst other things, necessity, omniscience, omnibenevolence, omnipotence, simplicity, unitarity/oneness, and being the creator and sustainer of all existence. That is, classical theism is the view that God is, necessarily, one concrete being, who is maximally powerful, maximally knowledgeable and maximally good, and has no metaphysical complexity, and is responsible for creating, and keeping in existence, all that exists (quantifying unrestrictedly). Accordingly, we can analyse this claim through (2), and thereby have the following: in all worlds, God exists and is omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipotent, simple, unitary, and the creator and sustainer of all existence. But, taking this claim as a *de re* modal predication of God, we can also analyse this claim through (5): in all worlds, there is a counterpart of God that is omniscient, omnibenevolent, omnipotent, simple, unitary, and the creator and sustainer of all existence. The first substantive paper explores the legitimacy of using (5) to analyse this claim, and so here I shall not examine its implications.

Lewisian theism, then, is the view that both modal realism and classical theism are true. That is, there is an infinite plurality of Lewisian worlds and, in all such worlds, the classical, maximally-perfect God exists. My thesis examines Lewisian theism in relation to God's necessity, omnibenevolence, creative freedom, simplicity, and omniscience.

¹⁷ See Anselm's *Monologion* (Anselm 1998) for an exposition of Anselm's perfect being theology. The reader, however, should note that the theological framework of this thesis is *Anselmian*; I do not claim that Anselm would assent to the claims I make herein. That is, my thesis is Anselmian in spirit – it is not a study of what Anselm would say about modal realism.

It should be noted that, although this is a thesis by interrelated papers, and thus each paper constitutes a stand-alone contribution to the literature, I do not provide an exposition of Lewisian theism's basic tenets in each paper; the reader can, accordingly, refer to this prologue for such an exposition. This does not mean, however, that I do not expound certain relevant aspects of Lewisian theism in each paper – certainly, in this prologue, I have not covered every aspect of Lewisian theism's theoretical machinery – only, knowledge of the theory's basic tenets is assumed hereafter.

And lastly, although my views on Lewisian theism have changed over time, much of the content of this thesis appears in journal articles; thus, the reader can accordingly see Collier (*Forthcoming*), (2021a), (2021b), (2019a), and (2019b) for the articles in their original forms.

Paper 1

God's Necessity: Counterpart Theory and Counterpart Sums

1 Introduction¹

Several authors believe Lewisian theism to be consistent regarding God's necessity: indeed, Oppy (2009; 1993), Leftow (2012), Cameron (2009), Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) and Collier (2021a) all think that modal realism has the resources to accommodate God's necessity whilst remaining theoretically fruitful.² In this paper, I argue that God's necessity cannot be accommodated on modal realism if counterpart theory is employed to account therefor (*contra* Oppy (2009; 1993) and Leftow (2012)). That is, I argue: God's necessary existence is incompatible with counterpart theory.

In my exploration of interpreting God's necessity through counterpart theory, I assess the recent contributions to the debate by Sheehy (2009; 2006), Davis (2009; 2008) and Vance (2016), rebutting some of Sheehy, Davis and Vance's respective arguments, supporting others and making novel ones of my own. After I have examined the relationship between God and counterpart theory, I shall consider, and reject, one final suggestion: God is the transworld summation of divine world-parts. So, the general import of this paper is thus: if counterpart theory is employed to interpret God's necessity, or if God is the transworld summation of divine world-parts, Lewisian theism is inconsistent.

¹ Most of the content of this paper appears in my Collier (2019b).

² It should be noted that Collier (2019b) refers to Lewisian theism as 'Anselmian theistic genuine modal realism'. Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) uses a different term, preferring 'theistic modal realism'. I prefer 'Lewisian theism'. It should also be noted that some authors refer to what I call 'classical theism' as 'Anselmian theism' or 'traditional theism'. I shall take these denominations as synonymous.

Now, if the above result carries, theists may have good grounds for providing a new argument against modal realism and modal realists may have good grounds for providing a new argument against theism, assuming counterpart theory is the correct way to interpret God's necessity.³ Indeed, if there are good arguments to support theism, and Lewisian theism is inconsistent or is objectionable for other reasons (through, amongst other things, modal collapse's being objectionable (to some at least)), then theists can employ these arguments to demonstrate the falsity of modal realism; and, if there are good arguments to support modal realism, and Lewisian theism is inconsistent or is objectionable for other reasons (through, amongst other things, modal collapse's being objectionable (to some at least)), then modal realists can employ these arguments to demonstrate the falsity of theism.

2 Preliminaries

To analyse *de re* modal predications of individuals, counterpart theory supplies the following biconditionals:⁴

- (1) x is possibly F iff a world w exists such that in w , x has a counterpart that is F .
- (2) x is necessarily F iff in all worlds w there exists a counterpart of x that is F .

³ The second paper of this thesis deals with other ways to interpret God's necessity on modal realism. For discussion of a non-counterpart theoretic interpretation of God's necessity, see Collier (2021a), Maia (2021), the latter sections of Collier (2019b) (the first section of which forms this paper), Collier (2019a), Almeida (2017b) and Cameron (2009).

⁴ See the Prologue or Lewis (1986: ch.4; 1968) or Divers (2002) for more on counterpart theory.

And so, by (2), modal realism translates theism's necessity claim, 'God necessarily exists', into the language of counterpart theory (assuming counterpart theory is the correct way to interpret God's necessity): 'in all worlds, there exists a counterpart of God'. Thus, to analyse God's necessity, we have the following biconditional (again, on the assumption that counterpart theory is the correct way to interpret God's necessity):

- (3) God necessarily exists iff in all worlds w , there exists a counterpart of God.

But, if counterpart theory is employed to interpret God's necessity, is Lewisian theism inconsistent? I now defend an affirmative answer thereto.

3 Counterpart Theory and God's Necessity

Lewis (1986: 96, fn61) outlines various ways that things can exist in worlds:⁵

In *Philosophical Papers*, volume I, pages 39-40, I distinguished three ways of 'being in a world': (1) being *wholly* in it, that is, being part of it; (2) being *partly* in it, that is, having a part that is wholly in it; and (3) existing *from the standpoint of* it, that is, 'belonging to the least restricted domain that is normally - modal metaphysics being deemed abnormal - appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications'. If the world in question is actual, that is almost my present distinction between being actual, being partly actual, and being actual by courtesy; the only difference in the terminologies being that I would not now throw all sets into the lower grade.

Herein, I am concerned with the first two ways that something can be in a world:

⁵ See Lewis (1983: 39-40) for Lewis's original statement.

- (4) Being *wholly* in a world, by being wholly a part thereof – (e.g. my laptop).
- (5) Being *partly* in a world, by having parts that are wholly parts thereof – that is, being composed of two or more (5)-kind beings – (e.g. a transworld mereological sum of laptop-parts)

I shall consider God both as (4)-kind, through the lens of counterpart theory, and as (5)-kind – but, is either option serviceable? Almost every philosopher I have asked about the viability of interpreting God's necessity through counterpart theory, taking Him as (4)-kind, has said that the answer is 'just obvious and unsurprising'. However, I have received two contrary answer-types, each with roughly equal numbers of advocates: some say it is 'just obvious and unsurprising' that construing God as (4)-kind, and analysing His necessity through counterpart theory, renders Lewisian theism inconsistent, and some say it is 'just obvious and unsurprising' that construing God as (4)-kind, and analysing His necessity through counterpart theory, renders Lewisian theism consistent. I think that construing God as (4)-kind, and analysing His necessity through counterpart theory, renders Lewisian theism inconsistent, and I argue for this below. Thus, if my response works, I shall deny the legitimacy of a view that appears 'just obvious and unsurprising' to some, and support a view that is 'just obvious and unsurprising' to others.

Now for the arguments. Given (3) and that (4)-kind beings are worldbound (i.e. they exist in one world only), it is not the case that one and the same God⁶ exists in

⁶ Oppy (2009; 1993) and Leftow (2012) support the consistency of Lewisian theism when construing God as (4)-kind and analysing His necessary existence through (3).

all worlds, but that in all worlds, He has a counterpart.⁷ But, as Sheehy (2006: 319-20) argues, there are two related problems here. The first (which is also noted by Davis (2009: 440; 2008: 60) is that if (3) is the correct analysis of God's necessity, then God's uniqueness is denied, since He then must have other-worldly counterparts. So, if (3) is the correct analysis of God's necessity, how can Lewisian theists be considered monotheistic?⁸

Now, there is a response available, I think. It seems that perhaps Sheehy and Davis's objection is simply an insistence that counterpart theory constitutes an untenable analysis of *de re* modal claims in general; thus, the reason why analysing God's necessity through (3) bears the wrong results is that counterpart theory, as an analysis of *de re* modal claims, is deficient, *simpliciter*. Thus, the objection is simply a version of Kripke's (1980) Humphrey objection – analysing God's necessity through (3) is just an example of counterpart theory's general deficiency. That is, if my having a counterpart Collier_c in a non-actual world *w* is sufficient to render-true a *de re* possibility claim concerning me (and not Collier_c), then it should be sufficient for *de re* modal claims concerning God. That is, if it is acceptable that I am possibly *F* (where only one of me exists) by virtue of there being, in a non-actual world, a counterpart of me, Collier_c, that is *F*, then it should be acceptable in the case of God. However, since Sheehy and Davis think that it is unacceptable to analyse God's *de re* modal properties through (3), they should then think it is unacceptable to employ (1) or (2) to analyse anything else's modal properties.

⁷ God's non-spatiotemporality is not denied by His existing in a world – indeed, I think God can stand in spatiotemporal relations to the world without His thereby being spatiotemporal. Theists tend to think that God can create space and time, and is thereby connected to space and time, without His thereby being in space and time. However, if I err here, an additional argument *contra* employing counterpart theory to analyse God necessity arises.

⁸ Those who espouse ordinal polytheism, like Steinhart (2013), will not be perturbed here.

Now, I think this counter-objection errs. Certainly, there must exist a counterpart of me that is *F* for it to be true that I am possibly *F*, and my counterpart's existence does not impugn my uniqueness; however, to my chagrin, there is nothing unique about me – indeed, there exist many individuals like me across logical space. On theism, however, this cannot be true for God: God, as a divine being, is unique – thus, in logical space, there should exist only one divine being.⁹ Assuredly, if there exists an infinite plurality of divine counterparts, one for each world, it is true that according to each world there exists one divine being only, and this being necessarily exists, given His having a counterpart in all worlds; but if, however, we take the totality of logical space as our quantificational domain, we see an infinite plurality of divine beings. So, whilst for theists there can exist an infinite plurality of individuals like me, since there is no requirement that I be unique in logical space, this is not true for God. And so, *contra* the above counter-objection, Sheehy and Davis's objection does not simply constitute a version of a general argument against counterpart theory.

Now, one may demur here. One may claim that, by taking God as (4)-kind and analysing His necessary existence through (3), there is no inconsistency within Lewisian theism, since both the following claims are true:

⁹ An anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) notes that unglorified humans are God-like in some respects (e.g. humans have some power over and knowledge of certain things) and humans become more God-like after they are glorified (e.g. they lose the ability to sin). These two points, the reviewer suggests, do not seem to threaten the uniqueness of God. However, to be a *sufficiently* God-like-individual, it is not enough that a human resembles God to some degree and in only some respects. For example, the attribute of being a creator and sustainer of all that exists is required to be a sufficiently God-like-individual. We see that no mere human could have this attribute. Of course, the counterpart relation is context sensitive, and so significantly relaxing the criteria for counterpart-hood we may feel would result in an otherworldly, mere human's being a counterpart of God. However, we are not interested in the question of whether the classical God is necessary given a significant relaxation of criteria for counterpart-hood, since any individual will come out necessary given a significant relaxation of criteria for counterpart-hood (indeed, my laptop will come out necessary if its concreteness is the only thing under consideration, since it will have a concrete counterpart in every world); instead, we are interested in the question: does God, in each world, have a counterpart that has all the classical divine attributes. If no, then classical theism and counterpart theory are incompatible.

- (6) God is unique: there actually exists only one God-like individual.
- (7) God necessarily exists and is necessarily unique: there exists only one counterpart of God in every world.

Certainly, the claims of theism ought to be translated into the language of modal realism – and, here, the Lewisian theist has chosen the language of counterpart theory – and once they are so translated we see that the apparent incompatibility between theism and modal realism disappears: both (6) and (7) remain true when we analyse (4)-kind-God's necessary existence through (3).¹⁰

This response, I believe, fails. Firstly, whilst it is true that Lewisian theists ought to translate their theistic claims into the language of modal realism, it is not true that this requires Lewisian theists to translate their theistic claims into the language of counterpart theory. Indeed, as Cameron (2009) notes, Lewis suggests that transworld identity can be employed to analyse modal predications of objects that lack accidental intrinsic properties: God, it seems, lacks accidental intrinsic properties. Assuredly, Lewis would not have been happy to have accepted that modal claims about universals – if they exist – are to be analysed through counterpart theory; appealing to transworld identity – not counterpart theory – is appropriate in the case of universals. And so, if theistic claims appear unacceptable on counterpart theory, it is open for Lewisian theists to decide that counterpart theory is not appropriate and opt for transworld identity instead. Moreover, as others have argued, taking God to exist from the standpoints of worlds is also an option, although this would render God a non-(4)-kind being, and here we are only interested in the relationship between God, as a (4)-

¹⁰ I thank an anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) for raising this point.

kind being, and counterpart theory.¹¹ But, secondly, satisfaction of (7) is problematic for Lewisian theists. We wish to quantify unrestrictedly over God-like individuals (which includes quantifying over all worlds) – not just restrictedly over God-like individuals (which involves quantification only over the actual world) – and when we do so, Lewisian theists wish to see only one God-like individual, but instead they see a plurality of God-like individuals. Certainly, when we restrict our quantifier to the actual world, we do see one, unique God-like individual, so (6) is satisfied – but when we ask how many God-like individuals exist with our quantifiers open, we see that there exist infinitely many God-like individuals. And, yes, there being an infinite plurality of God-like individuals, with only one in each world, renders God necessarily existent and necessarily unique; but, as we have seen, Lewisian theists are not required to use counterpart theory to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity. Thus, given that satisfaction of (7) is problematic – indeed, we end up with infinitely many God-like individuals – and given that Lewisian theists need not employ counterpart theory, Lewisian theists should therefore not employ (3) to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity.

But, there remains an additional plausible response to Sheehy and Davis's objection. There are two claims that are consistent with theism: (a) God is unsurpassable, and (b) God is unmatched. (a) broadly means that nothing is greater than God, since God is maximally great, and (b) broadly means that nothing is equal in greatness to God. Now, theists are standardly taken to accept the stronger claim, that is, that both (a) and (b) are true. But, perhaps, they need only hold the weaker claim, that is, that only (a) is true. Indeed, Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002: 87-88) briefly discuss this in relation to Lewisian theism: they hold that Lewisian theism is

¹¹ See Collier (2021a), Maia (2021), Almeida (2017b) and Cameron (2009) for a defence of the standpoints of worlds view.

inconsistent with the stronger claim, but consistent with the weaker claim. This is because if we accept that counterpart theory is the correct way to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity, then there will exist as many (4)-kind-Gods as there are worlds, with each God being equal in greatness. Thus, the weaker claim is accounted for, but not the stronger.

Now, one may say here: 'Certainly, it is true that, historically, theists have held the stronger claim, but theists, historically, have not held that (3) is the correct way to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity. If (3) is the correct way, then theists will have to drop their stronger claim. And so, theists, if they are to reject (3) as the correct way to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity, must argue that the stronger claim should be endorsed by theists.'¹²

Whilst I cannot do full justice to assessing this response – indeed, such a task would warrant a paper in its own right – there are several points I wish to make. After Sheehy's second objection, I supply a reason to think that theists should hold the stronger claim that concerns the concept of maximal greatness, but here are some initial reasons.

Firstly, there are, it seems, scriptural reasons. Take, for instance, the following verses from the Book of Isaiah:¹³

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. (Isaiah: 46:9)

¹² I thank an anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) for raising this point.

¹³ I use the King James Bible for all Biblical translations.

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. (Isaiah: 40:25)

To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (Isaiah: 46:5)

These verses, I believe, give theists scriptural reasons to hold the stronger claim. Thus, the reason why theists, historically, have held that God is unsurpassable and unmatched seems – at least *prima facie* – scripturally justified, and so perhaps theists' holding of the stronger claim is not merely historically accidental. Certainly, if Lewisian theists thought that (3) was the correct way to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity, and so, on their theory, there exists a plurality of (4)-kind-God counterparts, then Lewisian theists – insofar as they let scripture guide them in their philosophical theology – would have to provide compelling hermeneutic reason why the above verses do not require, or perhaps do not heavily suggest, that there be only one God-like individual in all reality. Of course, theists could claim that the above verses could be read from only the actual world's perspective; but, in any case, some serious hermeneutic work would need to be done.

Secondly, it does seem that if Lewisian theism requires theists to only make the weaker claim since (3) is the correct way to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity, then this counts as a relative cost of Lewisian theism. Certainly, rival modal theories – e.g. abstractionist theories – can accommodate the stronger claim.¹⁴ And so, for theists who are at least uneasy about only accepting the weaker claim (that is, for those who

¹⁴ See Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002: 88) for more on this point of abstractionism accommodating the stronger claim of God.

think they at least might like to leave open the option of holding the stronger claim), there is good, *prima facie* reason to prefer certain rival theories (at least in this regard), if (3) is the only way to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity on Lewisian theism. But, here, theists' preference for rival theories will depend upon whether the cost of having to accept only the weaker claim is outweighed by the benefits wielded by Lewisian theism.

And thirdly, there is the question of whether any Lewisian theist would wish to accept a counterpart theoretic reading of (4)-kind-God's necessity if it leads to Lewisian theists' only being able to hold the weaker claim. Such a modal theory, I feel, would appeal to few theists who harbour modal realist inclinations.¹⁵ This, however, is not to say that such a position is untenable – indeed, this is not a knockdown objection; it is only a check on the position's general attractiveness to the theists who harbour modal realist inclinations. Such a position, I feel, will not receive much support from theists. And so, even if the theory were a live option for theism – which I do not think it is – such a theory will have little appeal.

And so, I argue, the above responses fail to satisfactorily circumvent or defuse Sheehy and Davis's objection; at best, the objection that there are many (4)-kind-Gods if we are to analyse (4)-kind-God's necessity through (3) can be viewed as a benign consequence – but only if one is willing to accept that God is not unmatched. Since – I should imagine – most theists are not willing to accept this, the objection's consequence seems not so benign.

Now we can move on to Sheehy's (2006: 319-20) second objection. Sheehy notes that, for theism, God is the creator and sustainer of all existence. However, given

¹⁵ Indeed, perhaps it is unsurprising that Almeida, one of the chief supporters of Lewisian theism, does not invoke (3) to analyse God's necessity.

that, on modal realism, x 's bearing spatiotemporal and/or causal relations to a part of a world w entails x 's being a part of w , and given the world-bound nature of (4)-kind individuals, if (4)-kind-God's necessity is analysed through (3), He cannot be the creator and sustainer of all existence. Indeed, given the confinement of causal series to distinct worlds (or at least the confinement of causal activities of (4)-kind individuals to distinct worlds), God in the actual world only creates the actual world, and God in a distinct world w only creates w . So, again, whilst it may be true that according to the actual world, the actual God is the creator of all existence, quantifying only over the actual world's inhabitants, it is not true that the actual God is the creator of all existence, leaving our quantifiers as open as possible – but it is the truth of the second claim that theists affirm.

There is, however, a response available. Vance (2016: 570, n5) maintains that one may argue that the actual (4)-kind-God is the *true* God, and is thence responsible for the creation and sustaining of all existence; God in w is then not creatively responsible for w 's creation. Now, as Vance observes, this response faces the following problem: given that the actual God's otherworldly counterparts fail to create their worlds, they thence fall short of theism's requirements for divinity, since those otherworldly 'Gods' fail to create and sustain all existence. But, if these 'Gods' fail to qualify for divinity, they thereby fail to qualify as counterparts of the actual God, and thereby the actual God fails to be a necessary being. Here, I think Vance is right: it is not simply that it is contingent that the actual God created all existence – in fact, this claim is taken as true on theism¹⁶ – but that the actual God's *existence* is rendered

¹⁶ Now, it might be that Lewisian theists cannot uphold this claim: if the actual God's creation of the world is contingent, then there should exist a world that contains nothing. However, given modal realism's ontology of worlds, there are no empty worlds. There might, however, be contingency over what the actual God creates (on the assumption that the actual God has otherworldly divine counterparts), since there will exist worlds that qualitatively differ from the actual world. However, if

contingent. However, I think Vance's suggestion faces a more formidable problem: If the actual God were causally responsible for all existence, quantifying unrestrictedly, all worlds would be causally connected; but since worlds are unified by spatiotemporal and causal connectedness, if the actual God were causally responsible for all worlds, then there would exist one world only in logical space; but if there exists one world only, Lewisian theists incur modal collapse. So, the suggestion cannot be adopted by Lewisian theists.

Now, one may ask: 'Why think that theism is committed to the view that one maximally great being created all concreta (other than Himself)?'¹⁷ In essence, my response, I think, is already given above: that is, there is reason to think that theists should hold the stronger claim – i.e. that God is unsurpassable and unmatched. If I am right there, I should be right here. But, there is also reason to hold that the notion that no being ought to be able to create as much as or more than one maximally great being spills out of the concept of maximal greatness. Suppose, for example, we are told that a maximally great being, the actual God, only created and sustains the actual world, and we are also told that there exists a plenitude of other worlds not created and sustained by that God. Now, the property of creating things and the property of sustaining things, seem – at least – to be great-making properties. We can reasonably ask then: how can a maximally great being be maximally great if it only created and sustains a tiny patch of reality? If the respective properties of creating things and sustaining things are great-making properties, it seems that for the actual God to be truly maximally great, He should create and sustain all reality (that is, all worlds) – otherwise, He seems to fall short of maximal greatness. Of course, if counterpart

Vance's suggested response entails modal collapse, as I argue below, there will not exist other worlds that qualitatively differ from the actual world. See Paper 4 for more on empty worlds.

¹⁷ I thank an anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) for pushing me to answer this question and for suggesting the response below concerning grounding.

theory is the correct way to analyse God's necessity, then theists must accept this result – but, as we have seen, Lewisian theists need not accept counterpart theory; they can use transworld identity or the standpoints of worlds mechanism. Thus, if transworld identity or the standpoints of worlds mechanism allows one to say that one God created and sustains all reality, and (at least the ability for) creating and sustaining all reality is necessary for a being's maximal greatness, then Lewisian theists have reason to accept either transworld identity or the standpoints of worlds mechanism as the correct analysis of God's necessity. So, there is reason to think that the stronger claim spills out of the concept of maximal greatness, which gives motivation to reject counterpart theory.

A response, here, might be: one (4)-kind-God, perhaps the actual God, could still be the ground of all reality, even if He is not the creator and sustainer thereof. This suggestion, I think, will not work: it is odd to think that, out of a plurality of (4)-kind-Gods, there is one that is the ground of all worlds – even those worlds that are causally isolated from Him, and thus are neither created nor sustained by Him. My intuition is that if such a (4)-kind-God were removed from existence (which I appreciate is a counterpossible, but the conceptual point still runs), the worlds that were created and sustained by the other (4)-kind-Gods would still exist. But, at any rate, we incur a similar problem to one incurred by the suggestion that one, true creator God exists: that is, if we take this line of response, we end up with a contingent (4)-kind-God. If one (4)-kind-God had attributes relevant to maximal greatness that the other (4)-kind-Gods lacked, the other 'Gods' would not seem appropriate counterparts; grounding all reality seems a relevant attribute to maximal greatness; so, such a grounding-God seems to lack counterparts in all worlds, and so such a God is contingent. Thus, for the sake of having one grounding-God, we end up with a contingent God.

At this point the reader will have noted my repeated mentioning of modal collapse – so why is modal collapse objectionable? Well, other than just presenting a break with our modal intuitions, and so impugning the material adequacy of Lewisian theism, there are significant problems: modal collapse, I argue, is incompatible with Lewisian theism; that is, Lewisian theism is not simply trivially true, as Collier (2019b) contends, but is false, if there is modal collapse thereon. There are two reasons why.

First, the chief feature of modal realism is not the principle that any way that a world could be configured is the way that some world is configured, but the thesis that there exists an infinite plurality of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals (i.e. Lewisian worlds); that is, modal realism's chief feature is not its principle of plenitude, as this principle holds if there exists only one possible world in logical space, but is rather its existential claim that there exists an infinite plurality of possible worlds of a Lewisian nature. Sure, if all 'worlds' are causally connected, and thus only one possible world exists, we have no quantitative ontological loss in terms of the total, unrestricted domain of inhabitants of worlds, but do we have a reduction in the number of entities that satisfy Lewis's characterisation of worlds. On the assumption that only one world exists, and thus all that is possible is reduced to all that is actual, it is hard to consider Lewis's theory a token of possibilism, and not simply a token of some type of concretist actualism but with the additional claim that infinitely many spatiotemporally (but not causally) disconnected spacetimes exist. Hence, I take it that Lewisian theism is not merely trivially true if there is modal collapse in logical space, but is instead inconsistent and so false.

But, second, one might think that there is another reason for Lewisian theism's inconsistency and thus falsity, if it entails modal collapse. It is often contended that a type of alternate possibilities account of God's freedom is required if God is to satisfy

a robust notion of freedom; for example, Leftow (2015: 47-48) argues that without there being alternate possibilities for God, “nothing dependent entirely and solely on His will can *be* otherwise”. Thus, there need to exist possible worlds such that God wills *A* and not *B* (where $A \neq B$), and worlds such that God wills *B* and not *A*. However, if one world only were to exist, there would not exist the alternate possibilities for God that would deem Him maximally free – that is, not unless primitive modality were installed into Lewisian theism, such that what is possible is not exclusively reduced to what is true of worlds, and so it is not true that any way that the world could be configured is the way that some world is in fact configured. Many who are sympathetic to Leftow’s view of divine freedom, will deem Lewisian theism inconsistent if it entails modal collapse, since God’s maximal freedom is an essential tenet thereof.

Thus, there is reason to think that Collier’s (2019b: 339) contention that “[i]f modal collapse ensues... such a modal programme simply becomes trivially true” is false.

And so, if (3) is used to analyse (4)-kind-God’s necessity – then, amongst other things – there exist many (4)-kind-Gods or modal collapse ensues. I suspect that accepting modal collapse will not appeal to many Lewisian theists, and I suspect that accepting there being a plurality of Gods will likewise seem unpalatable. Thus, I hope to have shown that those who contend that counterpart theory and Lewisian theism are compatible, like Oppy (1993) and Leftow (2012), err in their estimations.

4 (5)-Kind-God

Let us, then, examine God as (5)-kind, where such a God partly exists in many worlds by having parts that wholly exist therein – (5)-kind-God is thence the cross-world

mereological sum of (4)-kind-divine beings. I agree, however, that this option is untenable.

One objection to this option is owed to Vance (2016: 563), who contends that since (5)-kind-God is not wholly located in any world, He is thence not omnipresent in any world. However, for theists, omnipresence is a divine attribute. Now, here I think Vance is mistaken. (5)-kind-God would be omnipresent in, say, w by having a part in w that satisfied the conditions for omnipresence in w – one account of God's omnipresence is to insist that God bears causal and epistemic relations to all spatiotemporal regions of w (this type of omnipresence is denominated derivative-omnipresence).¹⁸ Assuming each part of (5)-kind-God bears these relations to all spatiotemporal regions of its respective world, (5)-kind-God would be omnipresent throughout all logical space. Of course, this type of omnipresence does not entail that the whole of God is present in every spatiotemporal region, but to be omnipresent, we might think, is simply to be located in every spatiotemporal region; (5)-kind-God, it seems, can satisfy this through its parts' being derivatively-omnipresent within their respective worlds.

Vance, however, levies an additional objection. For theists, God is metaphysically simple – that is, there is no metaphysical complexity within God. But, clearly, (5)-kind-God fails to satisfy this theistic condition: He has proper parts, and thus metaphysical complexity.¹⁹ This objection, I believe, is a rather formidable one.²⁰

¹⁸ For recent discussions of omnipresence, see Hudson (2014), Inman (2017) and Cowling and Cray (2017).

¹⁹ An anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) thinks that the way that (5)-kind-God is not simple might not concern theists: there is no threat of "decomposition" or "dissolution". I think it would, however, concern theists: God should not depend upon parts in the way that composite objects do – God exists *a se*.

²⁰ Another possible way to block Vance here is to insist that (5)-kind-God is a transworld, extended simple. However, I think this would then qualify God for transworld identity, rather than His being (5)-kind. For work on extended simples, see: McDaniel (2007).

However, since (5)-kind-God seems at least to satisfy monotheism – since it seems to be, in a sense, one being – positing (5)-kind-God might be preferable to positing God as (4)-kind, despite (5)-kind-God’s metaphysical complexity. But there is a problem here: as Vance (2016: 563) notes, it is hardly natural to predicate oneness of (5)-kind-God; indeed, the unification of (5)-kind-God, it seems, is just as natural as the unification of, say, an individual *x* comprised of my laptop and a crisp packet – the respective ontological constituents of both *x* and (5)-kind-God seem hardly connected in such a way as to justify predicating unity of either *x* or (5)-kind-God. Now, one may indeed argue: worlds are considered individuals, and so an individual composed of my laptop and a crisp packet does seem possible – namely, a world in which both objects exist. I grant this. However, what unifies worlds is spatiotemporal and causal connectedness. (5)-kind-God cannot be unified by these relations: (5)-kind-God cannot be unified by spatiotemporal connectedness, as worlds are spatiotemporally isolated, and so (5)-kind-God’s parts should be spatiotemporally isolated, and, as we will see below, (5)-kind-God cannot be unified by causal connectedness, since this would incur modal collapse. But, even if one can successfully argue that (5)-kind-God is a unified individual in some sense, Vance thinks that (5)-kind-God’s unification would fail to satisfy the theist, since, for example, (5)-kind-God would not be a conscious unity. Here, however, I think Vance is too quick: certainly, we might think that a chief counterexample would be the Trinity – indeed, there are three persons in the Godhead, but God is still taken as being consciously unified – but we might also think that unification of consciousness would be gained if (5)-kind-God’s world-parts all stood in causal relations to one another.²¹ However, I do think that Vance’s general import carries. One may be tempted to think, given the similarity of (5)-kind-God’s

²¹ Although, as I argue below, this response entails modal collapse.

world-parts, that there is parity of naturalness between the unity of (5)-kind-God and the unity of natural classes – however, (5)-kind-God is not anything like a natural class, and to think that there is parity of naturalness between the unity of (5)-kind-God and the unity of natural classes demonstrates that predicating the set/class-member relation of (5)-kind-God seems more appropriate than predicating of Him the part-whole relation.

Vance (2016: 563) additionally argues that a (5)-kind-God is incompatible with modal realism since Lewis (1983: 40) claims that such (5)-kind-individuals are “impossible”, since only beings that exist wholly within a world, i.e. (4)-kind-individuals, are possible individuals. Now, I think there is room for Lewisian theists to resist Vance here; the following passage from Lewis (1986: 211) jars with Vance’s argument:

I do not deny the existence of trans-world individuals, and yet there is a sense in which I say that they cannot possibly exist. As should be expected, the sense in question involves restricted quantification. ...It is possible for something to exist iff it is possible for the whole of it to exist. That is, iff there is a world at which the whole of it exists. That is, iff there is a world such that, quantifying only over parts of that world, the whole of it exists. That is, iff the whole of it is among the parts of some world. That is, iff it is part of some world – and hence not a trans-world individual. Parts of worlds are possible individuals; trans-world individuals are therefore impossible individuals.

To call the trans-world individuals 'impossible' in this sense is not an argument for ignoring them – that comes later. It is only a terminological stipulation. If we thought they should not be ignored... it would be appropriate and easy to give 'possible individual' a more inclusive sense. We could say that an individual exists at a world iff, quantifying only over parts of that world, some part of that individual exists – that way, the trans-world individuals would count as possible.²²

Contra Vance, Lewis thinks that if we are not convinced by his reasons for why we should not endorse (5)-kind-individuals, then we can render such individuals possible

²² I thank an anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) for drawing my attention to this passage in Lewis (1986), and another for inspiring me to write my response below.

by employing the biconditional: x exists at world w iff when quantifying only over parts of w , some part of x exists. Lewisian theists may think that there are good reasons to accept at least one (5)-kind individual – i.e. (5)-kind-God – and so they will think that there are good reasons to affirm the above biconditional.

I argue, however, that Lewisian theists should deny the possibility of (5)-kind-God, and thus should reject the above biconditional (in the absence of other reasons to affirm it). The reason is that, assuming God is (5)-kind, a unified individual, and a causally efficacious part of Him exists in all worlds, we end up, again, with modal collapse. Here is my argument. If the principle ‘if a part of some world w is causally connected to a part of some world u , then w and u are causally connected’ is true, then: if a causal part of (5)-kind God is a part of w (call it w -part of (5)-kind-God) and a causal part of (5)-kind-God is a part of the actual world (call it actual-part of (5)-kind-God), and w -part of (5)-kind-God is causally connected to actual-part of (5)-kind-God through the sum of all (5)-kind-God’s parts constituting a unified individual, then the actual world is causally connected to w through a part of the actual world, actual-part of (5)-kind-God, being causally connected to a part of w , w -part of (5)-kind-God. If two worlds are causally connected, those worlds are one and the same world; so, the actual world and w are one and the same world, if the sum of all (5)-kind-God’s parts constitute a unified individual and a causal part of (5)-kind-God is a part of w and a causal part of (5)-kind-God is a part of the actual world. This result should apply to all worlds: if (5)-kind-God has a causal part in all worlds, and His parts are unified, then all worlds amount to just one. Thus, Lewisian theists who wish to deny the claim that (5)-kind-God is impossible incur total modal collapse.

Perhaps supporters of (5)-kind-God will demur here: they may say that parts of (5)-kind-God are causally isolated – no part of (5)-kind-God is causally connected to

any other part of (5)-kind-God –, and so there are no transitivity of causation problems that lead to modal collapse. This response, however, merely puts my point above in stark relief: *how is such an individual unified?* The need for the supporter of (5)-kind-God to provide an account of this becomes even more exigent when causal (along with spatiotemporal) connectedness of its parts is not an option.²³

And so, (5)-kind-God is not simple and is scarcely unified in the way that individuals should be, and if He is causal and unified, then modal collapse ensues.

5 Conclusion

Herein I have argued that God cannot be taken as the transworld summation of divine world-parts; and nor can God's necessity be interpreted through counterpart theory. Counterpart theory and God's necessity, then, are incompatible. Again, many will find this 'just obvious and unsurprising', but I hope to have convinced those who hold the contrary to be 'just obvious and unsurprising'. Now, as I noted earlier, there are other options for interpreting God's necessity on modal realism: transworld identity might be employed or God might be taken to exist from the standpoints of all worlds. However, for the theist or the modal realist who thinks that either God cannot be taken to exist in worlds through these means or that modal realism should not incorporate transworld individuals or entities that exist from the standpoints of worlds, I hope to have provided theists with an argument against modal realism and modal realists with an argument

²³ Of course, there are other ways that we could say that (5)-kind-God is unified. Here is one: (5)-kind-God's parts could be unified by similarity of intrinsic attributes. This, however, will not do: take my laptop and all its otherworldly, intrinsically identical duplicates – are they unified in a strong enough sense to say that they constitute one individual? It seems not. How about identity of purpose? Again, this seems not enough. Assuming my earthly purpose is to worship God, take my otherworldly, intrinsically identical duplicate, who has the same purpose – are we both unified in a strong enough sense to say that we are one individual? It seems not.

against theism: For such modal realists, they will have an argument against the existence of God, and for such theists, they will have an argument against the truth of modal realism. If there are good arguments to support theism, and I am correct that counterpart theory is incompatible with God's necessity, and counterpart theory is the only way to account for God's necessity, then theists can employ these arguments to demonstrate the falsity of modal realism; and, if there are good arguments to support modal realism, and I am correct that counterpart theory is incompatible with God's necessity, and counterpart theory is the only way to account for God's necessity, then modal realists can employ these arguments to demonstrate the falsity of theism.

Paper 2

God's Necessity: Transworld Identity and the Standpoint of Worlds

1 Introduction¹

To say that God necessarily exists is to say that He exists in all worlds. Several authors argue that Lewisian theism is inconsistent regarding God's necessity, since they contend that all the ways for God to exist in all worlds commit Lewisian theists to rejecting tenets of either theism or modal realism.² Herein I explore the various ways to respond to arguments for the inconsistency of Lewisian theism, and maintain that Lewisian theists possess the resources to circumvent purported inconsistencies within their modal theory. I do not, however, believe that Lewisian theists can rebut *all* the ways, hitherto discussed in the literature, that God is said to not be able to exist in all worlds. Collier (2019b) and Vance (2016) set out several ways for God to exist in all worlds: (1) God can be said to have a counterpart in each world; (2) God can be said to exist in each world in the way that a universal can be said to exist in worlds (if universals exist), i.e. through transworld identity; (3) God can be said to be a scattered individual, with a part of God existing in each world; and, (4) God can be said to exist in each world, through His existing from the standpoint of each world. Collier (2019b), Vance (2016), Sheehy (2006) and Davis (2008) contend that (1) fails (although these

¹ Most of the content of this paper appears in my Collier (2021a).

² See Le Poidevin (1996), Hoffman and Rosenkrantz (2002), Sheehy (2009; 2006), Davis (2009; 2008), Vance (2016), and Collier (2019b) for defences of this view. See Oppy (2009; 1993), Cameron (2009), and Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) for defences of the contrary view.

authors sometimes make this contention for different reasons), and the first two authors additionally contend that (2)-(4) fail (again, sometimes for different reasons). Herein I grant the contention that (1) and (3) cannot be endorsed by Lewisian theists. Indeed, Lewisian theists, I believe, cannot appeal to counterpart theory for God, and cannot maintain that God is a composite, scattered individual.³ However, it seems to me that, in the literature, (2) and (4) have been too hastily dismissed. I thence explore the ways to respond to arguments *contra* (2) and (4).

Here is the structure of the paper. In section 2, I sketch out various arguments *contra* (2), and respond thereto. In section 3, I sketch out various arguments *contra* (4), and respond thereto. I then conclude the paper in section 4, wherein I contend that (4) is the preferable option for Lewisian theists.

2 Arguments *Contra* (2), and My Responses Thereto

Cameron (2009: 98-100) contends that, by appealing to transworld identity, Lewisian theists can avoid an objection levied by Sheehy (2006: 319-20) and Davis (2009: 440; 2008: 60), which concludes that construing God as a worldbound individual (i.e. an individual who wholly exists in one world only) and employing counterpart theory entails polytheism.⁴ That is, Cameron argues that God's existence can be rendered necessary by employing transworld identity, which, roughly articulated, claims that to say of two individuals *x* and *y* that they are transworld identical is to say that there exist at least two numerically distinct worlds *w* and *u* such that in *w*, *x* wholly exists, and in *u*, *y* wholly exists, and *x* and *y* are identical; that is, a numerically identical

³ In Paper 1, I examine, and reject, options (1) and (3).

⁴ This objection is explored in Paper 1.

individual exists in numerically distinct worlds. Now, the reason why Cameron believes that Lewisian theists can employ transworld identity to analyse God's necessity is that modal realism provides the theoretical resources for the existence of transworld individuals. Individuals can be considered transworld individuals only if they fail to instantiate accidental intrinsic properties, where an accidental intrinsic property of an individual *x* is one that is intrinsic, but contingent, to *x*. Plausibly, God is an accidental intrinsic property-lacking individual, and thus could be said to wholly exist in more than one world. Indeed, transworld identity is invoked by modal realists to represent *de re* the modal properties of entities which lack accidental intrinsic properties; God can be said to lack such properties, and so transworld identity can be invoked to represent *de re* God's necessary existence: one and the same God can wholly exist in all worlds.⁵

Three counters to Cameron's objection to Sheehy and Davis exist in the literature. The first, raised by Sheehy (2009: 103-4), argues that Cameron's proposal commits Lewisian theists to a revisionary account of the indexical term 'actual'; the second, levied by Collier (2019b: 341), concerns the transitivity of worldmateship; and the third, propounded by Vance (2016: 567-8), and outlined above, argues that God's being a transworld individual entails modal collapse. Now, the two former counters I believe are the most easily dealt with – the third is significantly more challenging to Lewisian theists (indeed, this type of objection, as noted above, is the 'chief' objection to (2) and (4)). Nevertheless, I repudiate all three.

Sheehy's (2009: 103-4) counter relies upon the principle that if two individuals *x* and *y* are part of the same world, then *x* and *y* are worldmates. This, Sheehy believes, gives rise to a problem over the indexical term 'actual'. When the term 'actual'

⁵ Here, I do not wish to take a stand on whether talk of God's intrinsic properties entails divine complexity.

is used in a certain world w by a certain (non-transworld) individual x therein, only w (or w 's parts) is (or are) quantified over by x – only w (and its parts) is (or are) actual to x . However, since God exists in all worlds, when He uses the term 'actual', all worlds are quantified over – all worlds, to God, are actual. However, this is supposedly at odds with modal realism's interpretation of 'actual'; the same quantificational scope should hold for any two worldmates' usage of the term 'actual'. Collier (2019b: 341) assents here and distills the problem:

...if God and I agree on a single usage of 'actual', the appropriate quantificational restrictions are forsworn; if I follow God's usage of 'actual', I quantify over too much, and if He follows my usage, He quantifies over too little.

Now, apart from merely claiming, as Lewis (1986: 95) and others have (such as Collier (2019b: 341)), that the question of what is actual is not the grandest of questions, Sheehy's counter can be repudiated.

I think Sheehy confuses a distinction: *to be actual* versus *to be partly actual*.

Here is Lewis (1986: 96, fn61) on the distinction:

In *Philosophical Papers*, volume I, pages 39-40, I distinguished three ways of 'being in a world': (1) being *wholly* in it, that is, being part of it; (2) being *partly* in it, that is, having a part that is wholly in it; and (3) existing *from the standpoint of* it, that is, 'belonging to the least restricted domain that is normally - modal metaphysics being deemed abnormal - appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications'. If the world in question is actual, that is almost my present distinction between being actual, being partly actual, and being actual by courtesy; the only difference in the terminologies being that I would not now throw all sets into the lower grade.

Given the above, it is not necessarily the case that the quantificational scope of the term 'actual' should be the same for any two worldmates: if we take two worldmates x and y , where x is wholly in world w and y is partly in w , then what is actual for x and y

will differ, since *x* will be an actual individual and *y* will be a partly actual individual. The Lewisian theist could say that transworld individuals which wholly exist in worlds they are part of fall into the second category of actuality: they are partly actual, where 'partly' does not entail metaphysical complexity – or, if one objected here, perhaps on terminological-confusion grounds, one could say that transworld individuals of this sort are *multiply actual*. (If modal realists can allow entities which exist in many worlds through having parts that wholly exist in each world they are part of to be partly actual, then there seems to be good reason to say that modal realism can allow entities which wholly exist in every world they are part of to be wholly actual in each world they are a part of; that is, multiply actual. If the level of actuality generally tracks the level of being in a world, then if an individual is wholly in multiple worlds, we might expect that that individual is wholly actual in multiple worlds – hence my term 'multiply actual'). Moreover, to not afford this type of actuality to the transworld God, who wholly exists in each world He is part of, would mean that we would deny this type of actuality to universals – but surely one would want to say that universals are actual in worlds they are part of.

So, all of this is to say: Firstly, if Sheehy's actuality concern *is* a problem for the transworld God, then it should be a problem for *any* transworld entity; and, moreover, one cannot avoid this by declaring that no transworld entity exists (which includes universals), since it should also be a problem for pure sets which are actual by courtesy, and so 'actual', in some sense (perhaps the least restricted sense), in many worlds. But secondly, the problem seems parasitic upon issues over what exists at a world and whether things can exist in multiple worlds; once the ontological questions are dealt with, the indexical questions seem to admit of answers as well: if I am wholly in this world and not transworld existent and so is, say, my brother, then we are both

actual in the fullest sense – however, in our world, God is partly – or perhaps wholly, but multiply – actual. And, what is more, given that what exists at a world is not an inflexible matter, since that matter depends upon contextual factors’ determining of quantificational scope, it seems reasonable to say, as Lewis (1986: 95) does, that “[t]here is no need to decide, once and for all and inflexibly, what is to be called actual”; if there are different ways for different things to be actual – wholly, partly, multiply, or by courtesy – it seems reasonable to say that context determines the quantificational scope of ‘actual’: sometimes only wholly actual things will be quantified over, sometimes all things said to be actual in some way or another will be quantified over. So, Sheehy’s counter either simply serves to highlight a potential problem faced by modal realists more generally or it can be repudiated by noting the different levels of actuality available to members of different ontological categories.

Now onto Collier’s counter: the problem of worldmateship. Lewis (1986: 71) claims: “things are worldmates iff they are spatiotemporally related”. Collier (2019b: 341) notes: “world-mateship is transitive: if x is a world-mate of y , and y is a world-mate of z , then x is a world-mate of z —this is because world-mateship is grounded in the spatiotemporal relation, which is, itself, transitive”. So, Collier (2019b: 341) argues:

God, by existing in all worlds, is my @-world-mate, but is also otherworldly-Bill’s w -world-mate. Now, if I am God’s world-mate, and God is Bill’s world-mate, then, by transitivity of world-mateship, I am also Bill’s world-mate, despite my being wholly in @ and his being wholly in w . The problem is thus: since world-mateship is grounded in the spatiotemporal relation, and since I am, through God’s existing in both @ and w , Bill’s world-mate, I am spatiotemporally related to otherworldly-Bill. But, since worlds are spatiotemporally *isolated* individuals, and since Bill’s w and my @ are, by God’s existing in both, spatiotemporally connected, w and @ are one and the same world. ...total modal collapse ensues.

Collier's objection can be distilled in the following way: Because Collier and Bill are worldmates through having a worldmate in common, i.e. God, (since if two things have a worldmate in common, they are worldmates, given the transitivity of worldmateship), Collier and Bill are spatiotemporally connected (given Lewis's biconditional, "things are worldmates iff they are spatiotemporally related"). But, Lewisian theists can rebut Collier's objection by denying Lewis's biconditional. There is non-*ad hoc* reason to do this: Lewisian theists must drop the necessity of the spatiotemporal relation for worldmateship if they are to say that individuals which exist from the standpoints of worlds and entities, like universals (if they exist), which wholly exist in multiple worlds, can qualify for worldmateship – i.e. if Lewisian theists wish to say that I am a worldmate of a pure set, or a worldmate of a certain universal, they will need to reject the biconditional. Plausibly, if a universal exists in my world, then I am a worldmate of that universal – plausibly, the same is true of pure sets. This gives Lewisian theists reason to reject the biconditional, at least in its general form. But, since the transitivity of worldmateship is grounded in the transitivity of the spatiotemporal relation, once the biconditional is rejected, the transitivity of worldmateship will not necessarily be grounded in the spatiotemporal relation. Perhaps the transitivity of worldmateship will only hold for entities which exist in a world either as a part or from its standpoint. Here we can distinguish between different types of worldmateship.⁶

Accordingly, if grades of actuality can be established, I see no reason why worldmateship should not similarly admit of grades. Specifically, Lewisian theists can

⁶ Rodriguez-Pereyra, in correspondence, suggests that, maybe, something can co-exist with something else in a world, without thereby being its worldmate; 'worldmate' is a technical term after all. I am not so sure. Universals are parts of worlds – they are wholly parts of multiple worlds. But, here we have Lewis (1986: 69): "If two things are parts of the same world, I call them *worldmates*". Since a universal in *w* and, say, a duck in *w* are both parts of *w*, they are worldmates. So, Collier's (2019b) problem would still run. Thus, there is reason to reject the biconditional.

distinguish between something's being wholly, partly, multiply, or by courtesy a worldmate of something else. Here are the grades' respective biconditionals. Individuals x and y are *wholly/wholly* worldmates at world w iff the whole of x and the whole of y are spatiotemporally related at w , and neither x nor y exist in worlds other than w in any way (i.e. through being partly or wholly existent in other worlds or existent from the standpoints of other worlds). x and y are *part/part* worldmates at w iff a part of x (wholly existent at w) and a part of y (wholly existent at w) are spatiotemporally related at w , and both x and y partly exist in worlds other than w . x and y are *multiply/multiply* worldmates at w iff the whole of x and the whole of y are spatiotemporally related at w , and both x and y wholly exist in worlds other than w . x and y are *courtesy/courtesy* worldmates at w iff both x and y exist from the standpoint of w . Lewisian theists can also accept the following heterogeneous worldmate relations. x and y are *wholly/partly* worldmates at w iff the whole of x and part of y (wholly existent at w) are spatiotemporally related at w , where x does not exist in worlds other than w in any way but y partly exists in other worlds. x and y are *wholly/multiply* worldmates at w iff the whole of x and the whole of y are spatiotemporally related at w and x does not exist in any world other than w but y wholly exists in other worlds. x and y are *wholly/courtesy* worldmates at w iff the whole of x is spatiotemporally related to w and y exists from w 's standpoint. The reader can now see how the other heterogeneous relations will work (e.g. *multiply/courtesy*, *multiply/partly*, etc.).

With these grades established, Lewisian theists can highlight that the Bill/God worldmateship and the Collier/God worldmateship are both instances of the *wholly/multiply* worldmate relation. So, whilst Bill and God are *wholly/multiply* worldmates in w and Collier and God are *wholly/multiply* worldmates in @, Collier and

Bill will not be *wholly/multiple* worldmates. Thus, the *wholly/multiple* worldmate relation will not be applicable to Bill and Collier.

So, how could Collier and Bill be worldmates? They must be *wholly/wholly* worldmates, which means the whole of both Collier and Bill must be spatiotemporally connected to the same world. But how could this be? Perhaps, because God is spatiotemporally connected to all worlds, through His being causally connected to all worlds, which are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, and since the spatiotemporal relation is transitive, God's being spatiotemporally connected to Collier's world and spatiotemporally connected to Bill's world renders Bill's and Collier's worlds the same world, and thus Bill and Collier are spatiotemporally connected to each other? If this is so, we get to Vance's objection – not Collier's. If Lewisian theists can argue that God's being spatiotemporally connected to all worlds, through His being causally connected to worlds where worlds are sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, does not entail modal collapse, then they can deny that Bill and Collier are *wholly/wholly* worldmates. What this response to Collier demonstrates is that Bill's having a certain worldmate relation to God and Collier's having a certain worldmate relation to God does not entail that Bill and Collier have that same or indeed have any worldmate relation to each other.

So, now onto Vance's counter. Vance (2016: 567-8) raises the following argument: If God wholly exists in worlds *w* and *u*, and creates and sustains *w* and *u*, and creating and sustaining are causal relations, then *w* and *u* are causally connected, and thereby *w* and *u* are numerically one and the same world. Thus, Lewisian theists are committed to modal collapse, and thus inconsistency, if they maintain that God is causally active in all worlds, and one and the same God wholly exists in all worlds through His being a transworld individual.

This objection is rather formidable. However, I believe that Lewisian theists possess the resources to provide a response. Let us, then, explore the ways to defuse the objection.

The first attempt at a repudiation of the objection runs as follows. The phrase ‘*w* and *u* are causally connected’ seems ambiguous. Having a grasp of its different interpretations might provide a roadmap of the various responses (un-)available to Lewisian theists. If, for instance, ‘*w* and *u* are causally connected’ means that *w* and *u* are causally connected by virtue of their respective existences’ being owed to the causal activity of one and same individual, then it will be true that *w* and *u* are causally connected, since both worlds will have been created by God. If, however, ‘*w* and *u* are causally connected’ means that *w* and *u* are members of one and the same chain of causes, then it need not be the case that *w* and *u* are causally connected in any way other than by both being created by one and the same individual, since *w*’s and *u*’s respective causal histories will originate in separate causal acts of God. Thus, the options are: (a) what causally connects *w* and *u* is God Himself, and (b) what causally connects *w* and *u* is God’s act of creation. (a) is necessarily true, since on Lewisian theism, God is the creator and sustainer of all existence, which includes all worlds.⁷ (b), however, is not necessarily true, since God’s creation of each world will correspond to a distinct causal act.⁸ Lewisian theists, then, can insist that what matters for modal collapse-inducing causal connectedness of worlds is that at least two worlds belong to an identical causal chain – they can insist upon (b).

Now, whilst it is true that Lewisian theists are committed to (a)’s being necessarily true, this itself does not commit Lewisian theists to adopting (b) as the

⁷ God’s being the creator and sustainer of all worlds is entailed by the existence of worlds and God’s sovereignty, which – roughly – is the doctrine that all existence depends upon God.

⁸ I thank Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra for discussing with me with the distinction between (a) and (b).

correct interpretation of ‘*w* and *u* are causally connected’. Certainly, (b) is imbued with some ambiguity; for instance, it might be said that (b1) what ‘*w* and *u* are causally connected’ means is that they belong to the same causal chain, even though they may belong to separate branches thereof; or, it might be said that (b2) what ‘*w* and *u* are causally connected’ means is that they belong to the same branch of a causal chain. Assuredly, there is theistic reason for distinguishing between (b1) and (b2): if divine simplicity commits theists to saying that God’s creating and sustaining of numerically distinct worlds is *one* act, then it will not be possible that there be a separate causal act for each created world – if that is true, then each world will belong to the same causal chain, and so according to (b1), all worlds will be causally connected. So, (b2) might be insisted upon by Lewisian theists, if (b) is to be insisted upon at all. However, it is clear that Lewis (1986: 206-9) rules out the possibility of branch worlds. Thus, if branch worlds are not admitted into Lewisian theism, and Lewisian theism requires that there be branching, since divine simplicity requires Lewisian theists to say that it is not possible for God to have separate causal acts and so worlds causally branch off from God’s original causal act, then Lewisian theism will be inconsistent. So, by insisting upon (b2) and being committed to divine simplicity’s entailment of God’s having one causal act, branch worlds are admitted into Lewisian theism; but this is something that is theoretically prohibited.⁹

⁹ Now, one might contend that Lewis thought that branching is only a problem if one world branches from another world; however, it might not be clear that worlds constitute branch worlds simply because they branch from just something – instead, that something must be a world itself. To answer this, here is Lewis (1986: 208) (I have changed the term ‘spatiotemporal’ to ‘causal’):

...if we have overlap, we have [causal] relations between parts of different worlds. For instance, let *P* be the common part – say, a shared initial segment – of two different worlds *W*1 and *W*2, let *R*1 be the remainder of *W*1, and let *R*2 be the remainder of *W*2. Then the appropriate unifying relations obtain between *P* and *R*1, and also between *P* and *R*2. But now the relations obtain between parts of two different worlds: between *P*, which is *inter alia* a part of the world *W*1, and *R*2, which is a part of the different world *W*2.

Now, providing a comprehensive appraisal of divine simplicity – despite being helpful for Lewisian theists – will demonstrably lead this paper off-piste. Let us thence assume either that the doctrine of divine simplicity does not commit theists to saying that it is not possible for God to have more than one causal act, or that God's one causal act does not commit Lewisian theists to branch worlds, since perhaps one act might not entail that only one causal chain is possible.¹⁰

Even with this assumption, I think Lewisian theists still incur a problem. Under (b1), it seems that w and u will be connected for the following reason. God in w sustains w (and the sustaining relation is a causal relation). God in u sustains u . But, if God is wholly in both w and u , then there will be a part of w sustaining u (and a part of u sustaining w), and sustaining is causal – so, there will be a part of w causing something in u (and a part of u causing something in w).¹¹ Thus, w and u will be numerically identical. And so, it will not be possible that two worlds belong to separate branches of the same causal chain; it could not be the case that one world is not sustained by God (for any part of its existence), and so all worlds will belong to the same causal branch. This, then, would also entail that w and u are causally connected under (b2). Thus, this attempt at a repudiation of the objection fails.

The second way to defuse the objection is to give up on the causal isolation of worlds, thus modifying their individuation conditions. Perhaps worlds need only be spatiotemporally isolated but not causally. There is independent motivation for this response: Lewis's preferred account of causation will not work for Lewisian theism as

For God, His one creative act will be the initial segment shared by worlds. (Of course, within the subsequent passage, Lewis goes on to say that overlap might not matter in the case of universals. I discuss this below.)

¹⁰ Indeed, it might be argued that God's one causal act gives rise to an infinite number of causal chains – one for each world.

¹¹ One might argue (as per Lewis) that events are sets of spatiotemporal regions, and so (b1) does not entail that w and u are causally connected. However, see below for a reason why the ontology of causal events should not be sets of spatiotemporal regions.

a truly general account of causation; indeed, Lewis (1986: 3) contends that “nothing outside a world ever makes a world”. To see why, here is Lewis (1986: 78):

When we have causation within a world, what happens is roughly as follows. ... We have a world W where event C causes event E. Both these events occur at W, and they are distinct events, and it is the case at W that if C had not occurred, E would not have occurred either. The counterfactual means that at the closest worlds to W at which C does not occur, E does not occur either.

Let us now apply this account to God’s creation of the actual world: A divine creation event E_c occurs, where E_c is the creating of the actual world, and where E_c causes E_w to occur, where E_w is my writing of this sentence. Thus, we have the counterfactual: were E_c not to occur, E_w would not occur. However, there is a problem here. Events are identified with sets of spatiotemporal regions; so, if there are no spatiotemporal regions, there are no events. But, if there are no events, then there are no causal events. But, if there are no causal events, then there is no divine act of world creation. So, by hypothetical syllogism, if there are no spatiotemporal regions, then there is no divine act of world creation. Thus, since E_c is not a set of spatiotemporal regions (since there exist no actual spatiotemporal regions ‘at the point of’ the actual world’s creation), E_c is not an event, and since causal acts are identified with events, there is no divine act of world creation.¹²

Moreover, the account cannot merely be adapted such that it only applies to *possible* causation – God’s creating of the world, and the pluriverse, being deemed, perhaps, *amodal*. Here is why. Lewis (1986: 78) applies his account to transworld causation:

¹² I have used inverted commas to indicate that ‘at the point of’ should not be given a temporal reading – perhaps it should be read metaphorically.

Try to adapt this to a case of trans-world causation, in which the events of one world supposedly influence those of another. Event C occurs at world W_c , event E occurs at world EE, they are distinct events, and if C had not occurred, E would not have occurred either. This counterfactual is supposed to hold - where? It means that at the closest worlds to - where? - at which C does not occur, E does not occur - where? - either.

So, the causal isolation of worlds, and their lack of divine creation, falls out of Lewis's account of causation. Given this, Lewisian theists may contend that since God created worlds, and is causally active in all worlds as a transworld individual, they are committed to rejecting the counterfactual account of causation. The counterfactual account of causation is a reason why Lewis includes causal isolation as an individuation condition for worlds. So, once the counterfactual account of causation is rejected, Lewisian theists may contend that causal isolation is not an individuation condition for worlds.

This response, however, will not do. Yes, Lewis's counterfactual account of causation will have to be rejected by Lewisian theists, and certainly Lewis's account of events makes God's creation of the pluriverse a non-event (which, we may think, does not track felicitous usage of the term),¹³ but it is clear in Lewis (1986) that the causal isolation of worlds is something Lewis would insist upon even in the absence of his counterfactual account of causation. Here is Lewis (1986: 78):

If need be, I would put this causal isolation alongside spatiotemporal isolation as a principle of demarcation for worlds.

¹³ The account of events, however, may not fall down here: Lewisian theists may claim that a silent operator is lurking in the background, so that 'event' really means 'worldly-event' (or 'possible-event'). In this case, God's creation of the world is not a worldly-event (or a possible-event), but perhaps an amodal-event.

So, even if there is *some* independent motivation to reject the causal isolation of worlds (e.g. that the counterfactual account of causation must be rejected, and that account entails the causal isolations of worlds), Lewis clearly sees that causal isolation is necessary for world-hood.

However, a response is forthcoming: Lewisian theists may contend that divine causation, that involves creating and sustaining worlds, is different in kind from non-divine causation, so there is no non-divine, standard, causal connectedness between worlds, and perhaps that is what matters for causal isolation. It is important to note that this response is not merely the claim that God be afforded a derogation from the principle of causal isolation (since that would seem *ad hoc*), but, rather, that God's causal activity is different in kind from standard causal activity. This 'standard' causation, Lewisian theists might argue, is what matters for worlds' being causally isolated.

Now, there are two problems here, both of which, I believe, can be avoided. The first is Christological and the second is Lewisian. Concerning the former, one might highlight that Christ was on Earth, and upon Earth *did some causal stuff*.¹⁴ Some of this *causal stuff* would have involved, say, His doing some carpentry, or His scratching His head. This *causal stuff* seems to be standard causal stuff, even if performed by Christ.

A response here might be: just because these acts *appear* standard causal acts, since, for instance, they seem everyday acts, does not entail that they *are* standard causal acts. Moreover, if different kinds of causal act are to be countenanced, then it is plausible that the kind of causal act that an individual can engage in is determined by the nature of that individual: here Christ is God, and so Lewisian theists

¹⁴ Now, of course, it is possible that some Lewisian theists are not (non-Unitarian) Christians.

may claim that the only kind of causal act that Christ can engage in is divine, and divine acts, it is contended, are different in kind from non-divine acts.¹⁵ And, to claim that all Christ's causal acts were different in kind from standard causal acts, even though for the most part they appeared the same, provides a neater causal story than suggesting that, whilst perhaps His miracles were one kind of causal act, His, say, knocking up of some wooden structure was a different kind of causal act; only one kind of causal act was performed by Christ.¹⁶

Now, before I examine why we might think that God's creating and sustaining of worlds is different in kind from standard causal acts, here is the Lewisian problem. Lewis (1986: 75) claims the following:

...each world is interrelated (and is maximal with respect to such interrelation) by a system of relations which, if they are not the spatiotemporal relations rightly so called, are at any rate analogous to them.

It then seems reasonable that the following can be said concerning causation: *each world is interrelated by a system of relations which, if they are not causal relations rightly so called, are at any rate analogous to them.* If divine causation is analogous to

¹⁵ It might also be argued that the modal properties of Christ Incarnate should receive a counterpart theoretic analysis, but the modal properties of Christ, *qua* His divine nature, should receive a transworld identity analysis. If that is so, then it is possible that Christ Incarnate engages in standard causal acts without there being causal connectedness of worlds, since the actual Christ Incarnate and His otherworldly Incarnate counterparts will be worldbound (where those counterparts are identical with Christ *qua* His divinity, but different but sufficiently similar to Christ Incarnate). Christ *qua* His divinity will be transworld causal, since the causal activity He engages in is divine in kind; and, Christ Incarnate's standard causal acts will be worldbound. So, even if Christ Incarnate engages exclusively in standard causal acts, there will not be a causal connectedness of worlds. Of course, such a proposal will touch upon questions concerning Christ's hypostatic union – i.e. His dual nature; His being both fully God and fully Man. Collier (2019a) and Paul (2019) mention this suggestion.

¹⁶ However, there may be some tension here: if all Christ's acts are causally distinct from standard causal acts, then it might be difficult to keep track of what a miracle is. However, it *could* be argued that what a miracle is is the performing of some act, regardless of the nature of the individual performing that act, which jars with the, predominately in play, physical laws of some world (and perhaps serves a (perhaps not necessarily solely) non-secular purpose).

non-divine causation, then it would cohere with Lewis to claim that the exact type of causation at play does not matter for the causal isolation of worlds.

Saying something here about why God's causal acts of creating and sustaining worlds seem different in kind from standard causal acts will, I think, help us see why divine causation might not be analogous to standard causation. Certainly, bringing *concreta* into existence *ex nihilo* and sustaining those *concreta* in existence seem very different acts from standard creating and sustaining acts. Yes, we can think of 'bringing something into existence' by combining certain things that already exist – but that is not creation *ex nihilo*. Likewise, with sustaining: we can think of holding a breakable vase in the air, and so our causal activity holds that vase in existence in some sense. But this is very different from God's holding *all* existence, each and every subatomic particle, in existence; if God stops sustaining a world, all of it will cease to exist in an unmediated fashion – if I drop a vase, however, all of its fundamental constituents will continue to exist.

So, it seems plausible to say that the creation of worlds *ex nihilo* and the sustaining thereof is something disanalogous to our simply patching together component parts to create objects and our sustaining of certain things, where those actions are mediated and dependent upon, for instance, the laws of nature – God's creation of worlds is *ex nihilo* and His sustaining of existence does not depend upon anything outside Himself and is unmediated.

Certainly, it is plausible that one may object here, and reject the claim of there being a disanalogy between divine and non-divine, standard causation. In this case, we fortunately have another way to respond to Vance's objection.

Almeida (2017a: 11, fn.31) maintains the following:

...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. ...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.

And so, Almeida notes, the principle of the causal isolation of worlds does not entail that *no* entity can causally relate to numerically distinct worlds.¹⁷ If transworld causation is permitted for members of a sub-category of transworld entity, i.e. universals (assuming they exist), then it might be said to be true of a member of a different subcategory of transworld entity, i.e. God.

However, there is a good reason why God cannot be taken to be like a universal inasmuch as He is wholly a part of every world and causal therein. The reason is that by maintaining the above, Lewisian theists commit themselves either to denuding God of His particularity or to an *ad hoc* prevention of other accidental intrinsic property-lacking particulars from being transworld causally active individuals.

Here is my argument. God is a simple particular. Concerning His simplicity: He is not composed of proper parts; He does not instantiate an array of properties (or universals, if such things there be); He does not admit of metaphysical distinctions. On His particularity: He is not and cannot be instantiated by particulars; there is no particular that instantiates God – He is not a universal or a property. The distinction between particulars and universals is often given by way of supplying paradigmatic qualitative differences. Universals are said to be possibly wholly multiply-located, but particulars are not. But, maintaining that such a distinction is not merely paradigmatic but fundamental would either beg the question against God's existing in multiple

¹⁷ The reader will recall my mentioning, in footnote 9, Lewis's acceptance of causal overlap through universals.

worlds or would render God a universal. Moreover, some philosophers hold that some non-divine particulars are multiply-located – indeed, for those who believe in the possibility of time travel, some particulars will be multiply-located, and some predicate multiple-location of sub-atomic particles. Not even the observation that particulars instantiate properties and bear relations to other individuals is sufficient for the distinction, since this may violate divine simplicity, requiring that there be a distinction between *God* and *His attributes*, but also since universals themselves instantiate properties and relations.¹⁸ Instead, what distinguishes particulars from universals is the attribution of non-instantiability to the former; particulars cannot be instantiated.¹⁹ So, God is a particular.²⁰

If God is a particular and is theoretically permitted by Lewisian theism to wholly exist in all worlds through transworld identity by His not having accidental intrinsic properties, then we should think that this should hold for non-divine accidental intrinsic property-lacking particulars as well. Now, take sub-atomic particles: plausibly, they are particulars which lack accidental intrinsic properties. If we allow that such particulars wholly exist in a transworld-fashion, then we arrive at, what Lewis (1986: 205-6, fn6) denominates, *the problem of accidental external relations* – a parallel problem to *the problem of accidental intrinsics*, which affects transworld individuals that instantiate accidental intrinsic properties. Here is Lewis (1986: 205-6, fn6):

¹⁸ Here I distinguish between ‘particular’ and ‘individual’ – herein, I take ‘individual’ to include sets, universals (if they exist) and particulars.

¹⁹ Sometimes particulars are said to exist *by or in themselves*. I find this confusing. If this means that their existence is not dependent upon anything else, that will not do – for one thing, on theism, all is dependent upon God. If this is cast in contradistinction to universals’ existing *within things*, then again this will not do – for one thing, worlds are said to exist within logical space, and for another, composite particulars have distinct particulars existing *within them*. I will therefore try to steer clear of such Delphic phrases.

²⁰ For an introduction to particulars, see Bigelow (1998); a lot of the themes in this paragraph are found therein.

Suppose we have a pair of two of these simple particulars A and B, both of which are common parts of various worlds. A and B are a certain distance apart. Their distance, it seems, is a relation of A and B and nothing else - it is not really a three-place relation of A, B, and this or that world. That means that A and B are precisely the same distance apart in all the worlds they are both part of. That means (assuming that we explain representation *de re* in terms of trans-world identity when we can) that it is impossible that A and B should both have existed and been a different distance apart. That seems wrong: it is hard to suppose that the distance is essential to the pair, equally hard to suppose that distance is not the plain two-place relation that it seems to be. So trans-world identity, even for simple particulars without accidental intrinsic properties, is *prima facie* trouble. An advocate of it will have some explaining to do, both as to how he gets around the problem of accidental external relations, and also as to what motivates it when it cannot provide a fully general account of representation *de re*.

Now, Lewisian theists can motivate the claim that at least some simple particulars are transworld individuals, since God is a simple particular and all His intrinsic properties are essential. However, they are still left with the problem of accidental external relations. Moreover, on the option of saying that divine causation is disanalogous to standard causation, the above problem will also arise: if God is an accidental intrinsic property-lacking particular and is causally efficacious in multiple worlds, then the same problem rears its head. Thus, Lewisian theists sympathetic to this option will not only face problems concerning the persuasiveness of the disanology between divine and non-divine creation, but will also face the problem of accidental external relations.

Certainly, one way to circumvent the problem is to claim that God is *sui generis* insofar as only He is a transworld simple particular. Moreover, a defence is forthcoming against the following inevitable response: 'but the other simple particulars also lack accidental intrinsic properties, so why ought they not be transworld individuals as well, other than simply for *ad hoc* reasons?' It is clear that simply because an individual – particular or universal or set – does not have accidental intrinsic properties does not mean that that individual is a transworld individual, since if that were the case, pure sets would be transworld individuals – but they are not;

Lewis (1986: 96, fn61; 1983, 39-40) maintains that they exist from the standpoints of worlds. So, clearly, this condition is not sufficient for transworldhood. Lewisian theists cannot insist that sufficiency would be achieved by an individual existing wholly in the world (and satisfying the first condition), since sub-atomic particles do as well – it may be necessary, but, in addition to the first condition, not sufficient. Perhaps, in addition to the first condition (and perhaps the second), sufficiency would be achieved by an individual's being outside, but related to, a spatiotemporal region, in the way that God is outside but related to spatiotemporal regions? But why ought the satisfaction of this condition (along with the first and perhaps the second) mean that an individual is transworld existent? I do not see why – and at any rate, I suspect that including this condition would be *ad hoc*. And, what is more, Lewisian theists will have a hard time explaining why sub-atomic particles can be multiply-located in the actual world (if they believe they can be), but are not transworld located.²¹

Another response is to insist that only God lacks accidental intrinsic properties. This, I do not think, will get very far: indeed, as Lewis (1986: 205, fn6) declares, “it certainly seems hard to think of plausible candidates” when we think about what accidental intrinsic properties other simple particulars, like sub-atomic particles, might have.

Another possible response consists in forswearing God's particularity. But, then, what is God? Is the universal/particular distinction exhaustive and exclusive? If so, we cannot have this. If not, what is God? Perhaps there is a third category: *substance*?²² Perhaps *substance monism*, or perhaps the Horgan and Potrč (2012;

²¹ Perhaps Lewisian theists could find justification here by contending that time-travel is possible and entails that an individual is multiply spatiotemporally located, but nevertheless common or garden time travelling individuals are not transworld individuals. But, this contention seems to press the point on why common or garden time travelling individuals are not transworld existent – this defence, then, seems to admit of a similar question to the original.

²² See Benovsky (2018) for a good introduction to substance.

2008) variety, is to be attributed to God – perhaps attributed to God is *priority monism*, of perhaps Schaffer's (2010) variety.²³ The exact type of substance theory on offer I do not think matters here: what matters is whether substances can be instantiated – if they cannot be, which seems true, then, analytically, they turn out to be particulars.²⁴

So, the most plausible ways for Lewisian theists to circumvent Lewis's problem fail. Luckily, for Lewisian theists, there is another option: endorse (4) instead.

3 Arguments *Contra* (4), and My Responses Thereto

Let us now examine (4): God can be said to exist in each world, through His existing from the standpoint of each world. But, what does it mean to exist from the standpoint of a world? Lewis (1983: 39-40) explains: by virtue of being included as members of the least restricted domain that is generally regarded as being suitable for evaluating truth values of quantifications at worlds, things exist from the standpoints of worlds. The chief example of such beings is abstract pure sets. Although not 'in the world' in the same way that, say, puddles wholly exist in the world, or in the way that, say, some cross-world individual might partly exist in one world and partly exist in another, where the whole of the being is comprised of all its parts, where those parts wholly exist in

²³ Given that Schaffer's priority monism predicates parts of substances, even if those parts are non-fundamental, theists would not be willing, save substantial tinkering, to apply such a theory to God.

²⁴ This point highlights a reason why universals are an odd fit in modal realism: if properties are sets of individuals (or more correctly, sets of their instances), then modal realists can account for impossible properties – they are simply identified with the empty set. If modal realists admit universals into their account and posit the existence of uninstantiable universals to account for impossible properties, then the universal/particular distinction collapses: particulars are not able to be instantiated and neither are the impossible universals, but particulars are characterised as being non-instantiable, so impossible universals turn out to be particulars. Modal realists who espouse universals must then identity impossible properties with something else, perhaps with the empty set – in which case, their theory of properties becomes non-unified.

their respective worlds (if such a being exists in Lewisian theism), a pure set exists ‘in the world’ through existing from its standpoint.²⁵

Now, Almeida (2017a: 6-7; 2017b: 4) and Cameron (2009: 97) suggest that God can be said to exist in worlds in the way that pure sets exist in worlds: i.e. from their standpoints. Almeida (2017b: 4) notes that pure sets, with which numbers are identified, are not spatiotemporal entities and exist from the standpoints of worlds; thus, “[t]here is no reason why other beings that are not spatiotemporally located might also exist from the standpoints of all possible worlds”. God is one such being, and so it seems reasonable to contend that God exists from the standpoints of worlds.²⁶

Here, Sheehy (2009), Collier (2019b) and Vance (2016) object. Vance’s (2016: 565) objection that this mechanism of accounting for God’s necessity in Lewisian theism entails that God’s omnipresence is forsworn is countered by Collier (2019b: 343). Collier (2019b: 343-344) also counters one aspect of Sheehy’s (2009: 103) objection: such a mechanism renders God abstract and so Lewisian theism is committed to violating its ontological parsimony, which is generated by its only containing sets and concreta – now Lewisian theism is committed to positing within its ontological inventory of primitives one additional entity type, an abstract God, and

²⁵ Here, some speak of pure sets existing *at* rather than *in* worlds. Although this linguistic practise may assist with our conceiving of the kind of the relationship that pure sets bear to worlds, it does not bear particularly heavily upon ontology: indeed, Lewis (1983: 39-40) thinks that the three ways for objects to exist “in” worlds are to exist wholly in a world, to exist partly in a world, or to exist from a world’s standpoint. Occasionally, I shall speak of something’s existing ‘outside’ worlds (using inverted commas) when I am referring to that something’s existing from worlds’ standpoints.

²⁶ Here some may wonder why God is needed to account for the truth of quantificational sentences. Take the sentence: ‘the world was created’. God is needed for the truth of this claim, and He cannot exist in worlds as being a part thereof (as I have argued (since neither transworld identity nor counterpart theory is appropriate)). Moreover, since necessarily, God sustains in existence all that exists, we may think that God is needed for the truth of every quantificational sentence – and since God cannot exist in worlds by being a part thereof, He must exist in the least restricted domain. Now, perhaps, this domain will be even more unrestricted than the domain of pure sets, since God is also needed for quantificational sentences about pure sets. This is perhaps so; but in this case, we can just say that pure sets are not in the least restricted domain, but the domain is still more unrestricted than the domain that just includes world-parts – alternatively, we could maintain that pure sets exist as divine ideas: numbers, then, for example, are divine ideas; thus, we do not need to distinguish between two rather unrestricted domains, the pure sets’ domain, and God’s domain.

given theists' antecedent commitment thereto, the motivation for its being posited seems *ad hoc* when compared with the motivation for positing sets and concreta. Collier argues that such motivation is not *ad hoc*. And, moreover, Collier (2019b: 346) counters Vance's (2016: 565-6) objection that God's being abstract precludes Him from being causal. However, where all the above detractors agree is that such a mechanism entails God's abstractness. Indeed, Sheehy (2009: 103), Vance (2016: 565-6) and Collier (2019b: 345-346), all think that God is rendered abstract.

Abstractness, I believe, need not be predicated of God under (4). That is, I agree with Almeida's (2017a: 6) view that, under this mechanism, "God is no doubt a concrete individual – unlike properties and propositions, which are reducible to sets".²⁷ However, since Almeida does not give much of an argument for this view, here is one. Now, it is true that on modal realism, all that exists from the standpoints of worlds is pure sets. However, existing from the standpoints of worlds is neither necessary nor sufficient for something's being abstract. On the necessity claim, Lewisian theists can point to Lewis (1986: 83) who contends that impure sets exist where their concrete members exist – i.e. (generally) wholly within worlds, and so within space and time – but are still paradigmatic abstract entities. So, existing 'outside' worlds does not seem to be a necessary condition for something's being abstract.²⁸ On the sufficiency claim, theists of any modal theoretic persuasion will reject the contention that something's existing 'outside' space and time entails that that something is abstract. Since, on theism, God is taken as being concrete and the creator of space and time, to hold the contention that something's existing 'outside' space and time entails that that

²⁷ If I and Almeida are correct here, then both Sheehy's objection and Vance's second objection miscarry.

²⁸ I use inverted commas for 'outside' to indicate that something's existing 'outside' a world means that that something exists from the standpoint of a world, and thus should be included in its ontological catalogue. See footnote 25 above.

something is abstract is to hold that theism is inconsistent from the get-go. However, I take it that the current proposal's detractors do not wish to claim that theism is inconsistent in this way – if it were, they would have a knock-down objection to Lewisian theism, whatever the mechanism to render God necessary therein. Thus, we can circumvent objections concerning God's being rendered abstract under the proposal; existing 'outside' worlds is neither necessary nor sufficient for something to be abstract.

Let us now examine a more serious objection to the proposal: the modal collapse objection. Collier (2019b: 346), adopting Vance's (2016: 567-8) objection against God as a transworld individual, contends that the present proposal entails modal collapse: If God exists in worlds w and u , through existing from their standpoints, and created and sustains w and u , and creating and sustaining are causal relations, then w and u are causally connected, and thereby w and u are numerically one and the same world. Thus, Lewisian theists are committed to modal collapse, and thus inconsistency, if they maintain that God is causally active in all worlds, and one and the same God wholly exists in all worlds through His existing from their standpoints.

Now, the first way around this objection is to argue, like in the above section on (2), that divine causation is disanalogous to non-divine causation, and the latter is what counts for causal connectedness. However, even though I believe this view to be somewhat promising, I shall eschew spelling it out again. If an argument against the claim of disanalogy is in the offing for (2), it should be applicable to (4) as well.

The second way focuses on the notion of causal isolation. Lewis (1986) contends that something in one world cannot cause something in another. However, it is not entirely clear that Lewisian theists are committed to the view that beings that

exist from the standpoints of worlds cannot be causally active in other worlds. Indeed, if we take *something in a world* to mean a *world-part particular*, then Lewisian theists sympathetic to the standpoint view can avoid the modal collapse objection. On this way, Lewisian theists can contend that all that matters for causal isolation in modal realism is causal isolation amongst world-part particulars. What is proscribed on modal realism, Lewisian theists may argue, is that some world-part particular causes something to happen to an other-worldly world-part particular. Since God exists from the standpoints of worlds, this will not be the case for God.

Now there are two things to be said in support of this response. The first concerns ambiguity from Lewis. It is unclear from Lewis (1986) what he thinks about the causal isolation of worlds concerning beings which exist from the standpoints of worlds. Certainly, Lewis leaves open the option of positing transworld causal universals – thus, it does not seem unreasonable to think that beings which exist from the standpoints of worlds may also enter into causal relationships across worlds, if positing such beings is independently motivated. What is clear from Lewis (1986) is that particulars which wholly or partly exist in worlds cannot be transworld causal (since, if they were, then: if they had accidental intrinsic properties, then they would be worldbound, and if they only had essential intrinsic properties, then they would face the problem of accidental external relations). But, God's existence in worlds, under (4), is not of either of those two kinds, and His existence is also independently motivated. And secondly, it is not clear that Lewisian theists are committed to saying that God is even transworld causal under (4). Here is Almeida (2017a: 11, fn31), for example:

I take the restriction [causal isolation] 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'*.

Although Almeida does not provide a defence of the above, I believe one is forthcoming. For Lewis, events are sets of spatiotemporal regions. Since God is not a part of any spatiotemporal region, His causal activity in one spatiotemporal region will not affect a spatiotemporal region in another world. Now, like I mentioned earlier, Lewisian theists must reject Lewis's event theory, but what the above might demonstrate is that Lewis conceived of causal connectedness of worlds as arising from spatiotemporal regions affecting other-worldly spatiotemporal regions – under (4), that will not happen.²⁹

There is a worry for the above. We have simply assumed that God is causally efficacious from the standpoints of worlds. However, here is a question from Almeida (2017a: 11, fn31): “[d]oes causal isolation entail that nothing that is not in a world can be causally efficacious?”. Within Almeida (2017a: 11, fn31), there is a hint at an answer:

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.

This response, I think, however, is not a good one. On Lewisian theism, impure sets exist in worlds, and not from their standpoints: indeed, “a set of located things does seem to have a location, though perhaps a divided location: it is where its members are” (Lewis 1986: 83). However, the seeds of a better response are suggested in

²⁹ This might, however, give *some* weight to the idea that Lewis thought that nothing that exists from the standpoints of worlds could be causal – hence, Lewis only needed to talk of spatiotemporal regions' being causally connected to other-worldly spatiotemporal regions.

Almeida's (2017a: 11, fn31) quoting of Lewis: Lewis (1986: 83) asks "[i]s it true that sets or universals cannot enter into causal interaction?", and then proceeds to suggest that impure sets enter into causal interaction – we are also aware that universals are causally efficacious. Thus, worldly particulars, impure sets and universals can all enter into causal relations.³⁰ I therefore see no reason why at least some beings which exist from the standpoints of worlds cannot; it seems plausible to think that Lewis does not speak of such an option simply because pure sets are the only beings which exist from the standpoints of worlds within his modal realist framework – once God, a particular, rubs shoulders with pure sets (in the respect that He exists from the standpoints of worlds), I see no reason why Lewisians would deny the ability to engage in causal interaction to God simply because God exists from the standpoints of worlds.³¹

This, however, leads to a further challenge for the proposal: how can something be causally connected to a world and exist only from its standpoint? If something's being causally connected to worlds entails that that thing is a world-part, then my response above fails: nothing can be causal and exist from the standpoints of worlds, since something's being causal renders that something a world-part.³² We can also

³⁰ I also mention in footnote 31 below that pure sets may also participate in causal events; if this is so, then we have another argument for the possibility that things that exist from the standpoints of worlds bear causal relations to worldly particulars.

³¹ One may contend that the spirit of the notion of something's existing from the standpoints of worlds is that that thing exists in worlds simply because it is a member of the "least restricted domain that is normally... appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications" (Lewis 1986: 96, fn61). And thus, beings that exist in worlds in such a way are denied other roles within worlds, including causal roles. I am not sure here. Firstly, it seems that one reason for introducing the notion of something's existing from the standpoints of worlds is to account for things that should be included in a world's ontological inventory, but do not have spatiotemporal location. And secondly, it is not clearly the case that objects that exist from the standpoints of worlds play no roles within worlds. For example, if some theory of truthmaking is consistent with modal realism, such that pure sets (partly) make-true claims that involve pure sets, then pure sets will play a truthmaking role within worlds. Another example: assuming causal events are not identified with spatiotemporal regions, then it seems that pure sets participate in causal events: if I am thinking of the Axiom of the Empty Set, and someone asks what I am thinking about, the event of my revealing what I am thinking about involves, in some sense, a pure set (i.e. the empty set) – if this is so, then pure sets play other roles within worlds. Certainly, participation in causal events is a messy notion, but the point is that it is not clear that pure sets cannot play other roles within worlds.

³² It (epistemically) could be the case, however, that something is causal and not a world-part: we could imagine that God created pure sets, but not worlds. In this case, God would not be causally connected

present the problem differently: God will be causally connected to spatiotemporal regions, and will be related thereto by virtue of His being causally related thereto. And, plausibly, beings that are related to spatiotemporal regions are such that they exist in worlds in the sense of being partly or wholly therein.

Now, a response here, I believe, is forthcoming, and goes as follows. Perhaps for something to exist wholly or partly ‘in’ worlds that something must be spatiotemporally *located* therein.³³ Plausibly, what makes Lewis think that universals and impure sets reside ‘in’ worlds is that they are located where their concrete members are located. It thence seems reasonable to think that if something is not located within a spatiotemporal region, it is not ‘in’ a world – even if it is related thereto. Universals, worldbound particulars and impure sets all have spatiotemporal location, and thus seem to be ‘in’ worlds; if something does not have spatiotemporal location, then it seems plausible to say that it is not ‘in’ a world. But how can something be merely related to a spatiotemporal region but not located therein, and so not ‘in’ a world?

Firstly, within the discourse on God’s omnipresence, there is a lively debate between those who think that God is *fundamentally*-omnipresent in the world in the sense that my laptop is fundamentally-present upon my desk and those who think that God is *derivatively*-omnipresent in the world in the sense that He bears, say, causal and epistemic relations thereto. On the fundamental-omnipresence option, it seems plausible to ascribe a location to God (i.e. a fundamental-location); on the derivative-omnipresence option, it does not – or at least if one were to ascribe a location to God, it would only be an ascription of a derivative-location – but it still seems reasonable to

to worlds, and so God would not be a world-part (if something’s being causally connected to worlds entails that that something is a world-part), but He would be causally efficacious.

³³ I use inverted commas for ‘in’ to denote that something exists wholly or partly in a world.

ascribe God spatiotemporal relatedness.³⁴ It seems that Lewisian theists, sympathetic to (4), can opt for the derivative-omnipresence option. Perhaps, in fact, what distinguishes (2) from (4) is the notion of fundamental-locatedness: since God's essential intrinsic properties do not change from world to world, whether we conceive of God according to (2) or (4), we need an additional feature to distinguish (2) from (4); plausibly, this feature is spatiotemporal locatedness. If this feature is spatiotemporal locatedness, then this feature will be crucial in deciding, in some cases, whether something exists in worlds through existing from the standpoints of worlds or exists in worlds through transworld identity.³⁵ If fundamental-locatedness is necessarily predicated of God within the transworld model, then Lewisian theists will have to either provide a story of how an atemporal God can be fundamentally-located in the world or rule out the transworld model altogether. Lewisian theists may, then, have further reason to avoid the transworld model: providing an account of God's fundamental-locatedness, but denying Him temporality (or the related notion of mutability) will be a tall order: if that were to fail, then Lewisian theists would have to reject the transworld model. They would have to reject it, moreover, even if divine causation is disanalogous to standard causation.

But, the supporter of (2) may claim that he need not necessarily predicate fundamental-omnipresence of God. Lewis (1986: 83) speaks of impure sets and universals' being located in a "special way" – indeed, universals are "wholly present" where their particulars (in a non-special way) are located. Accordingly, there seems

³⁴ For discussion of contemporary accounts of omnipresence, see Cowling and Cray (2017), Hudson (2014; 2009; 2005) and Inman (2017).

³⁵ Here, we may have an additional argument *contra* (2): if the view that God's omnipresence is fundamental entails theistic problems, and (2) requires God's fundamental-omnipresence, then (2) will entail theistic problems. Equally, we may have an argument *contra* (4): if the view that God's omnipresence is derivative entails theistic problems, and (4) requires God's derivative-omnipresence, then (4) will entail theistic problems.

nothing in here to rule out the notion that the transworld God is located likewise in a “special way”, but His way concerns derivative-location; He is wholly present in all spatiotemporal regions, but still only derivatively-located. Perhaps universals are only derivatively-located in spatiotemporal regions as well.

The problem here is that the supporter of (2) will still owe the supporter of (4) a reason why the transworld model should be used for God and not the standpoints of worlds model. Since God’s essential intrinsic properties should not change whether we employ (2) or (4), we will need an extra condition to distinguish between the two models. The supporter of (4) can provide such a condition: *what distinguishes (2) from (4) is the notion of fundamental-locatedness*. I cannot think of a more plausible condition than this one. And so, in the absence of a theistically unproblematic replacement for the fundamental-locatedness-condition to distinguish between (2) and (4), I think Lewisian theists continue to face the above problem: if fundamental-locatedness is necessarily predicated of God under the transworld model, then Lewisian theists will have to either provide a story of how an atemporal God can be fundamentally-located in the world or rule out the transworld model altogether.

Here, then, is the second reason why something can be spatiotemporally related to worlds but not thereby ‘in’ worlds. We can imagine that impure sets do not exist ‘in’ worlds, by not being located where their members are located, but are still spatiotemporally related to worlds, through their depending upon their spatiotemporally located, worldly members. If this is plausible (and indeed it seems like, firstly, a viable option, and, secondly, a common pre-theoretical understanding of ‘where’ impure sets exist), then it seems plausible that God can also fail to be ‘in’

worlds, but can be spatiotemporally related thereto through His being their creator and sustainer.³⁶

Thus, given the two points above, if location is what matters for something's being 'in' a world, as seems to be the case, then a causal God can still exist from the standpoints of worlds. Derivative-omnipresence, whilst it rules out fundamental-location, does not rule out God's being spatiotemporally and causally related to worlds; and, impure sets, if they lack fundamental-locatedness and so exist from the standpoints of worlds, can still be said to be spatiotemporally related to worlds by virtue of their depending upon their spatiotemporally located, worldly members.

And so, Lewisian theists can argue that God is causal and exists from the standpoints of worlds, and there is no problematic causal connectedness of worlds, and so there is no modal collapse. God's not being spatiotemporally located allows Lewisian theists to maintain that He exists from the standpoints of worlds, and that causal connectedness of worlds only concerns worldbound, world-part-particulars.³⁷

4 Conclusion

Herein I have demonstrated that many of the respective arguments in the literature against (2) and (4) do not work. However, I have provided two novel objections to (2): firstly, I have levied Lewis's accidental external relations objection to the proposal, and secondly, I have argued that fundamental-location is a plausible condition that

³⁶ Now, it is true that there is something of a disanalogy between impure sets and God in terms of how they are related to spatiotemporal regions. However, both depend upon the existence of spatiotemporally located things to be spatiotemporally related to worlds; of course, God creates worlds, and so is unlike impure sets, but His spatiotemporal relations thereto still depend upon their existence. And moreover, the point of this paragraph is simply to show that just by virtue of something's being spatiotemporally related to the world, it is not necessarily the case that something is spatiotemporally located therein; an impure set, existing from the standpoint of a world, is an example of this.

³⁷ Of course, some of the above does not matter if divine causation is disanalogous to non-divine causation.

distinguishes (2) from (4), to the effect that the supporter of (2) will have to provide a story of how an atemporal God can be fundamentally-located in the world. I think that the first objection *may* be averted; I think that the second objection *may* admit of a response. However, the most straightforward way to render God necessary in Lewisian theism is to adopt (4): under (4), God can be concrete, spatiotemporally and causally related to worlds, exist from the standpoints of worlds, and worlds can remain causally isolated, and so modal collapse is avoided. Lewisian theists must argue, then, that God has no place 'in' the world – He exists 'outside' it.

Paper 3

God's Omnibenevolence: Evil Worlds

1 Introduction¹

We can readily conceive of worlds of appalling misery, whose metaphysical possibility seems eminently plausible. Indeed, we can conceive of a world that contains an infinite number of people who suffer physical agony for eternity. But, given God's necessity and possible worlds semantics, God exists in all worlds; so, if worlds of terrible suffering exist, God exists therein. However, according to Anselmian (classical) theism, God is taken to be maximally perfect, and so is taken to (necessarily) possess the traditional 'omni-' attributes of omnipotence, omnibenevolence and omniscience.² Thus, the question arises: if worlds of terrible suffering exist, and God exists therein, how can a maximally perfect God permit the existence of such worlds? This is the *modal problem of evil*. In this paper, I discuss a problem connected thereto, which concerns Lewisian theism and the existence of evil worlds, where worlds are of the concrete kind propounded by Lewis (1986). I call this the *problem of evil worlds for Lewisian theism*. The question concerning this problem is the following: given the modal intuition that evil worlds exist, should Lewisian theists countenance their existence? Or, to rephrase the question: given God's maximal perfection, is God permitted to allow the existence of evil, modal realist worlds and thereby render evil possible?

¹ Much of the content of this paper appears in my Collier (2021b).

² In the Prologue, I note that the type of classical theism under inspection herein is Anselmian.

Here is the paper's structure. In section 2, I distinguish between the modal problem of evil and the problem of evil worlds for Lewisian theism. In section 3, I present and thereafter refute an argument – owed to Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) – for the view that Lewisian theists are entitled, and encouraged, to affirm the existence of evil worlds, and doing so does not threaten classical theism. Then, in section 4, I present and thereafter rebut some other options for Lewisian theists – one of which rests upon a Thomistic contention pertaining to God's inability to sin, and the other appeals to what has been denominated *contingentism*, the thesis that worlds' axiological properties are contingent.³ The last response to the problem of evil worlds on Lewisian theism I consider is owed to Morris (1987): in section 5, I argue that a Morrisian response that denies the existence of evil worlds is broadly correct. I then conclude: Lewisian theists should assert the impossibility of evil worlds, where holding this position does not threaten the tenability of Lewisian theism.

2 Preliminaries

The claim that God is necessary, omnibenevolent, omniscient, omnipotent and the creator and sustainer of all existence is both a *de dicto* and a *de re* modal claim: the claim is *de dicto* through specifying a necessary condition for membership of the class *classical God*, and the claim is *de re* through specifying that the essential attributes of God are His necessity, omnibenevolence, omniscience, omnipotence and His being the creator and sustainer of all existence. So, we have the following claim (within a possible worlds semantics framework):

³ I assume the truth of necessitarianism unless otherwise stated. I explain necessitarianism later.

- (1) In all worlds, God is the creator and sustainer of all existence, and is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent.

The modal problem of evil, owed to Guleserian (1983), concerns (1)'s falsity. The problem can be formulated as follows. The existence of God is incompatible with an intuitively true claim: there exist worlds that are, on-balance, evil.⁴ Given the intuitive truth of this claim, some divine attribute must be revised, rejected or significantly qualified. So, either: theists must reject God's necessary existence, and so He does not exist in all worlds – but only in the on-balance good, or perhaps additionally the on-balance neutral worlds –; or, theists must revise, reject or qualify omnipotence, omniscience or omnibenevolence. For whichever option theists opt, they deny their theism; they deny (1).

In more detail, here is Guleserian's argument. By theism, in all worlds, God exists and is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent (1). Each world is, from its own perspective, actual. By theism, God creates all worlds.⁵ By theism, necessarily, God creates a world only if its creation is morally permissible. Thus, God's creation of

⁴ Herein, I assume that worlds have axiological properties: e.g. worlds have morally good, neutral or bad net-total-values. Plausibly, net-total-world-values are a function of the values generated by the goings-on in worlds and certain axiological principles.

⁵ Some say that God *allows worlds to exist*, rather than that God creates worlds, in an attempt to be more moderate or neutral. The difference between God's *allowing a world to exist* and His *creating a world* is as follows. The former simply supposes that God holds the power to prevent the realisation of a world *w*, through, perhaps, realising some state of affairs that is inconsistent with *w* or failing to realise some state of affairs consistent with *w*. So, God allows to be realised any existent world. God's creating a world, however, is the notion that God chooses to causally bring a world into existence. In the literature, it is taken that this is a (semi-) important difference. However, I doubt that there is a morally significant difference between the two notions when considering God and the existence of evil worlds. Whilst it *may* be true that *I* am only partially culpable for evil if I knowingly allow it to happen when it is within my power to prevent it, and I am fully culpable for evil if I am directly responsible for it, this difference in scale of culpability does not matter when it comes to assessing God and evil worlds. If God is even partially responsible for the existence of on-balance evil worlds through simply allowing them to exist, then His omnibenevolence seems denied, and any scale of denial of God's omnibenevolence is enough to render God non-omnibenevolent. Indeed, no divinely preventable evil world – it seems – is compatible with God's omnibenevolence. Thus, to make life easier, I simply speak of God's creation of worlds.

all (metaphysically possible) worlds is morally permissible. But, it is conceivable that there exist evil worlds, and conceivability is standardly taken as being a good guide to metaphysical possibility. And so, it seems metaphysically possible that evil worlds exist, and, by the biconditional for possibility (possibly, P iff there exists some world w , such that at w : P), if an evil world is possible, there exists an evil world. However, the existence of evil worlds is incompatible with (1). Therefore, at least one divine attribute must be revised, significantly qualified or rejected. Accordingly, Guleserian's argument can be formulated as a hexad of inconsistent propositions:⁶

- (2) Necessarily, God exists.
- (3) All worlds are actual from their perspectives.
- (4) Necessarily, if w is a world, God created w .
- (5) Necessarily, if w is a world created by God, it is morally permissible for God to have created w .
- (6) There exists an evil world w_e .
- (7) It is not morally permissible for God to create w_e when God could have prevented w_e 's existence.⁷

⁶ This hexad is partly owed to Kraay (2011: 362), who partly owes it to Garcia (1984: 379).

⁷ An anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) contends that there is a counterexample to (7). The reviewer writes:

...suppose we live in an earthly paradise but freely choose wars, holocausts, you name it, and turn it into a very bad place. God, in giving us real free will, gives us the option of [messing]...

Guleserian contends that theists should affirm the truth of (3)-(7), and thence should revise, significantly qualify or reject (2).

Now, there is a debate between Guleserian (1983) on one side and Garcia (1984) and Tidman (1993) on the other, where both Garcia and Tidman accept (3), (4), (5) and (7), and so believe the battle to lie between rejecting either (2) or (6). Both Garcia and Tidman contend that theists and their critics are equally epistemically justified or rationally entitled in holding their respective modal intuitions, since their respective intuitions are equally supported: for theists, this will be the intuition that (2) is true, and for their critics, this will be the intuition that (6) is true.⁸

This problem is connected, but is nevertheless somewhat distinct from the problem that this paper concerns. Indeed, the modal problem of evil presents a problem for positing God *in the first place*. That is, it can be conceived as an argument against the existence of God, if generic possible worlds-theory is correct. *The problem of evil worlds for Lewisian theism*, however, assumes the truth of Lewisian theism, and thus takes for granted the truths of (2)-(5). This problem, then, concerns whether evil worlds exist on Lewisian theism. Thence the problem is presented as a battle not between rejecting either (2) or (6), but between rejecting either (6) or (7) within a Lewisian theistic framework.

Morris (1987), Oppy (1993), Sheehy (2006), Leftow (2012) and Nagasawa (2017) all reject (6) in favour of keeping the moral intuition that God is incompatible

things up. The mess we make is our fault, not God's. In securing us the intrinsic good of free will, he has to take his chances. Arguably, then, there are on-balance evil worlds it is permissible for God to create. [(7)] seems to run into the Free-will Defense.

I can agree with the reviewer here, but I note that the defender of the import of (7) can revise (6) to read: (6*) 'There exists a world w_e wherein there is evil that is not subject to a theodicy'. Now the counterexample above does not seem to work against (7), once (6) is revised along (6*)'s lines.

⁸ Kraay (2011: 362) maintains that the appropriate response to the equality of support for (2) and (6) (if equality there be) is that both theists and their critics suspend their judgements over (2) and (6).

with evil worlds – with Sheehy and Oppy examining this view exclusively within a Lewisian theistic framework. However, Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) defends the view that Lewisian theists should instead reject (7) in favour of keeping the modal intuition that evil worlds exist. I now present, and thereafter reject, Almeida’s argument for this view. Then, in the following section, I present, and thereafter refute, some alternative approaches to the problem of evil worlds for Lewisian theism. And, subsequently, I present and argue in favour of a Morrisian response, refuting both some plausible objections already raised in the literature and some novel ones.⁹

3 Almeida’s Rejection of (7)

3.1 Why are Evil Worlds Especially Bad News on Lewisian Theism?

Before I start, it is worth noting why the problem of evil worlds is particularly problematic for Lewisian theists. The main reason is that there being real, flesh and blood gratuitous evil seems worse than, say, there being an abstract proposition, as a member of some abstract set of propositions, whose content concerns gratuitous evil. That is, Lewisian metaphysics are such that if evil is *possible*, then evil is *real* – but, conversely, for abstractionist theories of possible worlds (of, say, the Adams (1974) variety or the Plantinga (1974a) variety), if evil is possible, then – provided that the actual world is not evil – evil does not affect real, concrete individuals. Perhaps a more perspicuous way to present the point is as follows: On the possible worlds theory

⁹ It is worth noting that not all the above authors who support the rejection of (6) think that this approach, although necessary for Lewisian theists, is satisfactory. For instance, Sheehy (2006) thinks that although Lewisian theists are compelled to reject (6), this is nevertheless a significant cost of their theory. I later argue, amongst other things, that Lewisian theists do not incur significant costs in rejecting (6).

where mental images play the world-role and so ground modal truths, there being a mental image of gratuitous evil seems less morally problematic than there being real, concrete evil. Certainly, if my mental images alone ground modal truths, and I conjure an image of gratuitous evil, I therefore make it possible that there be evil; and, likewise, if Lewisian worlds ground modal truths, and I create a Lewisian world of gratuitous evil, I therefore make it possible that there be evil. However, my creating Lewisian worlds that contain real evil seems morally worse than my merely conjuring mental images of evil, even though in both cases I am responsible for grounding the possibility of evil. The same should hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for God.¹⁰ Notice, also, that one cannot circumvent the problem of evil worlds on Lewisian theism by claiming that all that matters is the actual world, since, on Lewisian theism, other worlds are just as real; thus, the problem of evil worlds matters even if the actual world is not evil.

So, for Lewisian theism, the case of evil worlds is more pressing: whilst some might think that God is not (or, at least, is less) blameworthy for rendering evil worlds possible (provided the actual world is not evil) if their possibility is grounded in His conceiving of evil, most will not be content not to blame God for His rendering evil worlds possible if their possibility is grounded in the existence of real, concrete evil worlds. Almeida, however, thinks that, on Lewisian theism, we should not blame God for the existence of evil worlds.

¹⁰ Perhaps one may object and say there is no significant difference when it comes to God. Perhaps one might say that God's mind should contain no evil images, and so on the mental image modal account, evil should be impossible (although maybe Almeida might object here (see his argument below)), for if His mind were to contain evil images, that would threaten, say, His having a perfectly beautiful mind. That is, a being with a perfectly beautiful mind should not even be able to conceive of evil. However, if one satisfactorily demonstrated that whichever modal programme theists used the problem would remain, using Lewisian theism still provides a vivid and perhaps different way to discuss the problem, and, through its ontological machinery, raises Lewisian theistic-specific and not merely general issues for theism. And at any rate, this paper concerns, amongst other things, Almeida's argument, which is explicitly Lewisian theistic.

3.2 Almeida's Argument

So, now for Almeida's argument. Almeida (2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008) thinks that Lewisian theism has the resources to posit evil worlds and do so in a theistically benign way. Almeida argues for this view by, firstly, highlighting that logical space (or the pluriverse) is structured the way it is by necessity – it could not have been otherwise. Almeida argues: since necessarily, logical space is what it is, necessarily, evil worlds exist; and, since necessarily, evil worlds exist, and no one can be blamed for the existence of something necessary, God cannot be blamed for their existence. Here is Almeida (2017b: 6):

It is false that the totality of God's creation might have included any less evil than it does. It is false as well that any part of the totality of God's creation might have included any less evil than it does. Every instance of evil in every region of the pluriverse – every instance of evil in every possible world – is necessary... There is no gratuitous or pointless evil anywhere in the pluriverse. Indeed, there is no eliminable evil anywhere in the pluriverse.

To raise the plausibility of this view, Almeida (2011: 7; 2008: 142) advances the following lifeguard analogy *contra* (7):

- (8) A lifeguard *L* has the capacity to rescue from drowning either *S* or *S'*, but cannot rescue both.

Now, given that it is impossible that *L* realise a world such that both *S* and *S'* are rescued, it is thereby morally permissible that *L* rescue *S* at the necessary price of failing to rescue *S'* (and *vice versa*). Almeida claims that God, on Lewisian theism, is in a predicament analogous to the predicament in which *L* finds himself: that is, God's

creation of evil worlds is morally permissible if their existence is necessary. That is, if evil worlds' nonexistence is impossible, then God cannot be blamed for creating such worlds. To illustrate this, Almeida invokes counterpart theory, which modal realism uses to explicate and supply the truth-conditions for *de re* possibility/necessity predications of (at least some) individuals (of the form: 'x is possibly/necessarily *F*'). Thus, for *de re* modal predications, we have the biconditionals:

(9) x is possibly *F* iff some world *w* exists in which *x* has a counterpart *y* that is *F*.

(10) x is necessarily *F* iff in all worlds *w*, all counterparts of *x* are *F*.¹¹

Here, then, is Almeida's (2011: 8; 2008: 142) illustration. Suppose that there exists a world *w* that contains a person *Tc* who does not suffer and who is a counterpart of *T*. Further, let us suppose there exists a world *u* such that, in *u*, *T* suffers unremitting, gratuitous pain which God could have prevented without the realisation of either greater good or greater evil (let us call the situation of *T*'s suffering from pain '*Pt*'). Let us also, for simplicity, suppose that *w* and *u* exhaust logical space for *de re* predications of *T* – that is, *w* and *u* are the only worlds in which *T* and his counterparts exist. Now, our intuition is that, in *u*, God ought to have prevented *Pt*, since God could have prevented *Pt* without the realisation of either greater good or greater evil. However, Almeida highlights, Lewisian theism employs the (B)-axiom: ' $A \rightarrow \Box \Diamond A$ '. Accordingly, if we apply the (B)-axiom to *Pt*, we get: ' $\Box \Diamond Pt$ '. But, if ' $\Box \Diamond Pt$ ' is true, then it

¹¹ See the Prologue, Paper 2, and Lewis (1986; 1968) for more on counterpart theory.

is necessary that T – or Tc – suffer gratuitous, but preventable pain.¹² Thus, were God to prevent, in u , the suffering of T , God could not prevent, in w , the suffering of Tc ¹³ – by the (B)-axiom, it is necessary that either T or Tc suffer preventable pain. That is, whilst preventing either T 's or Tc 's suffering is possible, the prevention of the suffering of at least one of them is not. Indeed, argues Almeida, necessarily, logical space is shaped how it is. Thus, Almeida contends: our supposition that God ought to prevent Pt is misguided – God's predicament is thence analogous to L 's.

Now, Almeida thinks that if he is correct, Lewisian theists can preserve both their Lewisian and their theistic intuitions: God – on this picture – satisfies theism's tenets, and the configuration of logical space – on this picture – satisfies modal realism. I now argue, however, that Almeida's argument is unsuccessful.

3.3 Problems for Almeida

Before I provide my own objection, I shall provide and rebut an initial objection, inspired by Kraay (2011) and Sheehy (2006).

Kraay (2011: 364) fleetingly alludes to a plausible difficulty for Almeida concerning one's gratitude towards God: specifically, in evil worlds, inhabitants are taught that they "owe their maker gratitude and praise for their horrible lives". Now, take T 's evil world u . Assuming T is a theist, T knows the divine attributes and holds a debt of gratitude towards God for God's creation of his miserable existence. T will also

¹² The argument in Almeida (2020) is a very similar argument to the one provided in this paragraph. Specifically, Almeida assumes the truth of 'possibly Pt ' and therefrom notes that, from our sacrosanct modal logical axioms, we get 'necessarily, possibly Pt ', and God is not blameworthy for something if that something is necessarily the case. The argument in Almeida (2020), although slightly different in form and content to the one currently under discussion, is subject to the same objection that I present herein.

¹³ Here, one may note that this counterfactual is a counterpossible, and so is vacuously true. For now, I partition such discussion, but later I discuss a connected problem for Almeida.

maintain this gratitude despite his knowing that his suffering was divinely preventable (assuming *T* is also an Almeidan) – indeed, according to Almeida, *Tc* could have suffered instead. Thus, we can ask: is Almeida committed to imposing a seemingly supererogatory burden upon the suffering inhabitants of evil worlds to praise God? That is, must theists in evil worlds praise God for their terrible lives? Certainly, *T*'s knowledge that his suffering is preventable would not sufficiently incline him to feel gratitude towards God. As Sheehy (2006: 321-322) notes:

...while it may be chastening for those whose lives are proceeding in a good or bearable manner that things could (so easily) be worse, it is of no succour to the suffering of an individual that things could be better, and indeed are better in a different world.

Now, there are two options here: either God deliberately *chose* that *T* suffer or He *randomly picked*. If God deliberately *chose* that *T* suffer – not because *T* deserved it, but for non-moral reasons that concern the shape of logical space (specifically, that necessarily, either *T* or *Tc* suffers) – it seems supererogatory that *T* praise God: the thought that ‘even though you chose me to suffer greatly, I must praise you’ seems objectionable. And, if, however, God just randomly picked *T* for suffering, again, it seems supererogatory that *T* praise God.¹⁴

This objection, I think, can be rebutted. Indeed, the objection appears not specifically targeted at Almeida; it appears simply a consequence of a version of a general problem of evil, if evil exists at all. If evil exists in the form of human suffering in the actual world, then actual world sufferers might ask: ‘why must we praise God for our suffering lives?’¹⁵ He ordained our suffering after all’. If this question presents a

¹⁴ Perhaps, in both cases, to blame God would not be appropriate; indifference may seem apt. But this would still seem bad news: necessarily, God is praiseworthy, and necessarily, His loved ones should be grateful for their lives.

¹⁵ We need not assume here that the actual world is on-balance evil.

difficulty for theists in general, then it is not surprising that it presents a difficulty for theists in particular scenarios, like *T*'s predicament. If this question presents a difficulty when evil exists in good/neutral worlds, then we should think that a cognate difficulty should arise for evil worlds. Perhaps, though, one might contend that a significant difference lies between on-balance and not-on balance evil worlds in terms of degree of evil: perhaps for extremely on-balance evil worlds, wherein there are no partially evil-redeeming features, the question 'why must we praise God for our suffering?' has more rhetorical force. But, I argue, this rhetorical force is irrelevant: I may legitimately ask, even if only one person suffers in my world, 'why must he praise God for his suffering life?'. So, if human suffering is problematic for our gratitude towards God in non-on-balance evil worlds, then human suffering will be problematic for our gratitude towards God in on-balance-evil worlds. I am inclined to think that if there is an answer to the former, an answer to the latter is also available. And so, whilst I do think the above question raises a difficulty for theists, I do not think the difficulty is specific to Almeida.

There remains, however, another objection to Almeida (owed to Kraay (2011)): Almeida's argument requires that theists revise their understanding of the divine nature. Now, Kraay accepts that if necessarily, evil worlds exist, God cannot be blamed for their existence. However, Kraay (2011: 364) argues:

This is a highly surprising and counterintuitive consequence for theism. Theists have generally held that no possible amount of (divinely permitted, divinely preventable) gratuitous suffering is compatible with theism. But on Almeida's view, every possible amount of such suffering is compatible with the existence of the Anselmian God. Accordingly, Almeida's move requires theists to dramatically revise their understanding of God. To the extent, then, that theists are committed to the traditional view concerning gratuitous evil and God, Almeida's view will be considered costly.

To assess Kraay's objection, we must distinguish between two types of gratuitous suffering. One way in which someone's suffering is said to be gratuitous is if that suffering lacks teleological qualities; that is, if the suffering is 'pointless'. The second way in which someone's suffering is said to be gratuitous is if that suffering is (metaphysically) contingent.

So, let us, firstly, construe Kraay's objection as concerning gratuitous suffering of the second variety. If we read Kraay this way, we see that his objection fails. Certainly, Almeida stresses, although *T*'s suffering is divinely preventable (since *T_c* could have suffered instead), the fact that either *T* or *T_c* suffer is not. Thus, Kraay – if the second variety of gratuitous suffering is at play – illegitimately moves from the claim "no possible amount of (divinely permitted, divinely preventable) gratuitous suffering is compatible with theism" to the claim "[b]ut, on Almeida's view, every possible amount of such suffering is compatible with the existence of the Anselmian God". For Almeida, the suffering endured in evil worlds is not deemed 'gratuitous' (in the sense of the second variety), since (Almeida emphasises) God could not have prevented any suffering in the pluriverse. Yes, God could have made *T_c* suffer and not *T* (and so from the perspective of *T*'s world, *T*'s suffering seems gratuitous), but the fact that either *T* or *T_c* suffer is not preventable (and thus from the pluriverse's perspective, suffering is not gratuitous). So, Almeida, I believe, escapes Kraay's objection, if we are to construe Kraay's objection as concerning the second variety of gratuitous suffering.

If, however, Kraay's objection concerns the first variety of gratuitous suffering, Almeida does have a problem, I argue. Now, generally, God is held to not permit 'pointless', non-teleological suffering. However, on Almeida's view, as Kraay notes (if we are reading him as cornering the first variety of gratuitous suffering), all possible

amounts of pointless, non-teleological suffering are consistent with God. This certainly seems – *pro* Kraay – a revisionary claim. Indeed, Almeida must explain why an omnibenevolent God created and sustains worlds of real, concrete, pointless suffering.

Now, there are two responses available to Almeida. The first is as follows: ‘There does not exist an infinite amount of pointless suffering. Recall that God could only save from suffering either *T* or *Tc* but not both, since it is necessary that one suffer, since necessarily, logical space is how it is. And so, the suffering of *T* serves *the point* of allowing *Tc* not to suffer’. Certainly, this response could be supported by Almeida (2017b: 6): “There is no...pointless evil anywhere in the pluriverse”. The second response available to Almeida is as follows: ‘There exists an infinite amount of pointless suffering (like *T*’s), but God cannot be blamed therefor, since necessarily, logical space is how it is.’ Certainly, this response could be supported by Almeida (2011: 8): “...it’s necessary that some morally equal counterpart (or other) of [*Tc*] endures needless suffering”. Here, “needless” reads like ‘pointless’. So, the first response asserts the non-existence of pointless suffering, and the second concedes the existence of pointless suffering, but asserts that God cannot be blamed therefor.

However, both responses, which attempt to prevent necessary revisions of God, I argue, can only be provided once a different, substantial revision of God is made. Kraay (2011: 364), then, is right about one thing: Almeida’s view does require theists “to dramatically revise their understanding of God”. However, their revision of God is not required for the reason Kraay cites. Specifically, Almeidans, who favour one of the two response-types above, are committed to rejecting God’s sovereignty.

Take the following intuitively true biconditional concerning existential dependence:

- (11) Necessarily, x existentially depends upon y iff x would not exist were y not to exist.¹⁶

Now, take the doctrine of divine sovereignty:¹⁷

- (12) Necessarily, God is the being upon whom all existence depends.¹⁸

A consequence of the conjunction of (11) and (12) is that were God not to exist, nothing would.

Now, recall (9): x is possibly F iff a world w exists such that in w , x has a counterpart that is F . On the assumption that w and u exhaust logical space for *de re* predications of T , (9) implies that T possibly suffers iff there exists a world in which T or T_c suffers. So, if the right-half of this biconditional were false, it would be impossible that T suffer. Moreover, recall: since all existence depends upon God, and worlds exist, all worlds depend upon God. And, finally, recall: modal truths depend upon worlds – that is, modal truths are parasitic upon, and so are less fundamental than, worlds. So, modal truths depend upon God.

Here is where my objection to Almeida lies. If God failed to create a world in which either T or T_c suffers, then by the biconditional for possibility (possibly, P iff

¹⁶ Some may object that, in (11), if y stood for God, then the counterfactual in (11)'s right-half would constitute a counterpossible, and thus be vacuously true. I think, however, that like with many intuitively meaningful counterpossibles, this result should push us more to reject Lewis-Stalnaker semantics for counterfactuals than to claim that seemingly meaningful counterpossibles are in fact meaningless. See Leftow (2006) and Davis (2006) for discussion of God and counterpossibles, and Lewis (1973) and Stalnaker (1968) for discussion of counterfactuals.

¹⁷ For support and/or discussion of divine sovereignty and aseity, see Plantinga (1980), Davison (1991) and Davidson (1999).

¹⁸ The type of dependence relation at play here, in the case of individuals, is causal. For abstracta, some (e.g. theistic activists) take the dependence-relation as causal (see Morris and Menzel (1986) for a defence), whereas others construe the dependence-relation in different ways (see Davidson (2019) for an overview).

there exists some world w , such that at w : P), it would be impossible that T suffer. That is, were T 's world u , one in which T does not suffer and were Tc 's world w , one in which Tc does not suffer, and w and u exhaust *de re* predications of T , then T would lack the *de re* modal property of possibly suffering – it would be, by (9) and (10), true that T necessarily does not suffer. Certainly, Almeida is right that *were* God to have created a world u , in which T suffers and a world w , in which his counterpart Tc does not suffer, then, by the (B)-axiom, it would be true that, necessarily, either T or Tc suffers (that is: Pt , ' $A \rightarrow \Box \Diamond A$ '; $\Box \Diamond Pt$). However, it would not be true that, necessarily, either T or Tc suffers if God were not to create a world in which either T or Tc suffers. But, here we see that Almeida's claim that *since evil worlds exist necessarily, God cannot be blamed for their existence* is problematic. For it to be necessary that evil worlds exist, God must first create them. Indeed, modal truths, for Lewisian theists, depend upon worlds; and, all existence, for theists, depends upon God; therefore, for Lewisian theists, worlds, and so modal truths, depend upon God. Here, then, we see that God's predicament is morally distinct from L 's (described in (8)). L 's position has been foisted upon him, and so L must choose between saving S or S' in the knowledge that either S or S' will die. God, however, creates worlds and so *determines* modal truths – that is, He determines that T possibly suffers or not. L would clearly be morally responsible for the drowning of either S or S' , if L put both S and S' into a drowning situation, and we would not consider absolving L from blame if L responded: 'but, in the situation, at least one had to die'. No, L , you put both S and S' into a drowning situation, when there was nothing outside you making you do so. God's position, however, is exactly this: He created T and Tc 's respective worlds – He determined the shape of logical space, and there was nothing outside Him that made Him do so. So, if Almeida wishes to retain the sense in which God is not blameworthy for His creation

of evil worlds by virtue of their being necessary (that is, if Almeida wishes not to beg the question against those in favour of rejecting (6) instead), and hold that there is an analogy between God's predicament and *L*'s, he is compelled to do the following. Almeida must deny both (12) and the Lewisian theistic claim that modal truth is parasitic upon worlds by taking necessary truths (like those concerning the shape of logical space) to be independent of God and more basic than worlds, and thus to determine which worlds God creates. That is, Almeida must deny both the theistic conception of God (specifically, God's sovereignty) and the Lewisian conception of the role of worlds. So, I argue, Almeida is committed to being neither a (classical) theist (through requiring a violation of God's sovereignty) nor a Lewisian.

And so, we can see that both the above responses to Kraay's objection concerning pointless, gratuitous suffering fail. According to the first response, it is necessary that either *T* or *T_c* suffer, and so *T*'s suffering serves the point of allowing *T_c* to not suffer, and thus there exists no pointless suffering in logical space. And according to the second response, the existence of pointless suffering is conceded but God is blameless, since necessarily, logical space is how it is. In both responses, we see that we are only permitted to absolve God from blame for creating evil worlds of pointless or non-pointless suffering if God Himself does not structure logical space. That is, we can only absolve God from blame if we think that the shape of logical space comes prior to, and so supplies the 'rule book' for, God's creation of worlds. This, however, incurs a violation both of theism's doctrine of divine sovereignty (expressed by (12)) and of modal realism's reduction of modality. So, in the first response, the only 'point' that *T*'s suffering would serve would be to realise the shape of logical space; but, given that theists believe that (12) is true and that God is necessarily omnibenevolent, we have very good reason to think that theists should not think that

God would structure logical space in way that allows T to suffer, even if T 's suffering serves the purpose of allowing T_c to not suffer, which simply serves the purpose of realising the shape of logical space.

So, I argue, Almeida faces a dilemma: either he must violate Lewisian theism's doctrine of divine sovereignty and its reductionist account of modality, and so he absolves God from blame for creating evil worlds; or, he affirms Lewisian theism's doctrine of divine sovereignty and its reductionist account of modality, but allows God to be charged with blame for creating evil worlds. Both horns lead to a revision of God (but not in the way that Kraay thought), and thus a revision (and so strictly speaking a rejection) of theism. So, theists should steer clear of Almeida's response to the problem of evil worlds on Lewisian theism.

But, here, Almeida may demur, and contend: 'Necessarily, evil worlds exist in the sense in which necessarily, numbers and the rules of logic exist: they are existentially dependent upon God, but there is no choice for God as to which numbers or which rules of logic exist. So, we can retain modal realism's claim that modal truth is parasitic upon worlds and theism's claim that (12) is true: worlds and modal truths depend upon God, but there is no choice for God as to which worlds exist. That is, similarly with how it is in God's nature that numbers exist, it is in His nature that evil worlds exist – and He has no choice over His nature, and so cannot be blamed for their existence.'

Now, one may initially think that a theologically problematic consequence lurks: 'If there is no choice for God over which worlds exist, and all reality is simply the pluriverse, we lose another important divine attribute: God's freedom. God, on this picture, has no freedom with regards to the shape of reality. So, whilst we may think that God is not free with respect to which numbers or which rules of logic exist, and

this may not seem so problematic, if we think that God is not free with respect to any part of reality, then God is not free with respect to anything. Lewisian theists, therefore, opt for this strategy on pain of rendering God unfree’.

I think this counter-objection can be rebutted. Certainly, theists do not wish to hold that God is unfree regarding the existence of numbers; even if it is not strictly God’s choice that numbers exist, they wish to claim that God is nevertheless free. *One* way that theists can divorce freedom from choice among options is by eschewing an alternate possibilities model of freedom, wherein agents are free by virtue of their selecting actions from possible options (which seems to underpin the above divine freedom counter-objection), and instead adopting a source-hood model of freedom, wherein agents are free by virtue of their actions arising out of or originating in themselves. If Almeida adopts this divine freedom model, he can blunt the above divine freedom counter-objection.

But, there is, however, a more crucial objection to the above response to my dilemma: Whilst it may be true that we cannot blame God for His nature, and so we ought not to blame Him for His creation of evil worlds, we can (and should) certainly think that His nature is not maximally perfect. For theists, however, God’s nature is maximally perfect. If we found in God’s nature an aspect that ordained the existence of infinite on-balance evil worlds of terrible suffering, we would most likely think that such a nature was not maximally perfect: we could conceive of a more perfect being – that is, one that did not have a nature such that the existence of terrible suffering is ordained. So, since theists believe that God’s nature is maximally perfect, they should not adopt the above response.

However, one may think that even though this response is not tenable, it shows that my above consequence for Almeida – that modal truth must be prior to God’s

creation of worlds if God is not to be rendered less than maximally perfect – does not follow.¹⁹ However, this is no gain for Lewisian theists, since I can readily concede this, and present my dilemma in the following way. If Almeida wishes to retain the sense in which God is not blameworthy for evil worlds by virtue of it being necessary that they exist, he must conceive of Lewisian theism in one of the two following ways. First: On Lewisian theism, God creates worlds, but the theory is not modally reductionist; modal truth assumes primacy over, is more basic than, or is prior to, worlds and God's creation thereof (that is, modality is primitive). So, ' $\Box\Diamond Pt$ ' is true in the absence of God's creation of the pluriverse; and given that the truth of ' $\Box\Diamond Pt$ ' assumes primacy over, is more basic than, or is prior to God's creation of a world u , at which Pt befalls, God does not incur blame for His creating T 's suffering-world u . Or second: On Lewisian theism, modal facts are parasitic upon worlds, and God creates worlds and thus the pluriverse such that ' $\Box\Diamond Pt$ ' turns out true, and His nature determines that He does so. I have argued, however, that adopting the first strategy towards evil worlds not only commits Lewisian theists to rejecting theism through rejecting the doctrine of divine sovereignty, but also commits Lewisian theists to rejecting modal realism through rejecting modal reductionism. Almeida's Lewisian theism, then, would be neither Lewisian nor (classically) theistic. And, adopting the second strategy commits Lewisian theists to a denial of the (classically) theistic view that God is maximally perfect. Whilst it might be Lewisian, Almeida's Lewisian theism would not be (classically) theistic. Thus, we have the dilemma: either God is blameworthy for evil or He is not – but if not, then, either He is not sovereign and modality is (at least partially) primitive, or He is not maximally perfect. Since God should be maximally perfect and

¹⁹ I thank an anonymous reviewer (for *Sophia*) for pushing me on this point.

not be blameworthy for evil, and modality should not be primitive, Almeida has a problem.

4 Other (7)-Denying Options

So, are there any other options for Lewisian theists who wish to reject (7) instead of (6)? I now examine and subsequently reject some plausible options.

The first option is to take the existence of evil worlds as consistent with Lewisian theism, but the permissibility of God's creating of them is not grounded in the necessity of there being evil worlds given the (B)-axiom, but rather in the fact that the net axiological total – the net total value – of the pluriverse is neutral or positive. That is, the creation of evil worlds is permissible, provided that, on balance, the pluriverse is neutral or positive. On this view, then, there will exist divinely created worlds of ceaseless delight, but there will also exist divinely created worlds of nightmarish suffering.²⁰

Now, as Almeida (2008: 140) observes, it seems that supporting the positive-net-value strain of this view is untenable. Certainly, such a view seems to commit one to an *ad hoc* rejection of the recombination principle. On the assumption that evil worlds exist, Lewisian theism's recombination principle (the principle that anything can and can fail to co-exist with anything else) seems to entail that if there exists a world w , which has n -value of badness, then there ought to exist a world which has n -value of goodness, if n -value goodness and n -value badness are generated from the qualitative features of worlds.²¹ Insisting upon the pluriverse's having a net positive

²⁰ Almeida (2011; 2008) notes and rejects this option.

²¹ See Prologue and Lewis (1986) for more on the recombination principle. I later discuss this principle in relation to necessary objects.

value requires one to deny, say, the existence of at least one evil world; that is, adherents of the view must hold that there exists a world that has n -value of goodness but its n -value-badness counterpart does not exist. Perhaps adherents will deny the existence of worlds whose net-total-badness-value goes beyond a certain measure – e.g. evil of degree n is possible, but evil of degree $n+1$ is not. However, denying the existence of one evil world to deliver a net-positive-value for the pluriverse seems an *ad hoc* rejection of the recombination principle: it seems that such a manoeuvre is only motivated by a wish to render God's creation of the pluriverse not just permissible, but praiseworthy (indeed, if the value of one's action is (intentionally) positive, one may feel that praise should be due).

But, I think, even if this does not require a rejection of the recombination principle, or if its rejection is not simply *ad hoc*, it still seems that such a suggestion fails to provide a satisfactory answer to the problem. Indeed, if someone were to ask 'how, on Lewisian theism, is God necessarily omnibenevolent if evil worlds exist?', and someone were to respond, say, 'because the set of worlds with total net-badness-values $n, n+1, n+2 \dots n+m$, has a smaller cardinality than the set of worlds with total net-goodness-values, $n, n+1, n+2 \dots n+m$ ', we would think this response was scarcely satisfactory: why should we think God would willfully permit evil worlds at all? We do not think that there should exist gratuitous suffering within worlds even if those worlds are on-balance good, and so why should there exist gratuitous suffering within the pluriverse even if the pluriverse is on-balance good?

Now, in person, Brian Leftow has suggested to me that positive-net-value-Lewisian theists may have a response, which avoids rejecting the recombination principle, that appeals to additional conditions for the pluriverse: the total value is positive, large and organic (i.e. it is supervenient upon the whole pluriverse). So,

positive-net-value-Lewisian theists might argue that the whole pluriverse can have a positive-net-value even if the good parts are exactly balanced by the bad parts. But, there is a problem here. On this suggestion, is it true that God is responsible for creating a world wherein there is gratuitous suffering, even if that gratuitous suffering serves the transworld purpose of delivering a net-positive value for the pluriverse? It seems so. But then, we can ask: would a necessarily omnibenevolent God create the net-positive-value pluriverse in which there are worlds of gratuitous suffering if there is an option that God create the net-positive-value pluriverse in which there exist no worlds of gratuitous suffering? It seems theists should answer 'no'. But if Lewisian theists answer 'no', then appealing to additional conditions such that the pluriverse's value not only be positive, but large and organic, will not solve the problem. That is, like my question above: we do not think that there should exist gratuitous suffering within worlds even if those worlds are on-balance good, and so why should there exist gratuitous suffering within the pluriverse even if the pluriverse is on-balance good, if God has the option of creating a positive, large and organic pluriverse without His creating evil worlds?²²

So, the positive-net-value strain does not seem to work, so what about the neutral-net-value strain? But there is still the problem of why God would create evil worlds at all. To reiterate the point I raise above, here is Sheehy (2006: 321) arguing that neutral-net-value-Lewisian theists are committed to a revision of God, since the view requires:

...a radical modification of our conception of an omnipotent and benevolent God which allows worlds of irredeemable suffering. In particular this benevolent God permits worlds with real inhabitants capable of enduring harms which are

²² If God does not have the option, and thus His creating evil worlds comes from His nature, we should think that His nature is not maximally-perfect.

worse than our own. There may be a world which is the best of all possible worlds. A God of modal realism has also created (or ‘actualized’ from the perspective of its inhabitants) the worst of all worlds. We may not care about the fate of our counterparts, but God ought to do so.

This seems generally correct: whilst Almeida’s proposal has the defence that God creates evil worlds out of necessity (which, however, in turn, requires him to reject (12), I argue), here neutral-net-value-Lewisian theists have no such defence: indeed, we are assuming God – ultimately – grounds modal truth (i.e. we are assuming the truth of (12)). Neutral-net-value-Lewisian theists, in the words of Almeida (2008: 140) (albeit using his words slightly out of context), will therefore “need some explanation of how a perfect being might [create] an [evil] world” if they cannot claim that modal truths determine God’s creation of worlds, or that evil worlds arise from God’s nature.

Now, I suspect one may contend: ‘From the pluriverse’s perspective, it seems true that if the pluriverse has a neutral/positive-net-value, God is permitted to create the pluriverse, since God is permitted to create something with a positive/neutral-net-value. Neutral/positive-net-value-Lewisian theists take the pluriverse as having a neutral/positive-net-value; so, God is permitted to create the neutral/positive-net-value-pluriverse, and so God is permitted to create evil worlds if they are part of the neutral/positive-net-value-pluriverse.’ This reasoning, however, is faulty. Assuredly, it matters how the neutral/positive-net-value is generated. If all worlds within the pluriverse had neutral/positive-net-values, my intuition is that God would be permitted to create the neutral/positive-net-value-pluriverse. However, if the neutral/positive-net-value-pluriverse were partly comprised of worlds which contained gratuitous suffering, my intuition is that God would not be permitted to create the pluriverse: theists affirm that no amount of gratuitous suffering is consistent with God. Thus, the inference ‘so God is permitted to create evil worlds if they are part of the neutral/positive-net-value-

pluriverse' does not follow from 'God is permitted to create the neutral/positive-net-value-pluriverse': how the pluriverse gains its neutral/positive-net-value matters.

Thus, I agree with Sheehy: neutral/positive-net-value-Lewisian theism should be rejected.

And so, I argue: rejecting (7) is non-viable. Thus, we can now ask: is rejecting (6) a serviceable option? If yes, Lewisian theists will have a way out of the problem; if no, they must choose to reject either (6) or (7) on the basis that rejecting either (6) or (7) is the less theoretically expensive option. I argue below that rejecting (6) commits Lewisian theists to revising neither theism nor modal realism. But, first, I shall discuss two plausible options for one who wished to retain the modal intuition that worlds that appear evil exist, but deny that they are, in fact, evil.

5 Rejecting (6): Two Initial Options

There are two options for Lewisian theists who reject (6): either they retain the standard understanding of what constitutes an evil world and reject their existence, or they reject evil worlds' existence but on a non-standard understanding of what constitutes an evil world. The first option is preferred by Morris (1987) (albeit not on a Lewisian theistic framework), which I discuss in the next section, and the second has not received any serious attention in the literature, and I explore it now.

Importantly, the second option does not commit Lewisian theists to a revision of modal realism; they can retain the recombination principle.²³ Indeed, take the recombination principle and two states of affairs: my making a stabbing action with a

²³ Although I argue below that Morris's denial of evil worlds also avoids a rejection of the spirit of the recombination principle.

sharp knife and a child. By the recombination principle, a world is generated in which all that occurs is my gratuitous stabbing of a child. On the non-standard understanding of what constitutes an evil world, Lewisian theists can claim that this world *seems* evil but its existence is consistent with God; such a world, despite appearances, is not evil. Thus, Lewisian theists can retain both the recombination principle and God's necessary omnibenevolence: God creates all worlds that would seem evil to us were they to be described (and thus we retain the modal intuition that evil world exists), but those worlds are not, in fact, evil. Kraay (2011: 363) claims that such a contention, however, "strains credulity". I now assess Kraay's claim by developing two plausible sub-options for Lewisian theists.

The first sub-option is broadly Thomistic.²⁴ Lewisian theists can assert the following: 'Whatever God creates is not evil, *simpliciter*, even though some of His creation *appears* evil. God, being necessarily omnibenevolent, is not capable of evil, and so even if He creates worlds which seem, intuitively, evil, they, in fact, are not. Thus, all amounts of what appears evil to us is consistent with God'.

This sub-option, however, is problematic, I argue. Firstly, it seems that we lose the sense of what it means to predicate omnibenevolence of God. Generally, when we consider God's perfections, we work from the bottom up. For instance, when I consider God's being maximally-good, I think of what it would mean to be non-maximally-good, or minimally-good, and I work upwards therefrom until I arrive at maximal-goodness; I work from the minimal to the maximal. Here, however, we cannot do that. If for some minimally-good agent, doing A would be wrong, how can we make sense of the claim that for a maximally-good agent – i.e. God – doing A is permissible, since a maximally-good agent can do no wrong? That is, if it would be wrong for me –

²⁴ This sub-option is inspired by Pike's (1969) discussion of God's inability to sin.

a morally imperfect being – to establish some conditions under which there is great suffering – perhaps, for example, I lock up children with almost no food and water – why should I think it would be permissible for God – a morally perfect being – to do a cognate action with worlds? If we cannot work from the bottom up, it seems our broadly Anselmian project gets confused; indeed, we can ask: what does it mean for God to be, in Anselm’s (1998: 87) words, that “than which nothing [morally] greater can be thought” if we are told that such a being does what we think is uncontroversially evil? It seems that we can think of a morally greater being.²⁵ Now, there are two senses of what it is for God to be maximally-good. First, there is the sense in which God is ‘metaphysically maximally-good’. Here is Morris (1987: 43):

On this understanding, God’s goodness involves his having, in some important and axiologically relevant sense, ontological completeness. He is held to exemplify a maximally perfect set of compossible, ontological great-making properties, construed along Anselmian lines.

But, there is another claim concerning maximal-goodness. Here is Morris (1987: 43) again:

On the other hand... there is the belief that God is good in much the same way as an ideal human moral agent would be.

Now, for Anselmian (classical) theism both claims are important. To make sense of what it is for God to be metaphysically maximally-good, we must understand what it means for us to be non-maximally-good. To understand how maximal-goodness is a great-making property, maximal-goodness must be construed as the most perfect

²⁵ In the Prologue, I note that the classical theism under inspection herein is Anselmian. That is, God is a maximally perfect being, such that (roughly) if some *F* is a great-making property/attribute, then God is *F*. Thus, if maximal-goodness is a great-making property/attribute, then God is maximally-good.

form of an ideal human's goodness (or, more generally, the most perfect form of the goodness of a rational agent); without these two claims, it seems our Anselmian (classical) theism collapses.

Connectedly, I argue, we have a problem for praise and blame: If we have a situation wherein God does A, and the performance of A is something for which, all things considered, we would scold a person, on this sub-option, we ought to praise God for His performing A. So, what is morally praiseworthy for God is not what is morally praiseworthy for humans. This then suggests that morality works significantly differently for God and humans:²⁶ for any action A, it is morally permissible that God perform A – not so for humans.

Some, however, have denied the second Anselmian claim.²⁷ Thus, it is perhaps not a deal-breaker for Lewisian theists. However, there remains a serious dialectical problem with taking this (somewhat) Thomistic approach: specifically, I argue, we lose the sense in which we can meaningfully engage with the debate. If there is no conceivable action that would count against God's omnibenevolence were He to perform it, since it is claimed that any action is consistent with God's omnibenevolence if He perform it, then we lose any grasp of the meaningfulness of the debate. It seems reasonable to think that non-theists will think that Lewisian theists are being *ad hoc* and 'not playing fairly' in providing this response. Certainly, if we were told about the divinely created pluriverse, and that pluriverse seemed (uncontroversially, from our perspective at least) to contain evil, we would think that, if someone used this (somewhat) Thomistic approach to justify this apparent evil, we would think that they

²⁶ Murphy (2017), however, argues for this.

²⁷ See Reichenbach (1982: ch7).

had not fully understood the problem or that they were employing conceptual trickery. This response, then, seems dialectically unfruitful.

So, we have the second option for those who deny (6) but affirm the modal intuition that seemingly evil worlds exist: *contingentism about good-world-making properties*.

Thus far we have assumed necessitarianism about good-world-making properties: the good-world-making properties are invariant across worlds. Contingentism, however, is the view that the axiological properties that make worlds good (or bad) vary across worlds.²⁸ If Lewisian theists adopt contingentism about good-world-making properties, then it is plausible that they can retain the modal intuition that seemingly evil worlds exist, but deny that there are any evil worlds. In worlds that appear evil, the good-world-making properties are such that those worlds are on-balance non-evil: so, all worlds that seem evil only seem evil in accordance with our world's good-world-making properties. The most plausible way that this is achieved is for God to be responsible for variance in moral principles across worlds.

This response, however, fails. Again, we are faced with worries over our Anselmian (classical) theism. When faced with an evil world, Lewisian theists can say: 'God decides what grounds what is on-balance good (by perhaps deciding which moral principles are true in that world), and so this world that seems evil is in fact on-balance good (since it coheres not with our moral principles but that world's)'. Certainly, if there exists a world *w*, wherein only bunnies exist and once they are born they endure seemingly gratuitous torture, and it is permissible therein to establish conditions under which bunnies endure gratuitous torture, then to be consistent one must not deem *w*

²⁸ Mann (1991: 253-8) discusses a strain of contingentism similar to the position under inspection here: *theological voluntarism*. This view is that God could have made different good-world-making properties than the ones that He actually made.

and thereby God's creation of *w* to be evil. However, this suggestion requires that Lewisian theists reject the second Anselmian claim: that God's goodness be understood as similar to the goodness of an ideal human. We – morally imperfect agents – think, for instance, that even if we could decide what the moral principles were in our world, we would not make (gratuitous) torture one of them, and so we think that God – a morally perfect agent – would not create moral principles, that govern any world, that render (gratuitous) torture permissible.²⁹ So, here, we lose the second Anselmian claim: the goodness of God is distinct from the goodness of an ideal human agent. Relatedly, theists also tend to think that necessarily, the moral principles are what they are, and part of the motivation for this is to avert arbitrariness over God's creating – or grounding – of moral principles. If, however, theists opt for contingentism about good-world-making properties through contingentism about moral principles, it seems arbitrary which moral principles God chose for our world or any world. This, clearly, has implications for the praiseworthiness of God. Assuredly, if I am told that God has created worlds in which terrible suffering happens, but I am also told that in such worlds, suffering is not morally relevant, I will find it hard to praise God for His creating of such worlds. From my world's perspective, He seems to have sanctioned evil, and from the pluriverse's perspective, His choice of moral principles seems arbitrary. Even if I praise God for creating my world with certain moral principles, I will find it hard to praise God for His creating worlds that appear evil from my perspective.

²⁹ One might argue that this presupposes that we are guided by principles independent of us. I am not so sure: assuming there are no moral principles independent of us, it seems possible that one can construct moral principles, and it is plausible that one would not make (gratuitous) torture one of them. Perhaps because it is within our natures that we have an aversion to torture. This might work in a similar way for God, if He decides what the moral principles are: perhaps His nature will drive His decisions, and no principles outside His own will help determine His decisions – the same could be true of us (assuming moral principles come from us).

Arguably, we should feel comfortable praising God for His creation of every world and thereby the pluriverse.

Therefore, this option, I argue, is non-viable.

Now, here one may argue: 'Instead of taking contingentism about good-world-making properties, we could take contingentism about the great-making-properties of God. We can retain the Anselmian contention that 'necessarily, God is maximally-perfect', but the properties that make Him maximally perfect vary across worlds. Thus, in some worlds, maximal-goodness is not a great-making-property and so God can be non-maximally-good in some worlds without this threatening His necessary maximal-perfection. So, in worlds that appear evil, the set of great-making properties of God in those worlds are different such that the maximal-perfection of God is not threatened.'³⁰

This approach also fails. First, the approach faces a dilemma. Let us assume that God's maximal-properties are modally invariant, but what is contingent is their being great-making. The problem is that even if that were the case, we would still have the problem of how a necessarily omnibenevolent God could create an evil world (even if being omnibenevolent is only contingently great-making). It seems that a maximally-good God would not create an evil world, regardless of whether it is a perfection to be omnibenevolent. Indeed, imagine that a maximally-evil being is the creator of worlds; it seems that such a being could not create good-worlds, regardless of what we think about maximal-evil's being a perfection. So, it seems that God's maximal-properties must vary world-to-world; specifically, He must lack omnibenevolence in some world for Him to create an evil world consistent with His nature. However, theists hold that if *F* is an intrinsic property of God in any world, *F* is a property of God in all worlds. That

³⁰ This approach is actually a rejection of (7), not (6): evil worlds exist, but God is not threatened by them, as, necessarily, in evil worlds, maximal-goodness is not a great-making property.

is, God's intrinsic properties hold necessarily, and this is guaranteed by divine simplicity. Here, however, we do not have that, and so divine simplicity is rejected. So, we have the dilemma: either God cannot create evil worlds given His nature, or His nature is contingent, but then He is not simple. We also have a problem for Anselmian (classical) theism: humans in evil worlds will find that what makes them more perfect is radically different from what makes God more perfect: in worlds where God is non-maximally-good and maximal-goodness is not a great-making-property of God, there will be a difference in terms of goodness over what makes us and what makes God more perfect.³¹

There is another option: necessarily, God retains all His maximal-properties such that God is necessarily omnibenevolent, but the conditions for His being omnibenevolent are contingent. So, for example, the will to create a world wherein babies are gratuitously tortured is not necessarily inconsistent with omnibenevolence. Here, however, we have similar problems. First, if, in another world *w*, God is non-omnibenevolent with respect to our world's (@) omnibenevolence conditions, but omnibenevolent in *w* with respect to *w*'s omnibenevolence conditions, and God at least partly satisfies *w*'s omnibenevolence conditions by virtue of His intrinsic properties *F*, in *w*, and at least partly satisfies @'s conditions for omnibenevolence by virtue of His intrinsic properties *G*, in @, where *G* is non-identical with *F*, then God is not simple; His intrinsic properties change across worlds. Plausibly, God's satisfying of *w*'s omnibenevolence conditions is at least partly owed to His intrinsic properties *F*, in *w*, and it must be that God satisfies *w*'s omnibenevolence conditions in *w* if God is to be

³¹ Another option is that what makes us better also varies across worlds, and so the second Anselmian claim is not rejected. Here, however, we still have the first problem.

omnibenevolent therein; thus, plausibly, on this option, God is not simple. And, second, we simply have the same problem concerning the Anselmian project.

Maybe, however, Lewisian theists could avoid the Anselmian worry by arguing that in all worlds where having F is a perfection condition for God, having F is a perfection condition for humans. However, having F is not necessarily a perfection condition for both humans and God; in some worlds, having not- F is a perfection condition (for both God and humans). Whilst this avoids a type of Anselmian objection that concerns the distinction between what makes humans more perfect and God more perfect in a certain world, it does not avoid the other type of Anselmian objection that concerns how actual world humans would think about a God whose maximal-perfection was not threatened by His will to create a world wherein babies are gratuitously tortured. Moreover, it also likely fails to avoid the divine simplicity objection.

And so, it seems we have exhausted the best options for those who wish to retain the modal intuition that seemingly evil worlds exist, but deny that those worlds are in fact evil. The options, I have argued, fail. Thus, I believe Kraay is right (2011: 363): retaining seemingly evil worlds but arguing that such worlds are not in fact evil “strains credulity”.

6 Morris’s Rejection of (6)

So, let us examine Morris’s (1987) rejection of evil worlds that retains the standard understanding of evil, and apply it to Lewisian thesim.

Morris’s position is summarised as follows: for Morris (1987: 48), God is the

...delimiter of possibilities. If there is a being who exists necessarily, and is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and good, then many states of affairs which otherwise would represent genuine possibilities, and which by all non-theistic tests of logic and semantics do represent possibilities, are strictly impossible in the strongest sense. In particular, worlds containing certain sorts of disvalue or evil are metaphysically ruled out by the nature of God, divinely precluded from the realm of real possibility.

So, adopting Morris's proposal allows Lewisian theists to retain, firstly, the reductionist account of modality and God's sovereignty in relation to modal truth, since God determines modal truth by creating worlds, where no modal facts are more basic than or 'come prior to' His creation of worlds; and secondly, the blamelessness of God, since the proposal denies the existence of divinely created evil worlds. So, we can ask: since Morris's proposal seems compatible with Lewisian theism, is Morris's view a serviceable option therefor? I now present and thereafter rebut the chief objections in the literature and some of my own, and conclude that Morrisian-Lewisian theism is not (at least) a prohibitively costly theory, and should be adopted by Lewisian theists.

The first objection is owed to Almeida (2011: 4-5; 2008: 140). Almeida argues that Morrisian-Lewisian theists beg the question. Here is Almeida (2011: 4-5):

Even a modest position on the deliverances of modal intuition urges that at least some possible worlds are on balance bad. Morris's position is that, for committed Anselmians [i.e. for committed Anselmian classical theists], the otherwise credible deliverances of modal intuition are not reliable guides to what is genuinely possible. But one of the questions at issue is whether anyone ought to be a committed Anselmian [classical theist] in the first place. And certainly our considered intuitions should play a role in delimiting possibilities for those considering the possibility of an Anselmian [classically theistic] God.

I argue that Almeida's argument errs slightly; specifically, it is not clear that Morrisian-Lewisian theists are liable to the charge of question begging any more than Almeidan-Lewisian theists are. Indeed, note that Almeida is committed to theism's truth. Note also that, for him, God creates all worlds. Here, then, we can turn the tables against

Almeida, and ask: if someone declared 'I have the intuition that there exists a world not created by God', which is certainly a modal intuition held by atheists, would it be question begging to respond 'but nevertheless God creates all worlds, so what you imagine is impossible'? Certainly, if this response is question begging, then we can equally charge Almeida with begging the question. Moreover, Almeida assumes that God exists necessarily and has all His intrinsic properties essentially – that is, He exists and has all the same intrinsic properties in all worlds. Again, turning Almeida's argument against Almeida, we might ask: is this assumption question begging, since some will not have the intuition that God exists necessarily and has all His properties essentially? It does not seem clearly so. Indeed, on the theistic framework, which both Almeida and Morris espouse, one is entitled to hold this view. Thus, I argue, Almeida is slightly too quick in dismissing Morrisian-Lewisian theism – if Morrisian-Lewisian theists beg the question, then question-begging can also be levied at Almeidan-Lewisian theists.

Here, then, is another objection to Morrisian-Lewisian theism: the problem of conceivability. The problem is as follows. The conceivability of some state of affairs, *S*, provides good epistemic reason to believe that *S* is metaphysically possible. Certainly, evil worlds are eminently conceivable – it is not hard to conceive of an on-balance evil, maximally inclusive situation. Since evil worlds are so conceivable, and the conceivability of *S* provides good epistemic reason to believe that *S* is metaphysically possible, we have good epistemic reason to believe that evil worlds are possible. So, Morrisian-Lewisian theists are committed to denying one of the following: either, they are committed to the general denial of the reliability of conceivability as a guide to what is possible, or they are committed to a specific denial of the reliability of conceivability as a guide to what is possible, i.e. in the particular

case of evil, evil's conceivability is an unreliable guide to evil's being possible. In the first case, we may follow Kraay (2011: 363) by arguing that denying "that our conceivings are reliable (if defeasible) guides to genuine possibility... seems an extreme form of modal skepticism", and, in the second, we may think that Morrisian-Lewisian theists owe us a non-*ad hoc* reason why conceivability as a guide to the possible is unreliable in the case of evil worlds.

This objection, I believe, can be rebutted by Morrisian-Lewisian theists. In the first case, I argue, the general denial of the reliability of conceivability as a guide to the possible is not as "extreme" as Kraay thinks. Certainly, we can conceive of many states of affairs that vary both qualitatively and quantitatively, and whilst our conceivings of such states of affairs might raise the epistemic probability of those states of affairs' being possible, this does not mean that our conceivings of such states of affairs raise the epistemic probability of those states of affairs' being possible to a sufficient level. Indeed, as alluded to above, atheists can readily conceive of worlds wherein no God resides, and one who thinks that God is not responsible for creation can readily conceive of worlds that are not created by God. Moreover, it is also, it seems, possible for someone committed to atheism to conceive of a state of affairs in which God exists necessarily. Assuredly, at least one reason why many debates in metaphysics are so interesting is that the respective metaphysical pictures of both sides of such debates seem eminently conceivable, even though the truth of one side requires the falsity of the other: e.g. theism versus atheism, simples versus infinite division, etc.... These examples demonstrate that whilst conceivability provides perhaps an epistemic push in the direction of something's being probably

metaphysically possible, denying that, in general, conceivability is a reliable guide to what is metaphysically possible is not as “extreme” as Kraay seems to think.³²

There is, however, a response available. Sheehy (2006) – in a separate but connected discussion – thinks that a significant difference lies between the conceivability of evil worlds and the conceivability of, say, round squares. For the former, we may think that evil is simply a matter of *extent*, rather than *kind*; as Sheehy (2006: 324) claims: “thoughts about extent seem possible in a way that thoughts about metaphysical impossibilities do not”. Thus, Morrisian-Lewisian theists will have to say that evil of degree n is conceivable and possible, but evil of degree $n+1$ is conceivable but not possible.

I think there are two responses here. The first is an insistence of the view that – perhaps – the *kind* of evil that would render on-balance evil worlds evil is important. Indeed, take a world that contains only teleologically important evil, or evil of a kind that could be explained via a certain theodicy,³³ and that contains such evil to an extent such that that world appears on-balance evil. Here, Morrisian-Lewisian theists may agree that such a world is on-balance evil, but they may claim that its evilness is of a kind that is divinely permissible. That is, when Morrisian-Lewisian theists denude logical space of ‘evil worlds’, they may say that what they mean by ‘evil worlds’ is worlds that contain any degree of evil of the gratuitous, pointless, non-teleological variety – or, more generally, any degree of evil of a kind that a theodicy could not explain away. This option seems available to Morrisian-Lewisian theists, and so

³² Now, it may be noted that there are several types of conceivability, and some may be generally reliable, while some may not be. This may be true. However, for matters of scope, I am unable to go into this here, and at any rate, my target is Kraay’s (2011: 363) claim that denying that, in general, conceivability is a reliable guide to the metaphysically possible is an “extreme form of modal skepticism”.

³³ For an overview of various theodicies, see Tooley (2019; 2015).

Sheehy's objection, if Morrisian-Lewisian theists opted for it, would not have any bite, since evil worlds could be said to be evil, not by extent but by kind.³⁴

However, even if Morrisian-Lewisian theists concede that a certain extent of any kind of evil renders evil worlds evil, they can still rebut Sheehy. The second response, then, is for Morrisian-Lewisian theists to note that, in metaphysics, the extent of something often changes the modal properties of that something. Certainly, Morrisian-Lewisian theists may point out that, in possible worlds semantics, what makes something necessary is simply a matter of extent; what makes God necessary is the fact that He exists to the extent that He exists in *all* worlds. So, on the possible worlds framework, conceiving of something's being necessary involves conceiving of extent – namely, the extent or number of worlds in which that something exists. However, if we follow Sheehy, and so we think that conceiving of 'extent n of phenomenon p ' gives one reason to think that ' n of p ' is possible but also gives one reason to think that ' $n+1$ of p ' or ' $n-1$ of p ' is possible (provided $n \geq 1$), then Morrisian-Lewisian theists should think that conceiving of 'extent m of God's existence in worlds' gives one reason to think that ' m of God's existence in worlds' is possible but also gives one reason to think that ' $m-1$ of God's existence in worlds' is possible. This, however, will not do. Witness what happens if 'extent m of God's existence in worlds' means that God exists in *all* worlds, and so God is necessary, since m = the total number of worlds. Following Sheehy, we will be committed to saying: 'because conceiving of 'extent m of God's existence in worlds' gives one reason to think that ' m

³⁴ It is worth highlighting that Morrisian-Lewisian theism may be able to render many conceivable evil worlds metaphysically possible. If Morrisian-Lewisian theists think that gratuitous evil is permitted, provided the world wherein the evil occurs is on-balance good or neutral, then our conceiving of many ghastly situations will be a conceiving of many genuinely possible situations. Now, I do not favour this view, but it is open for Morrisian-Lewisian theists to support. Moreover, if Morrisian-Lewisian theists adopt Murphy's (1995) contention that non-rational animals are not moral agents, then Morrisian-Lewisian theists can affirm the existence of worlds that contain terrible non-rational animal suffering.

of God's existence in worlds' is possible but also gives one reason to think that 'extent $m-1$ of God's existence in worlds' is possible, we should then think that conceiving that 'God is necessary' gives us reason to think that 'God is necessary' is possible but also gives us reason to think that 'God is contingent' is possible'. Thus, I argue, we should be wary of accepting that conceiving of 'extent n of p ' gives us reason to think that ' $n-1$ of p ' and ' $n+1$ of p ' is possible.

If, however, one objected to the above, consider an example in mereology. If we assume that physical objects are composed of atoms in certain arrangements, with a certain degree n of space between them, then it is conceivable that physical objects have a degree $n+1$ of space between their atoms. However, there will certainly be a cut-off point – that is, an extent such that going beyond, perhaps, distance $n+1$ between an object's atoms will result in a loss of mereological unification, and so an existential loss of that object. What this example demonstrates, then, is that (*contra* Sheehy) we should be wary of thinking that conceivings of extent give one extra reason for thinking that something is possible.

So, I argue, conceivability-objections do not seem to threaten Morrisian-Lewisian theists – or at least, they do not threaten the theory any more than they threaten other theories; indeed, the negation of (almost) any key aspect of (almost) any modal metaphysical theory will be conceivable. Perhaps, however, something must be said on behalf of Morrisian-Lewisian theists as to what is occurring when we conceive of evil worlds. Here is a suggestion. Perhaps, when we conceive of evil worlds, as Garcia (1984) suggests, we are inappropriately isolating a certain proposition or a certain state of affairs. Assuredly, a certain proposition or state of affairs may appear intrinsically metaphysically possible when it is assessed in (relative) isolation, but when it is assessed in conjunction with certain propositions or

states of affairs it will be clearly impossible. When we conceive of evil worlds (or of the distance between an object's atoms being $>n+1$) and think them possible it may well be that either we are not factoring in theism (or certain mereological principles or postulates or theories), or we are momentarily assuming that there could be violations, say, of God's omni-properties (or that the laws of (our best) mereology could be broken). And so, Morrisian-Lewisian theists may plausibly claim that when we conceive of worlds that they deny, in order to think that those conceivable worlds are metaphysically possible we must either forget God's necessary existence, or momentarily assume, say, that, in logical space, violations to God's omni-properties occur. Certainly, we can conceive of the laws of nature holding and still imagine their being violated – indeed, examples of this are frequently found in children's science fiction literature, Superman being perhaps an example, and part of what makes the fiction enjoyable is precisely the fact that the characters are 'defying the laws of gravity' or are realising some such nomological impossibility. That is, plausibly, part of what makes the fiction enjoyable is not that the characters reside in worlds where the laws are such that allow them to do certain nomological impossibilities, but that they live in nomological worlds but break those nomological laws.³⁵ Morrisian-Lewisian theists may contend therefore: what is occurring in the case of evil worlds, plausibly, is something like the above. Thus, I believe, there is good reason for thinking that Morrisian-Lewisian theists ought not to be as perturbed by conceivability-objections as Kraay and others think.

So, let us examine another objection. Almeida (2011: 4; 2008: 139) provides a plenitude objection by claiming that Morris "abandon[s] the *principle of plenitude*" since

³⁵ Of course, this assumes that the laws of nature are what they are not by virtue of the way things behave; that is, they are not merely descriptive, but prescriptive.

Morris denies the existence of evil worlds. Thus, Almeida believes that Morrisian-Lewisian theists will open gaps in logical space. Kraay (2011: 364) also seems to think that there is a sense in which there is a loss of worlds; he thinks Morris's view leads to "[p]artial modal collapse".

This, I argue, is not so clearly the case. Certainly, there is a loss of worlds relative to what we can conceive. However, we have seen that conceivability worries should not trouble Morrisian-Lewisian theists any more than they should trouble supporters of rival theories. Indeed, most (relatively) serviceable modal theories will incur a loss of worlds relative to what we can conceive: for example, those who believe that God is impossible will have a loss of worlds relative to what we can conceive – specifically, on either the view that God is contingent or on the view that God is necessary, there will be a loss of God-worlds. Of course, this is not to say that there could never, *in principle*, be a troubling loss of worlds relative to what we can conceive; certainly, if one adopted Spinozism – the view that there exists one world only – it seems that we have a troubling loss. But, it is to say that we should not be so perturbed by certain losses. Arguably, the loss of evil worlds is not so troubling.³⁶ Moreover, it is perhaps worth highlighting that the credulity that Morrisian-Lewisian theists might strain in affirming that 'necessarily, evil worlds do not exist' may seem just as troubling as the straining of credulity incurred by theists' claiming that 'in @, there is no gratuitous suffering'. If the strained credulity is not troubling in the second case, we may think it should not be so troubling in the first.

Now, concerning the charge of there being gaps in logical space opened by Morrisian-Lewisian theists, again, I think this is not so clear. Recall that Almeida-

³⁶ And note, also, that *pro* footnote 34, even under a relatively modally restricted theory, like Morrisian-Lewisian theism, we will have worlds wherein there is – perhaps – great evil, just the worlds are not on-balance evil, or the evil is of a kind permissible by God.

Lewisian theists think that they are permitted to avail themselves of evil worlds. But recall also that this can only be achieved if supporters are either to reject both God's sovereignty and modal realism's reductionist account of modality or to contend that God's creating of evil worlds comes from His nature. If, however, we assume the truth of God's sovereignty and take seriously modal realism's reductionism, then I still believe no gaps in logical space are opened. Here is why. The calculations performed by the recombination principle should respect the existence of necessary beings and those beings' essential properties. Certainly, one would not wish to say that a given modal theory was impoverished simply because within its model there did not exist worlds wherein, say, numbers or certain numbers did not exist, even though affirming that it be possible that there be no numbers or certain numbers would provide one with additional classes of possible worlds. Indeed, necessarily, numbers exist. The same defence, then, can be provided by Morrisian-Lewisian theists. The recombination principle's calculations should respect all necessities – this includes the necessity of God's existence and the necessity that He have all the intrinsic properties that He actually has. Thus, the recombination principle, we might think, should not deliver worlds that are on-balance evil, since such a world would require an impossibility – namely, the violation of at least one of God's essential properties. So, a modal theory is not better simply by virtue of it countenancing more possible worlds-classes, since if this were not the case, then a modal theory would be better, all things being equal, if it countenanced the contingency of, say, numbers. And so, when we factor in the necessity of numbers, we see that the recombination principle should not deliver a world such that therein number 1 exists but number 2 does not – likewise, then, when we factor in the necessity of God and the necessity that He have all the intrinsic properties that He actually has, we see that certain recombinations are not possible,

namely, those that deliver evil worlds. Almeida's claim that Morrisian-Lewisian theists open gaps in logical space, then, is not so obviously correct – indeed, even on atheistic-modal realism, not all recombinations are permitted; what is necessary should be respected in the recombination principle's calculations.

7 Conclusion

Morrisian-Lewisian theism, then, seems the least costly theory – as I have argued, the chief objections thereto miscarry, or are equally as pertinent to rival accounts. However, as a final point, it is worth noting that even if there *is* a loss of worlds, and even if conceivability objections *do* pose a problem, we must remember the question at the heart of the debate: *should Lewisian theists countenance evil worlds?* We have seen that many of the non-Morrisian formulations of Lewisian theism incur losses not just to modal realism but also to theism, whereas even if Morrisian-Lewisian theism incurs losses to modal realism it does not seem that Morrisian-Lewisian theism incurs losses to theism. Now, arguably, theism should assume primacy over modal realism for Lewisian theists, for God creates worlds and so modal truth ultimately depends upon God. Morrisian-Lewisian theists can affirm this – other Lewisian theists, however, cannot. Thus, given the primacy of theism, and given that Morrisian-Lewisian theists retain this primacy without any violations of theism, we should think that even if Morrisian-Lewisian theists incur losses to modal realism, their modal theory is substantially less costly than rival formulations of Lewisian theism, which incur losses to theism. Thus, I argue, even if my defence of Morrisian-Lewisian theism is not wholly successful, Morrisian-Lewisian theism is the cheapest option for Lewisian theists, and so, Lewisian theists ought to adopt Morris's position with (relatively) clear consciences.

Paper 4

God's Creative Freedom: Empty Worlds

1 Introduction

According to Lewis's (1986) modal realism, there exists a vast array of objects: cats, dogs, pure sets, impure sets, *etc.* Each object falls under one of the two ontological categories: concreta – wherein cats and dogs reside – and abstracta – wherein pure and impure sets reside. According to theism, God, amongst other things, is concrete. One significant difference between God and pure sets on the one hand, and cats, dogs and impure sets on the other, rests upon modal status: for theism, God is a necessary concretum, and for modal realism, pure sets are necessary abstracta; other concreta, like cats and dogs, and other abstracta, like impure sets, are (with some exceptions) contingent. Further, for any contingent object x , x might not have existed. For theists, given divine sovereignty, necessarily God is responsible for the existence of all contingent objects. So, for any contingent object x , God might not have created x .

For many, the universe is a contingent object. For theists, "God is a free creator of our physical universe: He was free to create it or to refrain from creating it; he was free to create this universe, a different universe, or no such universe at all" (Morris and Menzel 1986: 170). God's freedom, then, supplies grounds for thinking that God could have chosen not to create the universe; if He could not refrain from creating the universe, we may feel that His freedom was inappropriately constrained. Additionally, theists may think that God's omnipotence also supplies grounds for thinking that it is

possible that God not create the universe; if God did not hold the power to refrain from creating the universe, we may feel that His power was inappropriately constrained.

So, amongst the claims of theism lies the claim that ‘it is contingent that God create contingent objects’. This claim can be expressed as: “it is possible that God create contingent objects’ and ‘it is it possible that God not create contingent objects’”. Now, in possible worlds semantics, possibility claims are analysed through the possibility biconditional: possibly, P iff there exists some world *w*, such that in *w*: P. So, for ‘it is possible that God not create contingent objects’ to be true, given possible worlds semantics, the following claim must be true: ‘there exists a world wherein it is false that God creates contingent objects’. That is, there must exist a world empty of contingent objects: an empty world. Herein, I am concerned with Lewisian theism, and so the empty world in which God fails to create contingent objects must be ontologically consistent with modal realism. Now, the claim ‘there exists a world wherein it is false that God creates contingent objects’ is both a divine and a possible worlds rendition of metaphysical nihilism (MN): the view that it is possible that nothing exists, where the term ‘nothing’ is generally understood to concern a lack of concreta or contingent objects. Besides modal intuition and conceivability lending support for MN, we have a forceful argument in its favour: the subtraction argument – originally propounded by Baldwin (1996).¹

However, tension looms large for Lewisian theism: modal realism fails to accommodate MN. According to Lewis (1986: 73), “there isn’t any world where there’s nothing at all”. So, theism says that it is possible that there be no contingent objects,

¹ For discussion of the argument, see: Baldwin (1996), Lowe (2013; 2002; 1996), Rodriguez-Pereyra (2013; 2002; 2000; 1997), Paseau (2006; 2002), Efrid and Stoneham (2009a; 2009b; 2006; 2005a; 2005b), Coggins (2010) and Lee (2017).

but modal realism says that this is impossible. Herein, I examine attempts to render Lewisian theism compatible with MN, and find a solution.

Here is the paper's structure. In section 2, I explain why modal realism is incompatible with MN, and provide, following Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004), an inconsistent tetrad. In section 3, I provide a version of the subtraction argument, which bolsters the case for MN, and modify it to render it consistent with theism. In sections 4, 5, 6 and 7, I explore attempts to render modal realism compatible with MN, arguing that all fail, but one succeeds for Lewisian theism; I thence conclude that Lewisian theists should adopt, with some revisions, Rodriguez-Pereyra's (2004) account of empty worlds.

2 MN and Modal Realism

Let us see why modal realism is incompatible with MN. For modal realism, worlds are taken as *maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals*. For any individual x , to be part of a world w , x must be spatiotemporally connected (either) to w (or to a part of w). Spatiotemporally connected individuals are standardly taken as concrete.² For modal realism, then, if there exist no spatiotemporally connected individuals at a world w , there is no w . Here is Lewis (1986: 73):

A world is not like a bottle that might hold no beer. The world is the totality of things it contains, so even if there's no beer, there's still the bottle. And if there isn't even the bottle, there's nothing there at all.

² Later I discuss the notion that abstracta are also spatiotemporal.

This world-ontology, however, still allows modal realists to posit the existence of minimal worlds – that is, worlds that contain the smallest amount possible for world-hood. Indeed, Lewis (1986: 73) believes that there can be “just some homogeneous unoccupied spacetime, or maybe only one single point of it”, but – importantly – “nothing much is still something”.

We can now provide Rodriguez-Pereyra’s (2004: 685) inconsistent tetrad:

- (1) Possibly, there exist no concreta (MN).
- (2) Worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally related objects.
- (3) Spatiotemporally related objects are concrete objects.
- (4) Possibly, P iff there exists some world w , such that at w : P .

To demonstrate (1)-(4)’s inconsistency, witness what happens if each member of (1)-(4) is true. From (1) and (4), there must exist a world in which nothing concrete exists. From (2) and (3), this world must be a maximal mereological sum of spatiotemporally connected individuals, where such individuals are concrete. So, assuming that each member of (1)-(4) is true, we get the result that there exists a world, empty of all concreta but contains concreta. What then should be rejected?

3 Theism and the Subtraction Argument

Besides modal intuition supporting (1), we can also appeal to the subtraction argument. However, the argument’s dominant formulation (hereafter: SA), owed to Baldwin (1996: 232), is inconsistent with theism:

- (A) Possibly, there exists only a finite domain of concrete objects.³
- (B) For each one of those objects, it is possible that it not exist.
- (C) The non-existence of any one of these objects does not necessitate the existence of any other.

SA's conclusion is MN. The premisses appear, at first, unobjectionable. However, theism is committed to SA's being unsound. The problem is (B): *For each one of those [concrete] objects, it is possible that it not exist*. Since God is concrete, (B) must be rejected, for fear of rendering God contingent. So, how should theists revise SA? Here are some options.

The first option involves replacing, in (A), 'concrete objects' with 'spatiotemporally connected objects'. The hope is that by focussing on 'spatiotemporally connected objects', God will not be rendered contingent. Moreover, on this option, we avoid the complex and vast discourse on what constitutes concreteness.⁴ This option, however, is defective. Firstly, recall: for Lewis, for any individual *x*, to be part of a world *w*, *x* must be spatiotemporally connected (either) to *w* (or to a part of *w*). Now, whilst it is open to Lewisian theists to employ a different method for making God exist 'in worlds' – indeed, modal realism permits the option for theists that God exists from the standpoints of worlds, in the way that, for modal

³ Rodriguez-Pereyra (1997) contends that, since concreta have infinite parts that occupy infinite spatiotemporal regions, one can never arrive at a finite domain of concreta. This worry, however, is not of importance here.

⁴ For discussions of concreteness within the literature on the subtraction argument, see Baldwin (1996), Rodriguez-Pereyra (1997), Efrid and Stoneham (2009a; 2005a; 2005b), Cameron (2007), and Lee (2017). Almost all their attempts to provide the necessary conditions for something's being concrete are inconsistent with theism: for instance, their attempts often appeal to spatiotemporal location – but surely, theists assert, God is concrete outside His creation of spacetime. It is then, best that we leave aside the issue. This is also why I avoid the option of replacing 'concrete objects' with 'contingent, concrete objects'.

realism, pure sets exist from the standpoints of worlds – we may wish not to foreclose the option for theists that God exists in worlds in the way that standard individuals exist in worlds, i.e. as world-parts. However, if Lewisian theists do say that God is a world-part, then God will be rendered contingent. But secondly, even if one were to satisfactorily argue that God exists from the standpoints of worlds – and so leaving open the option of God's being a world-part is not a theoretical virtue – theists will still wish to claim that God is omnipresent. The problem here is that omnipresence requires God to be spatiotemporally connected to the world (although perhaps not 'spatiotemporally located' therein), and so arguably God will be considered a spatiotemporally connected object, and will thereby – on this revision of (A) – be considered contingent. So, the first option is defective.

The second option involves replacing, in (A), 'concrete objects' with 'spatiotemporally located objects'. Since God lacks a spatiotemporal location, He will not be considered contingent. This option, however, is defective. First, it is not clear that if we only have one/two individual/s in spacetime, where spacetime is relational and not, say, substantival, we have two spatiotemporally 'located' individuals. But that aside, it is unclear that disembodied souls, or spirits, have spatiotemporal location – but if they do, the sense in which they have spatiotemporal location will likely also render God spatiotemporally located, and thus contingent. So, it is best not to appeal to this option.

The third option involves replacing, in (A), 'concrete objects' with 'physical objects'. The hope is that since God is non-physical, He will not be rendered contingent. This response, however, is defective. The problem is that, plausibly, modal realists will wish to countenance the existence of non-physical world-parts; they may

think that non-physical spirits or souls are possible. Lewisian theists, then, will wish to be able to focus their subtracting lens onto such objects.

The fourth option involves replacing, in (A), ‘concrete objects’ with ‘contingent objects’. This revision, we may think, should be welcomed by modal realists, since they countenance abstract impure sets’ contingency. By shifting the focus from concrete objects to contingent objects, we may think that we can widen SA’s generality, as one could zero-in on the subtract-ability of a certain impure set, even if necessarily, subtracting its concrete ur-elements leads to its also being subtracted. This option, however, is defective. The problem is that there will not be finitely many impure sets – indeed, if there be impure sets, there will be infinitely many impure sets; thus, we will make false the revised claim of (A), (‘Possibly, there exists only a finite domain of contingent objects’).

The fifth option involves replacing, in (A), ‘concrete objects’ with ‘contingent ur-elements’.⁵ God is not contingent, and so is not a contingent ur-element – so SA will not render God contingent. This option, I believe, is the best. Firstly, it allows Lewisian theists to claim either that God exists from the standpoints of worlds or exists as a world-part. Thus, it does not determine which way God exists in worlds. And secondly, such a procedure provides Lewisian theists with a finite domain of contingent ur-elements, and thus the revised formulation of (A) is not falsified. Thence, Lewisian theists should replace (A) with (A*): ‘Possibly, there exists a finite domain of contingent ur-elements’. (A*) will then lead to a revised form of SA’s conclusion (MN), which will read: (MN*) ‘Possibly, there exist no contingent ur-elements’.

So, we can now run the argument. By (A*), there exists a world w_1 , with a finite domain d_1 of contingent ur-elements. By (B), a world w_2 exists, and is accessible from

⁵ In conversation, Brian Leftow suggested the ‘contingent ur-elements’ option.

w_1 , and its domain is identical with w_1 save that it lacks a contingent ur-element c , that is included in d_1 , and any other contingent ur-element whose non-existence is entailed by c 's non-existence. And, by (C), the loss of c does not necessitate another contingent ur-element's existence. That is, by (B), we can select a contingent ur-element c , included in d_1 , and subtract it from d_1 , thence giving us a new world w_2 , and by (C) the loss of c does not necessitate the existence of another contingent ur-element. Given that, by (B), w_2 's domain d_2 lacks one contingent ur-element that is included in w_1 's d_1 , and (C) ensures that the subtraction of c does not necessitate the existence of another contingent ur-element, d_2 – and thus w_2 – is smaller than d_1 – and thus w_1 . We can iterate this mechanism of subtraction until we arrive at a world w_{minimal} , whose domain d_{minimal} is such that, were any contingent ur-element of d_{minimal} not to exist, no contingent ur-element would exist in w_{minimal} – i.e., through a chain of accessible worlds from w_1 , where, for each world in the chain after w_1 , its domain size is smaller than the domain size of the previous world, we arrive at a world w_{minimal} with the smallest possible, positive domain size, d_{minimal} . By (B), given that it is possible that any contingent ur-element c_{minimal} , included in w_{minimal} 's d_{minimal} , fails to exist, we can infer the existence of a world w_{empty} , whose domain d_{empty} is identical with w_{minimal} , save that in d_{empty} , c_{minimal} is lacking. And so, by (C), since any contingent ur-element's non-existence does not necessitate the existence of any other contingent ur-element, d_{empty} is empty of all contingent ur-elements. If the accessibility relation is transitive (as per the characteristic axiom of KT4: ' $\Box A \rightarrow \Box \Box A$ ' – or: ' $\Diamond \Diamond A \rightarrow \Diamond A$ '), then w_{empty} is accessible from w_1 . But, since worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, our weight-loss programme for world-domains necessarily halts before size-zero.

Now, SA*, I believe, is persuasive. However, even if theists were not persuaded by SA*, they could make an appeal to God's attributes (e.g. freedom and omnipotence) to demonstrate MN*. (1*) – possibly, there exist no contingent ur-elements – thus seems well supported; so, let us examine rejecting (3).

4 Rejecting (3)

(3): 'spatiotemporally related objects are concrete objects'. Now, as Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 686) highlights, (3) is not something to which modal realists are beholden. In fact, and Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004) does not note this, modal realism – at least as construed by Lewis (1986) – is, I argue, committed to (3)'s falsity. The reason is as follows. Impure sets are abstract. However, for Lewis (1986: 83), impure sets are spatiotemporally "located". Here is Lewis (1986: 83):

Sets are supposed to be abstract. But a set of located things does seem to have a location, though perhaps a divided location: it is where its members are. Thus my unit set is right here, exactly where I am; the set of you and me is partly here where I am, partly yonder where you are; and so on.

Thus, (3) risks rendering concrete certain paradigmatically abstract objects, if Lewisian theists accept Lewis's account of impure sets; and so (3) can be rejected.

Now, one may contend that the way that impure sets are *in-the-world* should not be the same way that concrete individuals are *in-the-world*. Indeed, Lewis (1983: 39-40) provides three ways, and thence widens the notion of what it is, for objects to be *in-the-world*; specifically, Lewis claims that the *in-the-world* relation is a genus that has (at least) three breeds. Certainly, some objects can be *in-the-world* through all their parts being *wholly* in the world – i.e. they are world-parts (e.g. cats, dogs...).

Some objects, may, however, exist *partly* in the world, through having world-parts that are wholly in different worlds – i.e. trans-world individuals (if they exist).⁶ And some objects can be *in-the-world* through their existing from the world's standpoint, which is to say through their being members of the least restricted domain that is generally taken as suitable for evaluating the truth values of quantifications at the world – i.e. pure sets (e.g. numbers). Whilst Lewis does not claim that the *in-the-world* relation that impure sets hold is of the third breed, it is open to modal realists to contend this, and reject Lewis's account of 'where' impure sets reside.⁷ The contingency of impure sets, then, could come from their existing – or their being *in-the-world* – from the standpoints of only some worlds; that is, their existing only from the standpoints of worlds wherein their ur-elements are located. (Pure sets, conversely, exist from the standpoints of *all* worlds, and so are necessary). So, (3) might be retained by making this stipulation, since impure sets might not be considered concrete since they might not be considered spatiotemporally connected to the world (at least not in the way that they are on Lewis's account of where impure sets reside). So, my above objection *might* not be enough to reject (3).

Here is an additional way to reject (3) – or at least a way to revise (3). Recall MN*, which is an expression of (1*): 'Possibly, there exist no contingent ur-elements'. (3) should then read (3*): 'spatiotemporally related objects are contingent ur-elements'. This, however, may be objectionable to theists: it seems that if God is, what is called, derivatively-omnipresent in the world, partly by virtue of His being causally connected to all spatiotemporal regions of the world (the other feature often considered necessary for His being derivatively-omnipresent is His knowledge of all

⁶ It is worth noting that Lewis (1986: 96; 1983: 39-40) does not think that trans-world individuals are to be countenanced.

⁷ See Divers (2002: 87-90).

spatiotemporal regions of the world), then God is spatiotemporally connected to the world, even if He is not *literally* – or *fundamentally* – present in the world's spatiotemporal regions.⁸ And, if theists wish to claim instead that God is fundamentally present in the world's spatiotemporal regions – in the way that, say, my laptop, is present on my desk – then God will also be spatiotemporally connected to worlds. If omnipresence, on whichever one of the two above ways to construe the relation we choose, entails that God is spatiotemporally connected to the world (but perhaps not that He is 'located' therein), then (3*) will render God contingent. This is unacceptable, and so (3*) should be rejected.

Assuredly, one may contend that God is derivatively, and not fundamentally, omnipresent in worlds, but that this does not lead to His being spatiotemporally connected to worlds; 'He is connected to them, sure, but not spatiotemporally (indeed, He is causally and epistemically connected to the world in a way that does not render Him spatiotemporally connected to the world)'. This may be true; but we need not go into more detail here: rejecting (3*) does not solve the problem for Lewisian theists, I believe. The reason for this is that, according to Lewisian theism, all contingent ur-elements exist in worlds as being parts of worlds, and are thus spatiotemporally connected to worlds. That is, for Lewisian theists, all contingent ur-elements are dependent upon worlds, which, by (2), are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. So, (3*) is redundant if we accept (1*). (1*), the expression of MN*, is the thesis that it is possible that there be no contingent ur-elements. Once MN* is presented in these terms, it does not matter if we reject (3) or (3*) – we still have no empty world, since all contingent ur-elements exist in worlds,

⁸ For contemporary accounts of omnipresence, see Cowling and Cray (2017), Hudson (2005; 2014) and Inman (2017).

and are thus spatiotemporal objects; so, (1*), (2) and (4) deliver inconsistency regardless of (3)/(3*).⁹

5 Rejecting (4)

Bricker (2001) and Sanson (2016) advocate strategies that amount to rejecting (4). Let us, first, inspect Sanson's two suggested replacements of (4).

Sanson (2016: 60) highlights that for any (ordinary) possibility claim P , P is true "relative to a restricted domain", where that domain consists of worlds. Accordingly, the restricted domain will broaden or narrow depending upon the nature of the possibility expressed by the possibility claim under inspection: for example, for nomological possibilities, their respective truths will be taken as truth relative to the world-domain that contains all and only the worlds that have the same natural laws as our world. Sanson then asks: why cannot we simply install, into the available domain restrictions, a domain restriction that results in a domain being empty?

Here is Sanson's first proposal. Sanson points out that a simple way of obtaining a domain restriction is to focus on a certain object or a collection of objects, and then to quantify over its or their parts. We could then, Sanson suggests, use this simple method for domain restriction and apply it to modal realism's modal analysis, thereby expanding it to permit a domain restriction to the proper parts of an object or a collection of objects. Thus, (4) will read:

(4**) Possibly, P iff relative to some proper parts of an object or a collection of objects: P .

⁹ Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 686) makes a similar point about spatiotemporal objects.

Here, the ‘relative to some proper parts of an object or a collection of objects: P’ simply means: quantifying over the domain consisting of an object’s or a collection of objects’ proper parts, P is true. So, by (4**), MN* is true just in case it is true relative to some proper parts of an object or a collection of objects. Here Sanson thinks that this procedure of domain restriction is not unlike the procedure already carried out by modal realism: for Lewis, we restrict the domain to worlds and their parts, for Sanson, we restrict the domain to an object’s proper parts.¹⁰ Now, Sanson claims that modal realism will have to contain in its total domain – that is, the domain of all worlds – at least one simple if MN* is to come out true under (4**): indeed, if there exists a simple, we can restrict our domain to the proper parts of that simple, and that domain will, accordingly, be empty. This, however, will not be so: if it is legitimate to restrict our attention to impure or pure sets, we will have objects that (trivially) lack proper parts, and so we will not need a simple to render MN* true. I take it, however, that Sanson intends ‘object’ to be elliptical for ‘concrete object’, so I shall assume this reading of Sanson. On this reading, Lewisian theists are in luck: they have in their domain, God – a simple being. Sansonian-Lewisian theists, then, can restrict the domain, when evaluating MN*, to the proper parts of God – that way, MN* comes out true; God has no proper parts, which is to say that the domain is empty. So, is such a proposal tenable? I believe not.

Here is an initial worry. Firstly, Sanson’s proposal leaves much unanswered: if worlds are no longer important in our modal evaluations, what, for instance, happens to our account of propositions? Should they remain (*as per* modal realism) sets of worlds or should they be taken as sets of objects’ proper parts? It is unclear. And

¹⁰ Sanson affirms this in email correspondence (22nd May 2018).

secondly, one may worry that Sanson's proposal cannot provide an analysis of sets' modal properties, since I take it that Sanson is interested in making-true/verifying modal claims by appealing only to concrete objects' proper parts (indeed, if he were not, Sanson would not have claimed that his proposal, to make MN* true, requires at least one simple). But, these worries – I admit – are not forceful objections; they simply press the need for development.

Here, then, are two theistic objections to Sanson's proposal. Firstly, consider the empty domain given by restricting our quantifiers to God's (non-existent) proper parts. It seems that this would successfully deliver the result that no contingent ur-elements exist. However, what is to become of necessary beings under such a restriction? If we restrict our quantifiers to God's proper parts, we are left with no contingent ur-elements, but it seems that we are also left with no necessary being – specifically, we are left with no God. Assuredly, it is not true that God exists relative to the empty domain, since when we quantify over His proper parts, our domain is empty. If, through (4**), we allow for the possibility that God not exist, then we have a violation of theism. So, I argue, Sanson's proposal is unavailable to Lewisian theists.

Here one may contend that this result only arises if God bears the *in-the-world* relation of the first breed, that is, God is wholly a part of worlds, or of the second breed, that is, He is partially a part of worlds. Our total domain is the total set of worlds, and so when we choose objects to quantify over their parts, we choose objects that exist (wholly or perhaps partially) in those worlds. If, however, we take God as bearing the *in-the-world* relation of the third breed – that is, He exists from the standpoints of worlds – *and* we think that there exists one simple that is a world-part (which here cannot be God) which will give us an empty domain, *and* we think that from the empty

domain's standpoint God exists, *then* God is not rendered contingent by the empty domain; He exists from the simple's standpoint.

This response, I believe, fails. First, it is true that Lewis contends that one way to exist in worlds is to exist from their standpoints; but this is separate from, and entails nothing about, God's existing from the simple's standpoint.¹¹ However, even assuming God exists from the simple's standpoint, there are additional objections. It seems an *ad hoc* stipulation that we cannot restrict our domain to God, even if He exists in worlds by existing from their standpoints. Indeed, Sanson's proposal does away with Lewisian worlds in our modal analysis, and focuses on individuals' or at least concrete objects' proper parts regardless of their locations within Lewisian worlds; God, here, is a concrete object, and so it seems we should be able to restrict our quantifiers to His proper parts. But, if we do so, do we have God existing from the standpoint of His proper parts? It seems not. But if He does, then Sanson's original proposal concerning the emptiness generated by quantifying over the proper parts of a non-divine simple fails: the simple will exist relative to that domain, and thus the domain will not be empty. This alternative proposal, then, seems like the following, different proposal: 'We can retain the necessity of God if we simply include the whole of God in our restricted domain, so that when we restrict our quantifiers to the whole of God, we do not just quantify over His proper parts but over Him as well. This way, we will not render God contingent; we will have, in our restriction, God plus His proper parts.' But, this response fails for the above reason. This revised proposal for gaining an empty world would only work in the case of restricting our quantifiers to God. Indeed, if we

¹¹ An answer might be available, however. Worlds are, amongst other things, the objects over which we quantify to provide modal claims with truth values – the simple is such an object, and so we should think that the simple functions as a world, and to function as a world is to be a world. Thus, since the simple here is a world, and since Lewis notes that beings can exist from worlds' standpoints, it seems open for Sanson to claim that God exists from the standpoint of the simple. When discussing Bricker's proposal, I provide an objection to this type of response.

employed this revised proposal and focussed our attention on a different simple in our total domain, we could not gain an empty world, since, under this proposed domain restriction, the simple would be included in the domain. And, moreover, it is not clear that we retain God's necessity; when we focus our quantifier on, say, the non-divine simple, do we quantify over the whole of God as well? It seems not.

In response, Sansonian-Lewisian theists may suggest a different revision – they may say: 'We can retain the necessity of God if we claim that even though God is outside our quantifier restrictions, when we focus our quantifiers on His proper parts, He nevertheless exists. That is, He exists, but is outside the domain generated by our quantifier restrictions.'

This response, again, fails. Recall Sansonian-Lewisian theists' original modal analysis: 'Possibly, P iff relative to some proper parts of an object or a collection of objects: P'. In order to retain the necessity of God, Sansonian-Lewisian theists must develop some way of ascribing modal properties to objects that lie outside domain restrictions to objects' proper parts. To say that something is a necessary being simply because it exists outside a certain domain restriction will not do, since contingent objects will also lie outside certain domain restrictions. Perhaps, then, Sansonian-Lewisian theists could claim that God is necessary although outside domain restrictions to proper parts, since He exists outside *all* domain restrictions to proper parts and not just some. This manoeuvre, however, will require Sansonian-Lewisian theists to claim either that no simples other than God exist or that every simple is a necessary being, since all simples will lie outside domain restrictions to proper parts.

But, there is an additional problem with Sanson's proposal for Lewisian theists: restricting domains to items in worlds, and not worlds themselves, makes-true certain possibility claims that Lewisian theists believe to be false. Consider the claim:

‘possibly, there is on-balance evil’. Under (4), Lewisian theists could say that that claim is false: they could claim that since there is no on-balance evil-world (by virtue of, say, God’s nature), it is not possible that there be on-balance evil. Analysed through (4**), however, the claim will come out true, for surely there will be some degree of evil in worlds (even if it is necessarily subject to a theodicy), and Sansonians can simply restrict their domain to evil-affected objects’ proper parts. However, the view that on-balance evil worlds are impossible given theism, although rejected by some theists (e.g. Almeida (2020; 2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008)) receives dominance in theistic circles.¹² Thus, since Sansonian-Lewisian theists are committed to the truth of the evil-possibility-claim, they go against the dominant theistic view: this, then, presents a relative cost to Lewisian theists’ acceptance of the proposal.

I argue therefore: Sanson’s proposal is not available to Lewisian theists.

Sanson (2016: 60), however, has an alternative proposal that involves installing the following disjunct into (4**): “whatever is true relative to the empty domain is possibly true”. Sanson (2016: 60) is unperturbed by this procedure appearing *ad hoc*: if it is, we ought not to worry, he contends, since the truth of MN (or MN*) is not “one of the grand questions”. This indifference, I think, should strike many as surprising: what could be a grander question than ‘could there be nothing?’ or ‘why must there be something?’? But, such a proposal – I believe – fails, regardless of its possibly being *ad hoc*. Again, Lewisian theists will render God contingent if God is considered a world-part, since it will be true that ‘there is no God’ relative to the empty domain – and, if they wished to adopt a *from-the-standpoint-of-the-empty-domain* strategy, they will again face the difficulties I outlined above. But, moreover, and of general interest

¹² See Morris (1987) for a defence of the view. In Paper 3, I examine Almeida’s and Morris’s respective positions on the existence of evil worlds.

to all modal realists, such a strategy will make possible certain paradigmatically impossible claims. For modal realism, impossible propositions, like $\langle 2+2=5 \rangle$, are identified with the empty set of worlds. Such a set will have no ur-elements. So, the claim ' $2+2=5$ ' is true relative to the empty world-domain. Now, however, following Sanson, ' $2+2=8$ ' is possible, since whatever is true relative to the empty domain is possibly true. Thence, I argue, modal realists of any stripe cannot accept Sanson's proposed disjunctive analysis of possibility.

And so, Lewisian theists ought not adopt either of Sanson's proposals.

So, let us now examine Bricker's proposal.

Bricker's (2001: 44-8) proposal hinges on the introduction of a "null plurality" of worlds, modelled on the empty set. He recommends replacing (4) with the following disjunctive biconditional that appeals to plural quantification over worlds:

(4^{***}) Possibly, P iff at some world, at some worlds, or at nothing: P.

Let us examine the phrase 'at nothing'. Bricker notices that plural quantification does not operate in the null way – however, he believes that this is merely a problem that arises out of our expressions in natural language and not out of our understanding of quantification. Thus, Bricker (2001: 48) develops the notion of a claim's being "true at nothing", where a claim is true at nothing if and only if, intuitively, were no world to have existed, the claim would be true. So, the claim 'no contingent ur-elements exist' comes out true, since the claim is true at nothing. Bricker, here, believes that he avoids a problem I raised for Sanson's second proposal: namely, that such a modal analysis does not render impossible propositions possible. The reason is that being true at nothing is distinct from being true at no world: Bricker thinks that, for example,

contradictions whilst being true at no worlds, are not true at nothing. So, is Bricker's proposal of use to Lewisian theists? I believe not.

Now, as Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 687-9) argues, plural quantification does not operate in the way that Bricker hopes it does, and that any attempt to use plural quantification in the null way is nonsensical. Now, for what it is worth, I think Rodriguez-Pereyra is correct. But, in case he is not, here are my own objections.

Firstly, it is important to note that were Lewisian theists to adopt Bricker's proposal they would include a very different world-type into their modal theory. On standard Lewisian theism, worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. Bricker's proposal, however, not just allows multiples of modal realist-worlds to function as or play the role of worlds, but also allows, in the case of supplying a truth-value for MN^* , a very different entity to play the world-role; namely, *nothing*. So, what is playing the world-role to render MN^* true is something very different from modal realist worlds: it is not a concrete world, but nothing. So, Bricker's proposal not only requires a replacement of (4) but also a replacement of (2): only *some* worlds will be maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected objects – at least one other will be very different: the nothing-world. Thus, Lewisian theists, if they accept Bricker's proposal, must say that at least one genuine metaphysical possibility is rendered true not by some concrete world or even a collection of concrete worlds, but by something very different. So, Brickerian-Lewisian theists will have a messy account of the ontology of worlds, or of what performs the world-role.

Secondly, if Lewisian theists espouse Bricker's proposal, they will be committed to a strange form of divine world creation and sustaining: if nothingness plays the world-role to render MN^* true, then God's creation of this world seems very different

from His creation of modal realist-worlds. Indeed, it is not clear that God is creatively responsible for the nothing-world in the way that He directly is for modal realist-worlds. And certainly, it does not seem that the nothing-world is sustained by God, since what is there to sustain? Nothing. Thus, Lewisian theists will have to say something about how God creates and sustains the nothing-world, particularly as creating and sustaining normally require a *being* to create and sustain, but the nothing world is really nothing, and is thereby a *non-being*. Moreover, from this, Lewisian theists must admit that, *contra* theism, not all modal truths are dependent upon God; for even were God not to exist, nothing would still exist, and so at least one possibility would still be true: there could be nothing.

Thirdly, for Brickerian-Lewisian theists, it is not clear what is to become of propositions. If propositions are sets of modal realist-worlds, then the proposition expressing MN* will be identified with the empty set. But, the empty set is identified with impossible propositions. Bricker, however, does admit that MN* is true at no modal realist-world, although he distinguishes it from impossible propositions by claiming that the truth of the claim 'intuitively, were no worlds to have existed, MN* would have been true' is enough to render MN* possible and not impossible. That is, a proposition that is true at no modal realist-world is possible if and only if 'intuitively, were no worlds to have existed, that proposition would have been true'. This, however, will not do to separate possible from impossible propositions. If we asked Lewis 'do you think that, intuitively, were no modal realist-worlds to have existed, there would be no possibilities?' we would expect him to say 'yes'. However, we do not expect Lewis to then think that <there are no worlds/possibilities> to be a possible proposition. So, it does not seem that simply because some proposition intuitively would seem true to some were there to be no modal realist-worlds we should think that that proposition is

possible. Moreover, if Brickerian-Lewisian theists think that the claim ‘intuitively, were no worlds to have existed, MN* would have been true’ is enough to render MN* possible, then should not the claim ‘intuitively, were no objects to have existed, there would be no objects’ be enough to render possible the proposition <there are no objects>? If that follows, then Brickerian-Lewisian theists will be committed to saying that it is possible that God not exist (along with the other presumed necessary beings), since God is an object (along with the other presumed necessary beings). Perhaps more simply, one could demonstrate the possibility that God not exist by appealing to the following claim: ‘intuitively, were God not to exist, there would be no God’. This is not a good result for Lewisian theists; God is necessary, if anything is.

Thus, I argue: Lewisian theists should not adopt Bricker’s proposal.

6 Extending Lewisian Theism

So, let us now consider ontologically extending Lewisian theism to render it consistent with MN*.

One ontological extension of modal realism is suggested by Efird and Stoneham (2005a: 27), and involves positing a “null individual”. They highlight that in formal mereology, the null individual is considered abstract and results from subtracting an object from itself, and every object, correspondingly, has such an individual as a part.¹³ More specifically, the null individual is taken as the “intersection of two sums which have no parts in common” (Efird and Stoneham 2005a: 30). They then suggest that, if we accept that a world formed from the null individual constitutes

¹³ Of course, taking the null individual as abstract and contending that it exists in worlds commits one to the falsity of (3). But recall: (3) is not necessary, provided we alter (1).

a maximal mereological sum of spatiotemporally connected individuals, we can accept that MN is true. Moreover, for our purposes, we might be able to accept that MN* is true, if we grant that a world composed of only the null individual is a maximal mereological sum of spatiotemporally connected individuals: the reason is that the null individual is taken as a necessary being, since it is located in every possible world, since it is an improper part of every individual.

Now, Efrid and Stoneham rebut potential objections to installing the null individual into modal realism, one of which highlights that overlap of worlds is incurred and one of which highlights the null individual's bizarre feature of multiple-location. Coggins (2010), however, raises additional objections to Efrid and Stoneham's proposal. Here they are.

Firstly, Coggins (2010: 30) notes, it is a bizarre feature of the null individual that it is an improper part of every object. She then argues that such a feature is so extraordinarily bizarre and counterintuitive that she would rather accept that MN were false than accept the existence of the null individual – and, she argues, it is methodologically bizarre that Efrid and Stoneham defend MN on the grounds of its being intuitive, and attempt to account for its truth by positing such a counterintuitive entity.

This objection can be rebutted. If one were to accept that immanent universals exist where such things are multiply-located in a range of different objects, then the null individual could function in the same way. Indeed, Efrid and Stoneham underscore the similarity, in this respect, of the null individual and immanent universals. The null individual would, then, in this way, simply be more extreme than immanent universals: it is a necessary being and is an improper part of all objects. So, Coggins must explain what exactly she finds counterintuitive about the null individual: the degree to which it

is shared by objects? or the fact that it is shared *tout court* by other objects? If the former captures her aversion to the null individual, Coggins will have to provide a non-arbitrary red-line for the degree to which it is shared by objects such that going beyond that red-line is objectionable. If the latter, she will be committed to objecting to immanent universals as well.

However, one may claim that the second horn is not too costly: many reject immanent universals, and often because they appear ontologically bizarre. Here, then, is a more general rebuttal of Coggins's objection. Recall: Coggins highlights that it is methodologically bizarre that Efrid and Stoneham defend MN on the grounds of its being intuitive, but attempt to account for its truth by positing such a counterintuitive entity. This procedure of positing something counterintuitive to account for something intuitive, however, is commonplace in modal metaphysics. For example, it is intuitive that it is possible that I be a concert pianist. However, the standard ways that modal metaphysicians try to explain that possibility or ground its truth might strike anyone as bizarre: for instance, some invoke a platonic horde of sets of maximally consistent propositions (*pro* Adams (1974)), whereas others invoke an infinite plurality of uninstantiated properties (*pro* Stalnaker (1976)), where both modal theories require that certain abstract entities really exist 'out there somewhere'. Thus, the intuitive modal claim 'I could have been a concert pianist' will always, with modal metaphysics, be given an analysis that involves positing *something* counterintuitive. The relevant question, then, is: what work can the posited entity do? If the null individual can provide us with the things we want, then its bizarreness might be acceptable – after all, modal realism will strike many as bizarre, so the null individual might simply give rise to

another ‘incredulous stare’, and like with the original incredulous stare, the same method of rebuttal might be available.¹⁴

Coggins’s second objection, I believe, is more troubling. Coggins highlights that it is mereologically problematic that a concrete object is partly composed of an abstractum, the null individual. She also contends that Efird and Stoneham cannot reject its abstractness, since declaring its abstractness is part of their motivation for positing the null individual.

Modal realists may feel that they can rebut Coggins. They may highlight, as Lewis (1986: 83) does, that impure sets, which have as their ur-elements concreta, are spatiotemporally connected to the world, by being (literally) located where their ur-elements are located, and plausibly, if something is (literally) located in a world, it is a part thereof. And, worlds, according to most modal realists (at least), are taken as concrete. So, on modal realism, it is plausible that (some) abstracta are considered parts of (partly) concrete objects, even in the absence of an abstract null individual. So, Coggins, if she is to object to concreta having the null individual, construed as abstract, as a part, must also object to modal realism’s worlds having (some) abstracta – here impure sets – as parts. Since, she does not do this, Efird and Stoneham may accuse her of being *ad hoc* with her objection to the null individual.

This counter-objection, however, lacks general persuasiveness. Firstly, modal realists may object to Lewis’s account of impure sets by objecting to their being located in the world. As noted earlier, Lewis’s account of impure sets is rather controversial. But secondly, modal realists may contend that their worlds are neither concrete nor abstract or are both; that is, they may claim that the concrete/abstract distinction is

¹⁴ Of course, the original incredulous stare concerns *quantitative* parsimony. The incredulous stare over the null individual concerns *qualitative* parsimony. But, the method of rebuttal could be same: the addition of the null individual into our ontological catalogue is justified by the work it does.

either not exclusive or not exhaustive, or neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Thus, for some followers of modal realism, 'concrete' worlds will not have abstracta as parts, since worlds are neither concrete nor abstract or are both. They may think, however, that the same would be odd to claim of *all* individuals: whilst worlds might be neither concrete nor abstract or be both, it is hard to grant that *all* individuals are neither concrete nor abstract or are both. Indeed, there seem to be some paradigmatically concrete objects, and Efrid and Stoneham will have to say of these paradigmatically concrete objects that they are partly composed of an abstractum. Thus, the above rebuttal of Coggins's second objection should be avoided if one is to make a general argument against it.

Lewisian theists, however, may feel that they could satisfactorily rebut Coggins. Lewisian theists might use Efrid and Stoneham's null individual, but might contend that the null individual is a necessary concretum, not an abstractum. They may say: 'it may not be physical, but neither is God, and God is still considered concrete'. Now, whilst this would render MN false, since there would remain a concrete object in the world composed only of the null individual, it does not render MN* false: MN* is the view that it is possible that there be no contingent ur-elements – if the null individual, taken as a concretum, remains a necessary being, then Lewisian theists might think that they can avert Coggins's objection.

Moreover, here, Lewisian theists may think that they have the resources to rebut an additional objection levied by Coggins. Coggins grants that in non-empty worlds, the null individual is spatiotemporal, since it is connected to concrete objects, by being a part of them, that are themselves spatiotemporal. However, she argues, in the empty world, the null individual could not be spatiotemporal, since its spatiotemporality depends upon the spatiotemporality of concreta of which it is a part,

and concreta, in empty worlds, do not exist. Here Lewisian theists may argue that, if we take the null individual as concrete, and think that it could be taken on its own without it falling into nonexistence – that is, assuming the concrete null individual does not cease to exist when all (contingent) concrete individuals, all of which it is a part, cease to exist – then a world composed of the concrete null individual could be spatiotemporal. Lewisian theists may argue: ‘If we think that at least another, non-physical concretum, such as God, could be spatiotemporally connected to worlds (if not actually *in* space and time, but merely *connected* thereto), then it could be argued that the non-physical, concrete null individual could be spatiotemporal’.

This response, I believe, fails: how is the null individual concrete? Yes, both God and the null individual are non-physical. But this is not sufficient to render the null individual concrete. In the case of God, He is considered concrete partly by virtue of His causal power, His consciousness, His love, etc. The null individual, however, does not satisfy the criteria for concreteness that God satisfies. What criteria or criterion does it satisfy then? Perhaps its being spatiotemporal? This, however, will not do. For a start, Lewis and others do not think that that is sufficient for something’s being concrete – recall, for Lewis, impure sets. How, then, is the null individual concrete? It does not seem that the null individual satisfies standard criteria for concreteness; thus, Lewisian theists sympathetic to this response to Coggins must claim, in a way that is not *ad hoc*, that the null individual is a *sui generis* concrete entity – this seems a tall order. Thus, Coggins’s objection stands.

Perhaps, however, the bizarreness incurred by claiming that paradigmatically concrete objects are partly composed of abstracta, is not enough to dissuade Lewisian theists from adopting the proposal. There are, however, some theistic concerns Lewisian theists might raise over the null individual. The first I believe can be rebutted,

however the second poses a significant threat, and the method of the rebuttal of the first gives rise to the second.

Firstly, according to theism, God is responsible for all existence. However, since the existence of the null individual is not dependent upon the existence of concreta – indeed, concreta can be subtracted without the null individual ceasing to exist – then the theist may feel that if he were to adopt Efid and Stoneham’s proposal, he would then commit himself to the falsity of God’s sovereignty, which would be to commit himself to the falsity of (classical) theism, since the existence of at least one individual would not be dependent upon God.¹⁵

Now, I believe this concern may be unjustified. Certainly, it is true that many concrete objects can cease to exist without other abstract necessary beings ceasing to exist; I can cease to exist without, say, numbers ceasing to exist. However, given God’s sovereignty, were God not to exist, numbers would not exist, since we should think that God sustains all existence. God and other concrete beings are different in terms of what depends upon them. Thus, whilst it may be true that other concreta can cease to exist without the extinguishing of their null individual-parts, this may not be true of God: thus, if God were to perish, we have reason to think that so would the null individual.¹⁶

This response, however, whilst it may allow Lewisian theists to answer the above concern, leads to the second concern: If the null individual were to cease to exist upon God’s ceasing to exist, and plausibly this is due to God’s sustaining activity, and the null individual is a part of God, then God is not a simple being; that is, the

¹⁵ Of course, one may contend that other necessary objects seem not dependent upon God as well: one may think that, say, numbers necessarily exist, but are not dependent upon God. This view, however, I take as being antithetical to theism: theists wish to say that *all* existence is dependent upon God, without exception.

¹⁶ This is a counterpossible, but I use it only as a conceptual tool.

doctrine of divine simplicity is denied. However, the doctrine of divine simplicity is central to theism. Thus, God's having His part, the null individual, violates theism by violating God's simplicity. But, why might this be a problem for theists? – that is, why must theists find God's having the null individual as a part objectionable, since after all, the null individual is a very different sort of part from, say, an arm or a leg? The problem is that if some x is a part of God, then God will depend upon x in the way that any composite will depend upon its parts. Since God will depend upon His null individual-part, He will thus be distinct from His null individual-part. So, we see that the dependency relation gained by affirming God's sovereignty over the null individual is in fact a *co-dependency* relation. The null individual depends upon God, but God depends upon the null individual. So, sovereignty motivates theists to claim that the null individual is dependent upon God, but the motivation is later undercut since God would then depend upon the null individual. This result is unacceptable for Lewisian theists: whilst theists get sovereignty, they do not get aseity: God will depend upon something for His existence. Thus, I argue: Lewisian theists ought not adopt Efrid and Stoneham's proposal.

Let us then examine another proposal.

Efrid and Stoneham (2005a: 28-30) suggest that modal realists can avail themselves of abstract spacetime points to render MN true. Specifically, Efrid and Stoneham (2005a: 28) suggest that there is nothing in modal realism that conflicts with MN, since it "is consistent with there being worlds consisting of only spatiotemporal points, which we may call 'STP worlds'", and, they contend, an STP world is an empty world, since spacetime points are abstract. Lewisian theists may hope to use Efrid and Stoneham's proposal to render MN* true: they may claim that, since spacetime points

exist in all worlds, since God necessarily creates them, they are necessary beings, and so cannot be considered contingent ur-elements.

Efird and Stoneham's proposal, however, incurs an ontological cost.¹⁷ Note that the only abstracta to exist in Lewisian theism are pure and impure sets. Here, however, spacetime points cannot fall into either category – and, nor do they behave like universals, since universals are instantiated by concreta. Thus, if Lewisian theists adopt the proposal, they would have to install an additional ontological category into their modal theory. Now, incurring this cost, it *may* be argued, is a price worth paying, if it gets us what we want. Thus, more substantive objections are required if we are to have a more generally persuasive rebuttal of Efird and Stoneham's proposal.¹⁸

Coggins (2010), however, provides an objection to proposals like Efird and Stoneham's. Coggins (2010: 33) contends that proposals of this type are ontologically bizarre: if what contains concreta – here spacetime points – is something abstract, then – she contends – “it is hard to know how” such things contain concreta. Coggins notes that we can make sense of the notion that some abstracta, like universals, can be instantiated by concreta, and that impure sets have concreta as their ur-elements; however, she cannot make sense of the notion that abstracta *contain* or perhaps *lock into place* concreta.

Now, whilst I am sympathetic to Coggins's objection, it is worth highlighting that the occupation relation that binds objects to spatiotemporal regions is often primitively construed. That is, it is standardly taken as just primitively true that objects occupy

¹⁷ Now, Efird and Stoneham (2005a) highlight a methodological cost of this proposal – namely, that one must contend either that the STP world with the smallest domain contains a single spacetime point or that the STP world with the smallest domain contains at least two spacetime points. Incurring certain methodological costs, however, *may* be a price worth paying for Lewisian theists if they think that positing STP worlds allows them to render MN* true. See Efird and Stoneham (2005a) for more.

¹⁸ This is not to say, however, that I do not find the above to be a significant cost.

spatiotemporal regions. Thus, again, a more substantive objection is required to render Efid and Stoneham's proposal unserviceable for Lewisian theists.

Here, then, is one. STP worlds, according to Efid and Stoneham, can consist of more or fewer spacetime points (provided that, following Efid and Stoneham, the smallest world either consists of one or two spacetime points). If, however, we can subtract spacetime points, and their subtraction does not necessitate the existence of other spacetime points, then we should feel that we ought to have a world wherein no spacetime points exist.¹⁹

Here, the defender of STP worlds might contend that the subtraction argument cannot be run on spacetime points, since, firstly, infinite spatial division might be true, and so there could not exist a finite domain of spacetime points, but secondly, spacetime points are necessary beings, and the subtraction argument has been altered to focus upon contingent ur-elements. Now, one may initially feel that the latter can be easily rebutted. One may claim: 'it is not true that spacetime points are necessary beings – what is true is that it is necessary that there be spacetime points'. This, accordingly, is a different claim: one might think like Lewis when he contends that all concreta are contingent, but also think that it is necessary that there be concreta. Thus, spacetime points should be taken as contingent ur-elements. This rebuttal, however, will not do: whilst it may be true that each spacetime point could be subtracted, this rebuttal will prevent the subtraction argument from delivering the empty world, since necessarily, there will be spacetime points.

However, Lewisian theists have the resources to dismiss the second point, which also allows us to dismiss the first point, I argue. Certainly, theists should wish to say that 'it is possible that God not create spacetime points'. Saying that it is

¹⁹ Lee (2017) also makes this contention.

necessary that God create spacetime points seems to shackle God's omnipotence, and by claiming that it is simply in His nature that He create spacetime points seems unjustified. Thus, even if one were to claim that we cannot run the subtraction argument on spacetime points, since perhaps we cannot have a finite number of them, Lewisian theists can simply appeal to the omnipotence of God to indicate that spacetime points should not exist by necessity. And, what is more, this argument could also be employed were one to make the move to ontologically re-construe spacetime points as concrete, instead of abstract.

Thus, I argue, Lewisian theists ought not adopt Efrid and Stoneham's proposal.

Let us, then, examine another proposal.

Lewisian theists may feel that an empty world could be gained if they followed Leftow's (2012: 111, fn33) suggestion, and posited the existence of a wholly non-substantival world, wherein a non-substantival vacuum is surrounded by physical, spatiotemporal parts. Here, if we restrict our attention to this 'in-world' (purported) possibility, that is, the vacuum, then MN* will come out as true, since, in the vacuum, there will be no contingent ur-elements.

This suggestion, however, faces problems. First, we have a problem concerning world-unification. What unifies worlds is spatiotemporal connectedness. But, the vacuum is not spatiotemporally connected to anything. If the vacuum is not spatiotemporally connected to anything in a world, then it is not a part of that world. To be part of a world is to be spatiotemporally connected to a world. It seems, then, that the vacuum is simply outside worlds. Once we get to the start of the vacuum, we have come to the edge of a world. So, at best, it is unclear how such a vacuum could be considered a world-part, if within the vacuum there were no spatiotemporal relations. But, assuming that some account could be given concerning its world-

parthood, there is an additional problem. The problem rests upon the legitimacy of domain restriction. Recall a problem facing Lewisian theists if they adopt Sanson's first proposal: *restricting domains to items in worlds, and not worlds themselves, makes true certain possibility claims that Lewisian theists should wish to be false. Consider the claim: 'possibly, there is on-balance evil'. Under (4), Lewisian theists could say that that claim is false: they could claim that since there is no on-balance evil-world (by virtue of, say, God's omni-properties of omnibenevolence, omniscience and omnipotence), it is not possible that there be on-balance evil.* Now, many theists (and certainly Leftow) wish to say that on-balance evil is impossible, but if we allow restrictions to in-world items then we can say that it is possible that God create on-balance evil, for surely there will be some evil in worlds and we can just restrict our attention to that evil, ignoring the other evil-offsetting goods within that world. And, crucially, it is unclear – at best – how defenders of either of these suggestions is to allow a restriction in the case of vacuums but disallow it in the case of evil and their response not be *ad hoc*. So, Lewisian theists, I argue, should reject Leftow's suggestion.²⁰

7 Rejecting (2)

So, since extensions to Lewisian theism are untenable, let us examine rejecting (2).

The two chief proposals of this sort are owed to Oppy (2009) and Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004). Both proposals hope to alter modal realism's account of worlds whilst staying within the spirit thereof.

²⁰ Now, there are some theists, as I mentioned earlier, who may not find this result troubling (e.g. Almeida (2020; 2017a; 2017b; 2011; 2008)). However, such persons will be in a significant minority; hence, I take it that such a Leftow-esque procedure will appeal to few Lewisian theists.

Oppy (2009: 431) contends that, on Lewisian theism, worlds are not maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, but instead are maximal mereological sums wherein at most one part is a modal realist-world. Specifically:

(2*) Oppy-worlds are maximal mereological sums consisting of a modal realist-world and/or God.

Oppy (2009: 431), then, hopes to deliver an empty world by this revision of Lewisian theism: the empty world is simply an Oppy-world wherein the modal realist-part is absent, but God remains. Thus, using Oppy's proposed account of worlds, Lewisian theism can render MN* true: there will be a world wherein no contingent ur-elements exist, but God remains.

Now, Davis (2009) levies an objection against Oppy's proposal. Davis (2009: 440) highlights that worlds exist by necessity. This means – he thinks – that each modal realist-world will have a counterpart that exists in all worlds. But, the empty world does not have this part. So, it is not possible that we have an empty world on Oppy's account, since the modal realist-world-part of the empty Oppy-world is missing.

This objection, I believe, fails. Davis has incorrectly understood both Oppy's account of worlds and what Lewisian theists wish to say. Lewisian theists wish to say that MN* is true. On Oppy's proposal, we can render MN* true by excluding from an Oppy-world the modal realist-world-part, but retaining God. That is, Lewisian theists wish to say that a modal realist-world-part is not necessary. Lewisian theists can do this, on Oppy's proposal, since at most one part of an Oppy-world is a modal realist-world (a contingent world-part), and the other part is God (a necessary world-part). So, on Oppy's proposal, worlds would still exist by necessity – just worlds are not

modal realist-worlds, they are Oppy-worlds, wherein modal realist-worlds are *at most* a part but can fail to exist. So, *contra* Davis, Lewisian theists want to say that there exists a world that lacks a counterpart of a modal realist-world (where the counterpart relation is standardly understood), but that God remains. So, I argue, Davis's objection miscarries.

Despite this, however, I argue: Oppy's proposal will ultimately not satisfy Lewisian theists. Here is why. Firstly, the way that such an empty Oppy-world would depend upon God would be very different from the way that a non-empty-Oppy-world would depend upon God. If, for instance, God creates non-empty-Oppy-worlds, those worlds would creatively depend upon God. However, in the case of the empty world, that world would not creatively depend upon God. Thus, the dependency relation would not be a creative one – that is, it would not come from His will, since if it were to, God would will Himself into existence (indeed, the empty-Oppy-world is just God). So, Lewisian theists can, at most, claim that *only some* worlds come into existence through God's will. One consequence of this, besides it providing a messy picture of how worlds come to exist, is that at least one modal fact would not arise from God's freedom: i.e., that MN* is possible.²¹ Other modal facts, however, would clearly arise from God's freedom: the modal facts that are grounded in the concrete existence of a part of Oppy-worlds – namely, modal realist-worlds – that God creatively brings into existence. This will, I believe, strike many Lewisian theists as unacceptable.

Now, Oppy's proposal leads to an interesting question: at the empty Oppy-world, do pure sets exist from God's standpoint? If not, it is not necessary that pure

²¹ One may think that, on standard Lewisian theism, other modal facts do not arise from God's freedom (for example, His necessary existence), and so why is this an issue for Oppy-worlds? This is not so: on standard Lewisian theism, God is the delimiter of all possibilities through His creating of modal realist worlds. This includes His necessary existence – to think it does not is to think that modal truths do not depend upon worlds.

sets exist from the standpoints of worlds, and thus there is contingency about how pure sets exist in worlds. Perhaps pure sets exist from God's standpoint in the empty Oppy-world; but there is another option: to construe worlds such that pure sets exist within worlds. This forms part of Rodriguez-Pereyra's rejection of (2).

Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004) contends that modal realists should alter the characterisation of worlds such that a world w_{pure} exists wherein only pure sets exist. That way, MN will be true, and there will be no ontological costs incurred by positing w_{pure} , since pure sets are admitted into standard modal realism anyway. Lewisian theists can then hope to use Rodriguez-Pereyra's proposal to render MN* true: since pure sets are not contingent ur-elements, but necessary existents, we will have a world w_{pure} wherein no contingent ur-elements exist. Let us explore the proposal.

Recall: for modal realism, pure sets exist from the standpoints of worlds. Rodriguez-Pereyra contends that we can gain w_{pure} by altering the relation that pure sets bear to worlds. Specifically, pure sets, says Rodriguez-Pereyra, should exist *in*, and not merely from the *standpoints* of, worlds. To allow for this, Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 694) provides his characterisation of worlds:

(2**) A world is a collection of a maximal sum* and its set-theoretical expansion.²²

Here, Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 693) claims that some S constitutes a sum* just in case "(a) S is a sum of memberless entities and (b) if S consists of at least two entities,

²² The kind of 'collection' here, Rodriguez-Pereyra thinks, may be proper classes, or sums or pluralities. This does not concern us, however.

then everything in S is spatiotemporally related to every other thing in S ". Accordingly, Rodriguez- Pereyra (2004: 693-4) thinks that the empty set $\emptyset$ constitutes a sum*:

For $\emptyset + \emptyset$ is a sum*: condition (a) holds because $\emptyset + \emptyset$ is a sum of memberless entities, and condition (b) holds because its antecedent is false, since $\emptyset + \emptyset$ is a sum of only one entity. But $\emptyset + \emptyset = \emptyset$. Therefore, the empty set is a sum*.

Moreover, $\emptyset$ qualifies as a maximal sum*, since, as Rodriguez- Pereyra (2004: 694) notes:

...the empty set is not spatiotemporally related to anything. So fusing the empty set with any other memberless object x will make the resulting sum one which does not satisfy condition (b), for its antecedent will be satisfied but not its consequent, as x and the empty set will not be spatiotemporally related.

What, then, is a set-theoretical expansion? Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 693) explains:

The set-theoretical expansion of a sum S consists of (a) the sets formed from the (proper or improper) parts of S ; (b) the subsets of the sets in (a); (c) the sets formed from the sets in (b); and (d) the sets formed from any combination of parts of S , sets in (a), sets in (b), sets in (c), and any sums thereof.

So, typical modal realist worlds and w_{pure} are both collections of maximal sums* and their set-theoretical expansions; thus, Rodriguez-Pereyra has developed a characterisation of worlds that includes both typical modal realist worlds and w_{pure} whilst retaining the core tenet of modal realism: its possibilism – i.e. that there exist non-actual worlds.

There are, however, some worries for the proposal. Here is one. Rodriguez-Pereyra worries about the ontological status of his worlds: are they concrete or are they abstract? But, as I have already mentioned, it is unclear what Lewis thinks about the ontological status of worlds – indeed, he thinks that impure sets exist *in* his worlds.

Thus, I believe, such worries, although legitimate, are not specific to Rodriguez-Pereyra-worlds.

Another worry concerns the individuality of Rodriguez-Pereyra-worlds. That is, should such worlds be considered individuals? On the Lewisian account, worlds are taken as individuals; however, on Rodriguez-Pereyra's proposal, worlds do not seem to be individuals. Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004: 700), however, contends that whilst "it is true that Lewis takes worlds to be individuals", there is nothing in the core claim of modal realism that commits its advocates to the individuality of worlds. I believe Rodriguez-Pereyra is correct here. But, one need not be so passive; indeed, it is not obvious that Lewis's own modal realism is in the clear on this score. For Lewis, impure sets that have concreta as ur-elements are located wherever their concrete ur-elements are located, and thus (at least a great deal of them) reside in worlds; however, as Divers (2002: 88) notes, "orthodoxy has it...that no set is part of any individual". Thus, are worlds truly individuals on Lewis's own account? One may contend that location in a world does not entail being a part thereof, and thus Lewis is in the clear; some impure sets may be located in, but not parts of, worlds. This, however, may be odd: whilst it is true that derivative-location in a world does not entail being a part of that world (as discussed in section 4), it seems scarcely likely that impure sets that have concreta as ur-elements are derivatively-present where their concrete members are located. Thus, whilst it may be true that something's derivative-location in a world does not entail that something's being a part thereof, literal/fundamental-location in a world does seem to have this entailment, and plausibly, impure sets are literally/fundamentally-located where their concrete ur-

elements are literally/fundamentally-located.²³ So, individuality worries do not seem to be any more troubling for Rodriguez-Pereyra's worlds than they are for Lewis's.

Another worry: as Coggins (2010: 47-51) notes, we may feel that condition (a) for something's being a sum* is unserviceable, since 'memberlessness' is not a real ontological category: a pebble and $\emptyset$ are both memberless entities, but we do not think that they should, by virtue of their memberlessness, be placed into the same ontological category. That is, memberlessness does not seem to carve reality at its joints. But this, I think, is hardly a specific objection to Rodriguez-Pereyra's proposal: Lewis's worlds also scarcely carve reality at its joints – they consist of pure sets, impure sets and concreta. Thus, Coggins's objection is a somewhat odd one: Lewis's own modal realism does not seem to carve reality at its joints, and it is not clear why joint-carving is a virtue for a modal theory in the first place.

What, then, should Lewisian theists make of Rodriguez-Pereyra's proposal – should it be espoused? Well, as currently stated, Lewisian theism is incompatible with (2**). Recall condition (b) for something's being a sum*: "if S consists of at least two entities, then everything in S is spatiotemporally related to every other thing in S ". Here, Lewisian theists will deny (b), since they wish to say that even in w_{pure} God exists, but that there is no spatiotemporal connection between them. Thus, Lewisian theists will have to amend (b). They could claim: (b*) 'if S consists of at least two entities, then everything in S is spatiotemporally *and/or causally* connected to every other thing in S ', as Lewisian theists wish to hold that, given God's sovereignty, all existence depends upon God, and the dependency relation is often construed as being grounded in God's causal, sustaining activity.

²³ It does not seem true, however, that necessarily, impure sets are fundamentally-located in worlds; the impure set that contains God as its only concrete ur-element is not fundamentally-located in worlds, since it seems true that God is not fundamentally-located therein.

Rodriguez-Pereyra's proposal, with this revision, now seems to work. Since Rodriguez-Pereyra's revised account delivers an empty world for Lewisian theists, seemingly without hitch, it should be espoused by Lewisian theists. Thus, Lewisian theists can, after all, verify the claim: 'possibly, God created an empty world'. That is, Lewisian theists can retain God's creative freedom.

Paper 5

God's Simplicity: The Contingency Argument

1 Introduction¹

Within Lewisian theism lies the doctrine of divine simplicity. The doctrine, roughly articulated, is that God is without metaphysical complexity: there are no spatial or temporal parts in God; nor in God are there distinct properties or attributes; there are no metaphysical distinctions to be found anywhere in The One. Herein, I argue that Lewisian theism has the resources to defuse one of the most pivotal objections to divine simplicity: *the contingency problem*. In arguing for this, I argue that Tomaszewski's (2019) charge of invalidity against the argument to support the contingency problem can be averted; indeed, I supply a valid version of the argument, which is an instance of a *reductio ad impossibile*. I then defuse the argument by distinguishing between God's existing in worlds through counterpart theory, transworld identity and from the standpoints of worlds, and noting that each way for God to exist in worlds has separate requirements that in turn have consequences for the contingency problem.

Here is the plan. In section 2, I provide and expound Tomaszewski's (2019) objection *contra* the validity of an argument for the contingency problem. In section 3, *contra* Tomaszewski, I supply a valid version of the argument *contra* divine simplicity. In section 4, I provide a Lewisian theistic response to my valid version of the argument. In section 5, I show why ersatzism cannot solve the contingency problem in the way

¹ Much of the content of this paper appears in my Collier (*Forthcoming*)

that Lewisian theism can. And finally, I conclude that although classical theists must take the contingency problem seriously, Lewisian theism offers the resources to avoid its sting.

2 The Charge of Invalidity

Contemporary objections to divine simplicity abound.² Some argue that divine simplicity is incompatible with the Trinity,³ others argue that the conjunction of the doctrine with the Incarnation is inconsistent,⁴ and others argue that divine simplicity is simply incoherent or leads to a denial of some central tenets of classical theism (hereafter: ‘theism’).⁵ The contingency problem, which Oppy (2014: 99) and others take to be “the most apparently intractable problem for the doctrine of divine simplicity”, falls under this last category: the objection is presented as an argument *contra* God’s freedom.⁶ If the argument is both valid and sound, theists will be committed to waving goodbye either to divine simplicity or to divine freedom, since the argument’s conclusion entails that everything that is, necessarily is; and, if everything that is, necessarily is, it is argued that God could not have willed otherwise. That God could not have willed otherwise, it is argued, threatens God’s freedom. Accordingly, ‘modal Spinozism’, as Leftow (2015: 48) notes, “thus looms” if the argument holds water. Tomaszewski (2019: 276), however, thinks that the argument is invalid, and contends

² For an excellent introduction to divine simplicity, see Vallicella (2019).

³ See Moreland and Craig (2003: 586) and Stenberg (2014: 394).

⁴ See Hughes (1989: 253-64).

⁵ See Plantinga (1980: 46-61) and Gale (1991).

⁶ Specifically, the argument is an argument *contra* an account of God’s freedom that requires the truth of (a version of) the principle of alternate possibilities (which, roughly, is the principle that *x* freely performed *A* only if *x* could have performed not-*A*). As we shall see below, Leftow (2015) provides good reason for thinking that this is the right sort of account of God’s freedom. Herein, I shall not dispute the veracity of this account.

that a burden rests upon “those who pose such an argument to show that there is some version of it which is demonstrably valid”.

Now, many presentations of the argument exist: some focus on God’s intentions, others God’s actions, and others God’s knowledge, to deliver the result that divine simplicity should be rejected.⁷ However, most presentations of the argument appear somewhat materially indistinguishable. Here, I follow Tomaszewski (2019: 277) in providing Mullins’s (2016) articulation of the argument, given its perspicuity. Here is Mullins (2016: 138):

On divine simplicity God’s essence is identical to His existence. Also, God’s one simple act is identical to His essence/existence. God’s act of creation is identical to this one simple act, and so identical to God’s essence/existence. God exists of absolute necessity. So His act of creation is of absolute necessity since it is identical to His essence/existence.

Its being contingent that God created the universe is an oft-cited feature of theism; many believe it to follow from divine freedom. For instance, Leftow (2015: 47-48) contends that if God lacks the ability to “will otherwise, nothing dependent entirely and solely on His will can *be* otherwise”; thus, if it is not in God’s power to will otherwise, “there had to be a universe, and this universe”. Thus, if the contingency argument is both valid and sound, we arrive at the following dilemma, articulated by O’Connor (1999: 406): “either God is not metaphysically simple or His creating this world is somehow bound up with His very being”. But, according to theists, God is simple and His creation of the world is contingent.

The argument is devastating, if valid and sound. Tomaszewski (2019), however, thinks that the argument is invalid. Thus, Tomaszewski maintains, divine

⁷ For examples of reasonably recent presentations of the argument, see O’Connor (1999: 406), Moreland and Craig (2003: 525), Pruss (2008: 151), Mullins (2013: 195-199), Oppy (2014: 99) and Leftow (2015: 47-49).

simplicity advocates are not even tasked with denying the truth of one of the premisses or with modifying the metaphysical commitments of the doctrine of divine simplicity to defuse the argument.⁸ Mullins's argument is formalised by Tomaszewski (2019: 277) as follows:

- (1) Necessarily, God exists.
- (2) God is identical to God's act of creation.
- (3) Necessarily, God's act of creation exists.

To see where the argument miscarries, Tomaszewski (2019: 278) provides a formal rendering in quantified modal logic:

(where 'G' = God, and 'C' = God's act of creation)

- (1) $\Box \exists x (x = G)$
- (2) $G = C$
- (3) $\Box \exists x (x = C)$

Tomaszewski notes that the argument is invalid due to Mullins's inadmissible use of the substitution principle – a principle which states that *for any two terms x and y, if x and y are coextensional, then x and y are intersubstitutable, salva veritate*. That is, for any true identity statement, "the intersubstitution of terms that designate the same object... should preserve truth" (Martí 1997: 278). The use of the substitution principle is valid within extensional logics, but not (always) within intensional ones; modal logic,

⁸ For responses of this type, see Stump and Kretzman (1985), O'Connor (1999), Grant (2012; 2003), Pruss (2008) and Brower (2008). The most popular strategy in the literature seems to be to construe God's intentions as extrinsic rather than intrinsic.

however, is an intensional logic.⁹ Thus, Tomaszewski contends, Mullins errs: within the scope of the necessity operator, the term *God's act of creation* is substituted for the term *God*, where the two terms are not *intersubstitutionable, salva veritate*. That is, under the necessity operator, *God's act of creation* cannot be substituted for *God* whilst preserving the truth of the statement. But why is this so? Citing Quine (1953: ch8), Tomaszewski (2019: 278) reminds us that “modal contexts are referentially opaque”, and so one cannot substitute *willy-nilly* one term for another within the scope of a modal operator whilst preserving the truth of the original statement. Here is an illustration of the invalidity of the substitution principle under modal logic, given the logic's intensional nature. Take the necessity statement:

(4) Necessarily, all my horses are odd-toed ungulates. ($\Box \forall x (Hx \rightarrow Ox)$)

Now, (4) is true. But this does not mean that we are permitted to substitute the term *my horses* with the term *my animals*, even though all my animals – in this world – happen to be horses. Indeed, the following necessity statement is not entailed by (4):

(5) Necessarily, all my animals are odd-toed ungulates. ($\Box \forall x (Ax \rightarrow Ox)$)

Clearly, (5) is false (if the axiom ' $A \rightarrow \Box A$ ' (modal Spinozism) is false, which seems so). It is possible, for instance, that I own some chickens – and this possibility, if it be so, is sufficient to render (5) false. Thus, I hope to have made clear, the substitution principle is false under modal logic.

⁹ The fact that modal logic is intensional does not entail that an appropriate semantic theory thereof must also be intensional; indeed, possible worlds semantics provides modal logic with an extensional semantic theory: the modal operators are taken as quantifiers over worlds.

Now, Tomaszewski (2019: 279) contends that the argument would be valid were (2) prefixed with a necessity operator:

$$(2^*) \quad \Box (G = C)$$

However, as Tomaszewski (2019) notes, it is immediately obvious to theists why (2*) should be rejected. By taking it as necessary that God is identical with His act of creation (i.e. by affirming (2*)) one begs the question against theists. Indeed, that it is contingent that God created the universe is what theists affirm – and the doctrine of simplicity, whilst entailing that God is necessarily identical with His act, does not entail that God create the universe, and thus does not entail that God is necessarily identical with God's act of creation (thus, (2*) should be rejected). That is, all that the doctrine entails is that God is necessarily identical with His act, but what that act is is not established by necessity from the doctrine. Thence, simply installing the assumptive premiss that necessarily God is identical with His act of creation will not convince the theist that divine simplicity entails that it is necessary that God created the universe. Thus, the inclusion of (2) invalidates the argument, but the inclusion of (2*) begs the question against theists.

Moreover, if one thought that the inclusion of the premiss:

(where 'S' = simple)

$$(9) \quad \Box \exists x (x = G \ \& \ x \text{ is } S)$$

committed theists to (2*), Tomaszewski (2019) says *think again*. All that (9) commits theists to is the claim that God is identical with His act – but it does not entail that necessarily that act is the act of creation; indeed, it does not entail (2*).

I take Tomaszewski's objection against Mullins's version of the argument to be decisive.¹⁰ However, one may be suspicious that Tomaszewski has not formalised the best version of the argument. Certainly, Mullins's rendition is perspicuous, but it seems that the other rendition of the argument found in Tomaszewski (2019) – i.e. one provided by Leftow (2015) – is quite distinct. Indeed, Leftow's rendition makes explicit mention of God's *intentions*, and revising the nature of God's intentions is precisely the strategy to block the argument's conclusion wherewith the literature is suffused.¹¹ Here is Leftow's (2015, 48) informal rendition of the argument:

On DDS, nothing in God is really distinct from anything else in Him. If so, then everything wholly within God – everything intrinsic to God – is identical with everything else in God. Suppose, then, that God's intentions are wholly within God. If they are, it follows that they are all identical: God has just one intention. Further, God's intention = His essence. God has His essence necessarily. So it seems to follow that He has His actual intention necessarily. But then it seems that He necessarily wills just what He does: that He could not have willed otherwise.

Here is my formalised version of Leftow's argument (I include some premisses that I take to be tacit in Leftow's informal rendition, and also give God's intending to create the universe as an example of God's actual intention):

¹⁰ Tomaszewski (2019: 280-283) also considers various other ways to repair the argument: he considers a strategy of appealing to rigid designation and a strategy of applying Leibniz's Law. Both strategies, he argues, fail. I do not contend otherwise.

¹¹ O'Connor (1999) is a good example of an account of the extrinsicality of God's contingent intentions. See Leftow (2015) for an objection thereto concerning divine freedom. See Stump and Kretzmann (1985) for a discussion of extrinsic and intrinsic properties in relation to God. Grant (2003) also argues that 'God's creating the universe' can be construed in extrinsic terms, and Grant (2012) develops a similar argument, but focussing on the extrinsicality of God's knowledge.

- (10) God is simple. (Assumption)
- (11) If (10), then anything intrinsic to God is identical with everything else intrinsic to God. (By simplicity)
- (12) Anything intrinsic to God is identical with everything else intrinsic to God. (10, 11 MP)
- (13) God's intentions are intrinsic to God. (Assumption)
- (14) God's intentions are identical with each other. (12, 13)
- (15) God has one intention. (14, by identity)
- (16) God's essence is intrinsic to God. (Assumption)
- (17) God's intention is identical with His essence. (12, 13, 16)
- (18) Necessarily, God has His essence. (Assumption)
- (19) Necessarily, God has His intention. (17, 18 by substitution)
- (20) God's intending that He create the universe is identical with His intention. (assumption)
- (21) Necessarily, God intended that He create the universe. (19, 20)
- (22) If (21), then God could not have intended otherwise than intend to create the universe. (By necessity)
- (23) Therefore, God could not have done otherwise than intend to create the universe. (21, 22 MP)

This argument is much more complex, and focusses upon God's intentions. However, Leftow's, like Mullins's, argument is invalid. Although it is true that God *did* intend to create the universe (20), and it is true that God's intention *is* identical with His essence (17), and His essence is *necessary* (18), and so His intention is *necessary* (19), it does not follow that *necessarily* God's intention is to create the universe (that is, (21) does

not follow). Thus, Leftow (on behalf of the supporter of the contingency argument) inadmissibly avails himself of the substitution principle: within the scope of the necessity operator, *God's intending that He create the universe* is substituted for *God has His intention*, when the two terms are not *intersubstitutionable, salva veritate*.¹² Tomaszewski's argument for the invalidity of Mullins's version can thus be extended to Leftow's rendition of the argument.

I hope now to have vindicated Tomaszewski from the potential accusation of his taking just one – perhaps poor – rendering of the argument, noting its invalidity and then generalising that invalidity to *all* the argument's renderings. Indeed, as I have shown, Leftow's (2015: 48) argument is also invalid. But, all is not lost for the argument: I believe that a valid version can be provided.

3 Validating the Argument

I now present a valid version of the argument. The following version constitutes an argument for the falsity of at least one of the following claims: (a) that (necessarily) God is simple, (b) that God's will to create the universe is intrinsic to God, and (c) that it is possible that God willed to create the universe differently.¹³ Let us take it as given that theists deny neither (a) nor (c); thus, the battle lies in the legitimacy of rejecting (b). And, this is just the result we want for the dialectic, since we want a valid version of the argument which is relevant to the common move made in the literature to defuse that argument, namely denying (b). Specifically, the argument below takes the form of

¹² Now, one may think that the argument is valid, if we take *God's intending that He create the universe* as a rigid-designator. Later I discuss rigid-designation, and firstly why Tomaszewski thinks it of no use, and secondly why I think the Lewisian theist can appeal to rigid-designation in a way that solves the problem.

¹³ I thank an anonymous reviewer (for the *Journal of Analytic Theology*) for pushing me to clarify this point.

a *reductio ad impossibile*: the conjunction of (a), (b) and (c) entails a contradiction. For someone who believes (b) and (c) to be unobjectionable, (a) must go. For theists, who believe (a) and (c) to be unobjectionable, (b) must go. The following version of the argument, then, allows the dialectic in the literature to not merely be like a scuffle over the colour of the shoes of some fictitious chimera, but to concern the soundness of a valid and formidable argument. Here is the valid version:¹⁴

- (24) Necessarily, God is simple. (Assumption)
- (25) If (24), then *necessarily if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F*.
- (26) *Necessarily if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F*. (24, 25, MP)
- (27) God's possibly creating a world *w*, wherein a universe has *n* atoms (where $n < 10$), presents a possible intrinsic difference in God from His possibly creating a world *u*, wherein a universe has *m* atoms (where $m > 10$). (Assumption)
- (28) If (27), then *necessarily, if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F is false*.
- (29) *Necessarily, if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F is false*. (27, 28 MP)

¹⁴ Pruss's (2008: 151) version of the argument is somewhat similar to my version. So is Oppy's (2014: 99-100).

(30) *Necessarily, if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F* is true
 and *necessarily, if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F* is
 false. (26, 29 conjunction-introduction)¹⁵

This argument is valid. Here is why. (24) is a given, given the terms of the debate. (25) is an expression of what (24) entails: i.e., that there are no accidental (i.e. contingent) intrinsic attributes of God.¹⁶ To see that the principle *necessarily, if God is F, and F is intrinsic, then necessarily, God is F* follows from the doctrine of simplicity, consider two worlds: *w*, wherein God wills to endow the universe with *n* atoms (where $n < 10$), and *u*, wherein God wills to endow the universe with *m* atoms (where $m > 10$). If we assume God's will to endow the universe with atoms is intrinsic to God, then there will be an intrinsic difference in God between God in *w* and God in *u*. If there is such an intrinsic difference in God across possible worlds, then God will have certain intrinsic attributes in some possible worlds and others in others – and this violates divine simplicity. Thus, God must only possess essential (i.e. necessary) intrinsic attributes. So, we have (25). (26) follows by modus ponens from (24) and (25). (27) seems reasonable.¹⁷ (28) seems right: if God's possibly willing to create a world wherein the universe has *n* atoms presents a possible intrinsic difference in God from His possibly willing to create a world wherein the universe has *m* atoms, then it is not the case that: necessarily, if God wills to create a world wherein the universe has *n* atoms, then it is necessary that God wills to create a world wherein the universe has *n* atoms, and

¹⁵ The reader will note that I have prefixed the conditional '*if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F*' with '*necessarily*'. This is due to the nature of the argument; I do not wish to talk about the falsity of a material conditional. I thank Robert Koons for discussing this point with me.

¹⁶ Here I speak of 'attributes' and not 'properties' to avoid incurring ontological confusion, and to avoid incurring commitments over the ontology of the divine attributes.

¹⁷ Later, I argue that (27) is false on Lewisian theism, provided God's necessary existence is accounted for in a certain way.

nor is it the case that: necessarily, if God wills to create a world wherein the universe has m atoms, then it is necessary that God wills to create a world wherein the universe has m atoms. (29) follows by modus ponens from (27) and (28). And, the contradiction of the form ' $\neg A \& A$ ' imbedded in (30) follows by conjunction-introduction from (26) and (29). So, we have a valid version of the argument, and thus theists must reject one of its premisses.

And so, presenting the argument in the form of a *reductio ad impossibilem*, like my version of the argument above, renders the argument valid. Thus, *contra* Tomaszewski, theists are required to defuse the argument. Fortunately, Lewisian theists have the resources to do just this.

4 Lewisian Theism's Response

Typically, those who attempt to defuse the argument focus upon the nature of God's intention or His knowledge or another divine attribute standardly understood as being intrinsic (for instance, Grant (2012; 2003), O'Connor (1999) and Stump and Kretzman (1985)), arguing for its being extrinsic rather than intrinsic (and thus would advocate rejecting (27) above). However, I do not believe that the doctrine of divine simplicity requires qualification or modification and nor do I believe that one is required to construe what we previously and commonsensically considered intrinsic attributes as extrinsic attributes to defuse the argument, *if one is a Lewisian theist*. In his (2017a) and in his (2017b), Almeida explores many advantages that Lewisian theism enjoys for debates in philosophical theology; I now argue that another of Lewisian theism's advantages is that it supplies the resources to solve the contingency problem.

The premiss to reject is (27). However, as I say above, Lewisian theists need not reject (27) by contending that the intention or the will (or what have you) to create is extrinsic rather than intrinsic – instead, Lewisian theists can reject (27), whilst keeping the – at least – pre-theoretic understanding of the intrinsicity of, say, the intention or the will to create, by distinguishing between God's existing in worlds through counterpart theory, through transworld identity or from standpoints of worlds, and noting that each way to exist in a world has separate requirements that in turn have consequences for the contingency of God's intrinsic attributes.¹⁸ Let us examine these options.¹⁹

4.1. Counterpart Theory

(27) includes two *de re* modal predications of God: God has the modal property of possibly willing to create *w* and the modal property of possibly willing to create *u*, where $w \neq u$ and where these modal properties present possible intrinsic differences in God. So, how should Lewisian theists account for these two *de re* possibility predications? The first way is to employ counterpart theory, where the counterpart-relation is a similarity relation that, when not held reflexively, holds between two non-identical individuals in two non-identical worlds. Accordingly, Lewisian theists might

¹⁸ Again, I use 'attributes' here instead of 'properties' as I do not wish to imply that God has properties if His having properties entails a violation of divine simplicity.

¹⁹ It is true that in Papers 1 and 2, I argue (respectively) against God's existing in worlds through counterpart theory and through His existing in worlds through transworld identity. One may then think 'why do you give airtime to these two options?' Well, I think it is important to examine the various options here, since, firstly, my arguments in those papers *may* admit of responses, and if they do, I wish to say something about how, for example, the contingency objection affects counterpart theoretic Lewisian theism; secondly, such an exploration allows us to better understand Lewisian theism's theoretical machinery; and thirdly, this is a thesis by interrelated papers, and those papers can be taken to constitute self-contained papers – thus, what I say therein need not carry forward into what I say herein. See the Prologue, Paper 1, Paper 2, and Lewis (1986; 1983; 1968) for more on the ways that things exist in worlds.

employ the biconditional: God possibly wills to create w iff a world exists such that therein there exists a counterpart of God that wills to create w . Since (in Divers's (2002: 44) words) "what is the case at a world is what is in a world", a world exists such that therein there exists a counterpart of God that wills to create w only if the world referred to is identical with w (assuming necessarily, if God wills to create a certain world, that certain world exists). So, if w is willfully created by a counterpart of God, then a world exists (i.e. w exists) such that therein a counterpart of God wills to create w . However, if counterpart theory is employed, we see that the truths of the respective propositions $\langle \text{God wills to create } w \rangle$ and $\langle \text{God wills to create } u \rangle$ are not necessarily co-extensional, since the sets of worlds in which they are true are non-identical – and, connectedly, we see that the property *having the divine will to create w* is identified with a set of individuals distinct from the set of individuals identified with the property *having the divine will to create u* , and are thus not necessarily co-exemplified. Given $w \neq u$, and given the counterpart-theoretic principle that no individual inhabits more than one world (partly or wholly),²⁰ the counterpart-relation that holds between w -God (that is, God who exists in w) and u -God (that is, God who exists in u) is non-reflexive, and so w -God and u -God are two distinct individuals in two distinct worlds such that w -God cannot be truthfully predicated with willing to create u and u -God cannot be truthfully predicated with willing to create w .²¹ That is, we get the following: in w , w -God wills to create w , and not u – and in u , u -God wills to create u , and not w . So, w -God (who exists in w) does not actually will to create u , but only merely possibly wills to create u , and likewise, *mutatis mutandis*, for u -God (who exists in u) and His willing to create w . Since (at least on counterpart theory) there is no necessary co-extensionality

²⁰ See Lewis (1968) for a list of counterpart-theoretic principles.

²¹ Here is where many in the literature baulk at a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of modal predications of God. See Sheehy (2006), Davis (2009; 2008), Vance (2016) and Collier (2019b).

between the propositions <God wills to create *w*> and <God wills to create *u*>, and connectedly there is no necessary co-exemplification between the properties *having the divine will to create u* and *having the divine will to create w*, and since we are assuming necessarily, *x wills to create y* is an intrinsic predication of *x*, (27) comes out true: there is a possible intrinsic difference between God's possibly willing to create *w* and His possibly willing to create *u*. So, assuming the other premises of the argument are true, if counterpart theory is the correct way to interpret *de re* modal predications of God, then Lewisian theism is inconsistent, since a necessary tenet of Lewisian theism is that God is necessarily simple and a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of 'God possibly wills to create *w*' and 'God possibly wills to create *u*' entails a lack of necessary co-extensionality between the respective truths of their corresponding non-modal propositions, which entails (given the assumption concerning intrinsicity) that God is not necessarily simple – that is, (at least some of) His intrinsic attributes vary world-to-world, and are thus contingent.²²

²² There is a way to block this lack of co-extensionality by contending that, in *u*, *u*-God wills to create *w*, but His will is not satisfied – that is, He fails to bring to fruition the content of His will. However, there is a problem here. Since *w* is possible (since *w* exists), some may think that God's willing to create *w* should result in *w*'s creation; by omnipotence, it seems impossible that God fails to bring something possible into existence if He wills to create that something possible. However, given simplicity, the will to create *w* and the will to create *u* are one and the same will, and so *u*-God's one will is inconsistent, rather than the conjunction of the two being inconsistent, since in *u*, *u*-God wills to bring about both *w* and *u* in the same world, and *w* and *u* are non-identical. Now, whilst many might feel that it is no slight upon God that necessarily, He cannot bring about a contradiction, many will also hold that necessarily, God lacks a will to bring about a contradiction. And, moreover, since in *u*, *u*-God's will to create *u* comes to fruition but not His will to create *w*, we should ask why God's will to create *u* comes to fruition and not His will to create *w*?; it certainly seems arbitrary that *u* came about and not *w*, since both are possible (since both *w* and *u* exist), and God's will to create *w* and His will to create *u* are one and the same will. In fact, since (under this proposal) *u*-God inconsistently wills for *w* and *u* to come about as the same world, we might think that neither *w* nor *u* should come about at all, rather than its being arbitrary which one comes about: indeed, if God were to will '¬A&A', it seems that neither '¬A' nor 'A' should come about. So, on this response, whilst *u*-God's omnipotence *may* not be threatened, His will is inconsistent and either it seems arbitrary that *u* comes about and not *w* or it seems that *u* should not come about at all, given that *u*-God's will to create *u* and *w* is inconsistent.

There is a similar option: *u*-God actually wills to create *u* in *u*, but actually wills to create *w* in *w*. The problem here is that, on counterpart theory, *u*-God in *u* does not create *w* in *w*, since *u*-God resides only in *u*, and so again *u*-God's will to create *w* is not and cannot be brought to fruition. This is not to say that *u*-God impossibly wills to create *w* – indeed, *u*-God possibly wills to create *w*, since there exists a world wherein *u*-God's counterpart, *w*-God, wills to create *w* – it is simply to say that *u*-God does not actually will to create *w* in *w*.

Lewisian theists, then, have an argument against a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of God's necessary existence.²³ If a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of the two claims 'God possibly wills to create *w*' and 'God possibly wills to create *u*' yields the result that God is not necessarily simple, since there is no necessary co-extensionality between the two claims' corresponding non-modal propositions, then theism does not turn out to be necessarily true – and if theism is not necessarily true, then Lewisian theism is not necessarily true, and if Lewisian theism is not necessarily true, then Lewisian theism is necessarily false (since Lewisian theism postulates that necessarily, both modal realism and theism are true). Thus, Lewisian theists had better avoid a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of (27), since such an interpretation leads to Lewisian theism's necessary falsity. If, however, counterpart-theory is the correct way to interpret (27), Lewisian theism is inconsistent (or at least requires significant revision); modal realism, *qua* counterpart-theory theory, and theism, *qua* God's necessary simplicity, are incompatible.²⁴

4.2 Transworld Identity

So, Lewisian theists had better avoid a counterpart-theoretic interpretation of (27)'s modal claims. Let us, then, examine a transworld identity interpretation (whilst, again, assuming necessarily, *x wills to create y* is an intrinsic predication of *x*). The source of the problem with a counterpart-theoretic understanding of 'God possibly wills to create *w*' and 'God possibly wills to create *u*' one might feel is that one and the same divine individual does not exist in both *w* and *u*. Transworld identity denies the truth of a

²³ This argument is in addition to the argument concerning polytheism. See footnote 21 for references.

²⁴ This is an interesting result, since the charge of multiplicity within God has hitherto only been levied at the proposal that God be taken as the transworld mereological summation of all God-counterparts. See Vance (2016) and Collier (2019b).

principle corresponding to the counterpart-theoretic principle that no individual inhabits more than one world (partly or wholly), and instead adopts the principle that one and the same thing wholly exists in distinct worlds, only if that thing possesses its intrinsic properties essentially.²⁵ That is, for (at least some) things that do not vary in their intrinsic properties across worlds – for example, immanent universals (if such things exist) – Lewisian theism has the resources to employ transworld identity: i.e. one and the same thing wholly exists, as a world-part, in multiple worlds (i.e. x exists in world w and y exists in world u and $w \neq u$ and $x = y$). Thus, were transworld identity applied to God, Lewisian theists would contend that w -God wholly exists in w and u -God wholly exists in u and $w \neq u$ and w -God = u -God; that is, *God* (taking the term as a rigid-designator) wholly exists in each and every world in the same way that an immanent universal does, if immanent universals exist. Given God's necessary simplicity, His intrinsic attributes should not change across worlds, and given transworld identity allows for things to wholly exist in multiple worlds only if they possess all their intrinsic attributes essentially, God's necessity, we might think, as Cameron (2009) suggests, should be interpreted through transworld identity.

Almeida (2017a: 7), however, contends that “there seems to be a conflation here of intrinsic properties and intrinsic nature”, where God's intrinsic nature is taken as “the set of his essential properties”. The problem is that not all possible intrinsic attributes of God are apt for being within His nature; indeed, there is no necessary consistent co-exemplification of all the possible intrinsic attributes of God. Almeida (2017a: 7) notes: “in some possible worlds, God [wills] to create a world that displays

²⁵ I use the general term ‘thing’ here, since I think Collier (2021a) is correct in contending that Lewisian theism rules out particulars’ existing in multiple worlds, given the problem of accidental external relations (see Lewis 1986: 205-6, fn6). However, I shall ignore this problem herein, and assume that employing transworld identity for God's necessity is, *prima facie*, compatible with Lewisian theism.

maximal diversity and in other possible worlds God [wills] to create an ontologically minimal world”,²⁶ where it is assumed that God’s will is intrinsic, but holding both God’s will to create w and His will to create u in one world is inconsistent; thus, for members of the first set of possible worlds, God’s intrinsic attribute of willing to create them is distinct from God’s intrinsic attribute of willing to create members of the second set of possible worlds – God’s will to create w and His will to create u cannot be consistently co-exemplified in the same world. So, although God (rigidly-designated) exists in both w and u , it is nevertheless the case that in w His willing to create w is an intrinsic attribute distinct from the intrinsic attribute of His willing to create u , in u – again, they are not necessarily consistently co-exemplified. So, an issue arises: if Lewisian theists say that there is no inconsistent co-exemplification of God’s willing to create w and His willing to create u , since in w God has the intrinsic attribute of willing to create w and does not have the intrinsic attribute of willing to create u , and in u God has the intrinsic attribute of willing to create u and does not have the intrinsic attribute of willing to create w , then transworld identity cannot be employed, since God’s intrinsic attributes vary world-to-world, and (27) comes out true, since there are possible intrinsic differences within God. But, if Lewisian theists alternatively say that there is necessary co-exemplification of God’s willing to create w and His willing to create u , since in w God has the intrinsic attribute of willing to create w and has the intrinsic attribute of willing to create u , and in u God has the intrinsic attribute of willing to create u and has the intrinsic attribute of willing to create w , then transworld identity can be employed and (27) comes out false – but then there is inconsistency within God. So, Lewisian theists can contend that the argument is unsound through (27)’s falsity, on a

²⁶ I have altered Almeida’s quotation to concern God’s will; Almeida’s point is untouched by this alteration.

transworld identity interpretation, only if they accept volitional inconsistency within God; and thus, it seems, Lewisian theists have preserved God's simplicity for the price of His volitional consistency.

Now, there is a response here, which relies upon the contention that a set-theoretic conflation of God's nature and His intrinsic attributes is not problematic, or at least is no more so than other set-theoretic conflations that befall on modal realism. That is, contending that God's willing to create w is conflated with His nature does not pose a problem insofar as it does not pose a problem (or does pose a problem) for other conflations (but only to the same extent). Take (26): *Necessarily, if God is F , and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F .* This entails, on modal realism, that (necessarily) if God is intrinsically F in one world, then He is intrinsically F in all worlds (assuming also that what is intrinsic to God is necessarily intrinsic to God). So, taking God's nature as the set of His essential intrinsic attributes and assuming for any F where F is intrinsic to God in one world, F is intrinsic to God in all worlds, and thus the set of all His possible intrinsic attributes is identical with the set of His essential intrinsic attributes, we might think that the doctrine of divine simplicity commits Lewisian theists to the type of conflation of God's nature and all His possible intrinsic attributes that Almeida has in mind. However, there are a couple of things to note here. First many other conflations also arise on modal realism: for example, taking the proposition $\langle 1+1=2 \rangle$ as a set of all worlds in which '1+1=2' is true, and taking the proposition $\langle \text{identity is reflexive} \rangle$ as a set of all worlds in which 'identity is reflexive' is true, we see that these two sets are identical: $\langle 1+1=2 \rangle$ is identical with the set of all worlds, and so is $\langle \text{identity is reflexive} \rangle$ – there is no world in which '1+1=2' is false and there is no world in which 'identity is reflexive' is false. So, if conflation is bad, we might think that Almeida is committed to other instances of conflation being bad – that is, if we need a

hyperintensional distinction to lie between God's nature and the set of all His possible intrinsic attributes, then such hyperintensionality is also required for disparate distinctions. So, this is not a specific problem for Lewisian theists who take God to exist in worlds through transworld identity. But secondly, not being able to make a distinction in set-theoretic terms between God's nature and the set of all His possible intrinsic attributes *may* not be troubling for Lewisian theists; within theistic debates, that there lies a conceptual, but not ontological (or specifically set-theoretical), distinction between two things is often taken to be sufficient for there being something of a difference between such things – perhaps the distinction between God's willing to create w , and say, His being omnipotent is simply conceptual in character, and so provided we can make a conceptual distinction between God's willing to create w , and say, His being omnipotent, Lewisian theists ought not to worry too much about there being set-theoretic identity between the two. Perhaps, the conceptual distinction is in terms of fundamentality or existential dependence, where fundamentality or some types of existential dependence are perhaps in turn primitive concepts. For example, there lies a distinction in terms of fundamentality and dependence between modal facts and worlds – modal facts are less fundamental than and dependent upon worlds – and something similar, we might think, is going on for God's nature and (at least some of) His possible intrinsic properties: (perhaps) God's willing to create w is less fundamental than and dependent upon His nature. Indeed, there is a necessary co-exemplification of God's being, say, omnipotent and His willing to create the world (taking 'the world' as indexical) – that is, in all worlds, God wills to create the world and is omnipotent – however, we can readily make a conceptual distinction between the two. Moreover, if one wished, such a conceptual distinction could be made in set-theoretic terms: if the concept of willing to create w is identified with a set s_1 of thinkers

and if the concept of God's omnipotence is identified with a certain set s_2 of thinkers, and the two sets are non-identical (which seems to be so, since someone may think that God is omnipotent but did not will to create w), then there is a set-theoretic distinction between the two concepts. So, perhaps, a conflation of God's nature and the set of all His possible intrinsic attributes is not problematic.

However, even if there is no issue of set-theoretic conflation, Lewisian theists may be committed to rejecting the set-theoretic account of God's nature, regardless of transworld identity concerns. If we take God's nature to be identified with the set of His essential attributes, and we take a property (or attribute) to be a set of its instances, we see that there is no necessary co-extensionality between all God's essential attributes. Take God's omnipotence and His concreteness. Omnipotence is identified with the set of all its instances, and omnipotence (say) is only instanced in God. Concreteness is identified with the set of all its instances, but concreteness is instanced by more individuals than God. Thus, their extensions are distinct; and so, God's omnipotence and His concreteness are both essential to God, but set-theoretically distinct; thus, if God's nature is the set of all His essential attributes, and properties (or attributes) are sets of their instances, there is division within God, since concreteness and omnipotence are distinct properties (or attributes) – for God to be simple, all His intrinsic attributes must be necessarily identical with each other. Moreover, if God is identical with His nature, given His simplicity, and His nature is the set of all His essential intrinsic attributes, then God is identical with a set, but since sets are abstract, God is identical with something abstract; and this is inadmissible: sets, for example, are not the type of entity that admit of some token that can display maximal-love.²⁷ Some of this is perhaps too quick, but the point is that Lewisian theists

²⁷ Plantinga (1980) notes something very similar, and uses it to reject divine simplicity altogether.

may be justified in rejecting a set-theoretic account of properties (or attributes), regardless of transworld identity concerns.²⁸

And so, since divine simplicity, on Lewisian theism's set-theoretic account of properties, seems to entail a conflation of God's nature with His possible intrinsic attributes, and since such a conflation seems either not too problematic or just as problematic as it is for other (non-divine) properties, and a set-theoretic account of (at least divine) properties (or attributes) should perhaps be rejected anyway, Almeida's conflation objection seems more an objection *contra* simplicity or *contra* a set-theoretic account of properties (or attributes) than it does an objection *contra* God's existing in worlds through transworld identity.²⁹

All the above, however, says nothing about the second part of Almeida's objection: such a conflation leads to volitional inconsistency within God. This, I think, can also be dealt with by Lewisian theists by their availing themselves of rigid-designators for worlds. If one and the same God exists in multiple worlds, we might expect there to be truths about God in *w* (taking '*w*' as a rigid-designator) that concern Him in *u* (taking '*u*' as a rigid-designator), in a similar way, perhaps, that there are truths about God in, say, Ghana that concern Him in, say, Australia.³⁰ If so, then Lewisian theists can employ rigid-designators to dissolve volitional inconsistency within God. In *w*, it is true of God that He wills to create *w* in *w*, but, in *w*, it is also true of God that He wills to create *u* in *u* – that is, it is true of God in *w* that God wills to create *w* in *w*, but it is also true of God in *w* that He wills to create *u*, only God wills to

²⁸ Now, one may think that if one shelves a set-theoretic account of properties (or attributes), then one can avoid the problem above for counterpart theory. This is not so: it will still be the case that *w*-God in *w* cannot be truthfully predicated with willing to create *u*.

²⁹ Plausibly, what I have said further pushes at the illegitimacy of an extensional, set-theoretic account of certain intensional entities, like properties and propositions.

³⁰ I do not suggest either that *w* and *u* are spatiotemporally related to each other or that God's being in Ghana means that He is literally *in* Ghana in the sense of literally occupying regions of spacetime – God is not literally spatiotemporally located.

create u in a separate world, namely in u . *Mutatis mutandis*, this is perhaps no stranger than its being true in Ghana that God wills to existentially sustain Ghana and also its being true in Ghana that God wills to existentially sustain Australia. Its being true in w that God wills to create u does not entail that God wills to make u a part of w or that God wills to make w become u – it is simply that it is true of God in w that He wills to create a certain world, with certain qualitative features, distinct from w , namely u . This does not commit Lewisian theists to an extrinsic account of God's will – indeed, it does not relativise God's will to worlds. Lewisian theists, here, can retain the intrinsicity of God's will, and avoid volitional inconsistency within God: no inconsistency is exported to God by its being true in w that God wills to create u – in w , His will to create u does not compete with His will to create w , since He does not will to create w with both the qualitative features of w and the qualitative features of u ; instead, it is true in w , that God wills to create w with w 's qualitative features, and it is also true in w , that God wills to create u (as a world distinct from w) with u 's qualitative features. Thus, Lewisian theists, if they employ transworld identity, can reject (27) without there being (*contra* Almeida) volitional inconsistency within God: there is no intrinsic difference in God from w to u .

There are several issues here, however.

In a related discussion, Tomaszewski (2019: 280) contends that employing rigid-designators in a similar way to the way I do above leads to begging the question against theists. This would be devastating for Lewisian theism, if Tomaszewski were right. If instead of taking ' w ' to be rigidly-designated in the phrase 'God wills to create w ', ' w ' is taken as an indexical world-referring term – i.e. ' w ' refers to the world in which the utterance 'God wills to create w ' is made – then if in the phrase 'God wills to create w ', 'God' is taken as a rigid-designator (and so it designates God in every world), then

it is true in all worlds that God wills to create w , and is thus necessarily true. But, if it is necessarily true that God wills to create w (where ' w ' is indexical), then it is not contingently true that God wills to create w . However, its being contingent that God wills to create w is what Lewisian theists should affirm, given their classical theism.

There are two responses. First, on Lewisian theism, whilst it may be true in all worlds that God wills to create w (taking ' w ' as indexical), it is not the case that this entails modal collapse; specifically, it is not the case that, in Tomaszewski's (2019: 280) words, the world had to be the way it is "down to every last fact". Indeed, take *de re* contingency claims first. If we predicate possible attributes of w , we see that w has counterparts that are qualitatively distinct; w , say, has chickens as parts, but w has a counterpart, say, u , that lacks chickens. So, it is not true that w necessarily has chickens. So, there is no modal collapse here; worlds could have been otherwise. If we predicate possible attributes of God, we also see that there is no modal collapse: 'God possibly wills to create a world with chickens' is true, since w exists and God is w 's willful creator, but 'God possibly wills to create a world without chickens' is also true, since u exists and God is u 's willful creator. So, there is no modal collapse here either; God could have created otherwise. And, second, given the existence of both w and u , we have the true *de dicto* contingency claim 'contingently, God wills to create chickens', since the *de dicto* claim 'possibly, God wills to create chickens' is true, since w exists and God is w 's willful creator, and the *de dicto* claim 'possibly, God wills to not create chickens' is true, since u exists and God is u 's willful creator. Another thing to note is that, if Lewisian theism can account for the empty world, it may be the case that 'God wills to create w ', taking ' w ' as an indexical term, is not necessarily true, and

so is not a rigid-designator at all.³¹ Now, discussion of the existence of an empty world would lead us off track here, but suffice it to say that some think that modal realism can account for such a world, and so the hope is that its theistic cousin, Lewisian theism, can likewise account for such a world.³² If an empty world exists, there is no question-begging going on, since ‘God wills to create *w*’ is contingent. And so, *contra* a version of Tomaszewski’s objection to this type of rigid-designation, there is no total modal collapse, and if an empty world exists, there is no rigid-designation of this type at all.

However, if the existence of an empty world entails that ‘God wills to create *w*’ (taking ‘*w*’ as indexical) cannot designate God in all worlds, we can apply Tomaszewski’s objection to ‘God wills to create *w*’, taking ‘*w*’ as a rigid-designator – which is the way I propose Lewisian theists deny the truth of (27). So, on this way, the question-begging nature of the rigid-designation response is (supposedly) sourced in the fact that ‘God wills to create *w*’ will not just be true in *u*, but true in all worlds, including the empty world (if such a world exists) – and this, I noted, is required if ‘*Necessarily, if God is F, and F is intrinsic, God is necessarily F*’ is true (and necessarily, God’s will is intrinsic). But, if ‘God wills to create *w*’ is true in all worlds, then it is necessary that God wills to create *w*; but if it is necessary that God wills to create *w*, then it is not contingent that God wills to create *w*. However, its being contingent that God wills to create *w* is what Lewisian theists should affirm, given their classical theism.

³¹ Here I am taking ‘*w*’ as elliptical for ‘concrete world’; but, if instead ‘*w*’ just means ‘the world’, and the empty world can be created, then ‘God wills to create *w*’ would still be true in the empty world.

³² For accounts of empty worlds on modal realism, see Rodriguez-Pereyra (2004), Bricker (2001), Sanson (2016) and Efrid and Stoneham (2005a), and for accounts of empty worlds on Lewisian theism, see Leftow (2012: 111, fn33) and Oppy (2009). See Paper 3 for discussion.

Now, again, on Lewisian theism, whilst it is true that ‘God wills to create *w*’ (taking ‘*w*’ as a rigid-designator) is true in all worlds, it is not the case that this entails total modal collapse; that is, it is not the case that, in Tomaszewski’s (2019: 280) words, *w* had to be the way it is “down to every last fact”. Indeed, take *de re* contingency claims first. If we predicate possible attributes of *w*, we see that *w* has counterparts that are qualitatively distinct; *w*, say, has chickens as parts, but *w* has a counterpart, say, *u*, that lacks chickens. So, it is not true that *w* necessarily has chickens. So, there is no modal collapse here; worlds could have been otherwise. If we predicate possible attributes of God, we also see that there is no modal collapse: ‘God possibly wills to create a world with chickens’ is true, since *w* exists and God is *w*’s willful creator, and ‘God possibly wills to create a world without chickens’ is true, since *u* exists and God is *u*’s willful creator. So, there is no modal collapse here either; God could have created otherwise. And, second, given the existence of both *w* and *u*, we have the true *de dicto* contingency claim ‘contingently, God wills to create chickens’, since ‘possibly, God wills to create chickens’ is true and ‘possibly, God wills not to create chickens’ is true.³³ So, there is no question-begging going on: (in a sense) *w* is contingently the way it is (since *w* has qualitatively distinct counterparts) and God contingently willed to create a world with all *w*’s qualitative features (since God willed to create a world with qualitative features that are not shared by *w*), and if an empty world exists, then *w*’s existence is contingent, not just its qualitative features (since *w* would then have an empty world counterpart). So, *contra* a version of Tomaszewski’s

³³ Now, it is true in another sense that ‘necessarily, God wills that *w* has chickens’; in every world, it is true that God wills that *w* has chickens. However, that it is true in a sense that ‘necessarily, *w* has chickens’ is not a bad result; as Lewis (1986: 126) contends: “the character of the totality of worlds is not a contingent matter” – if this is so, this does not seem troubling, since we should expect a subdomain to be necessarily the way it is if the total domain is necessarily the way it is. However, we still get contingency: it is not true that ‘necessarily, chickens exist’ since there are worlds that do not have chickens.

objection to this type of rigid-designation, there is no total modal collapse, and there is no question-begging going on.

Another issue concerns extrinsic properties. If it is true of God in w that He wills to create u , then maybe it is true in w that He bears certain relations to beings in u . That is, if in w God possesses intrinsic properties that concern worlds distinct from w , then ought God in w to possess extrinsic properties that concern, say, individuals in worlds distinct from w ? If so, then this will also apply to immanent universals, if they exist; that is, in w it will be true, say, of the immanent universal *greenness* that *greenness* is instantiated by individual x in u . Now, I am not sure this is a problem: in fact, I think I am comfortable with its being true of greenness in w that it is instantiated by x in u – and moreover, it seems that this does not violate the principle that what is true of a world is what is in that world; since we have allowed one and the same thing to exist in multiple worlds, it seems we can predicate of such a thing that it bears relations to other things in other worlds. This is perhaps no stranger than its being true in Ghana that greenness is instantiated by an individual in Ghana but also instantiated by an individual in Australia. Sure, Ghana and Australia are spatiotemporally connected, and are thus part of the same world, but ought spatiotemporal connectedness matter for its being true of greenness in one spatiotemporal region that its instantiated by an individual in another spatiotemporal region? I am not sure it matters. But, at any rate, it seems that for other beings, modal realism allows there to hold relations between individuals across worlds. For example, on counterpart theory, it is true that, say, in w , an individual x stands in a counterpart relation to a non-identical individual y in u .³⁴ Why, then, should something similar not be true of transworld

³⁴ Of course, some may worry that certain transworld relations cannot hold between distinct individuals that reside in distinct worlds. Indeed, Divers (2014) highlights such a problem in relation to spatiotemporal magnitudes: he notes that were counterpart theory to require that spatiotemporal relations hold between counterparts, then counterpart theory faces an issue about contingent

identity? That is, if counterpart theory allows it for it to be true in w that x in w stands in a relation to y in u , then why is it not allowed on transworld identity that it be true in w that x in w stands in a relation to a non-identical thing y in u ?

However, if it *is* inappropriate to say of an immanent universal in w that it bears certain relations to individuals in u , then we have the beginnings of an argument *contra* God's existing in worlds through transworld identity. On theism, it is true that all existence is dependent upon God, given the doctrine of divine sovereignty (i.e. necessarily, God is the being upon whom all existence depends), where the quantifier in the phrase 'all existence' is unrestricted, and thus extends over the totality of the pluriverse; if all existence depends upon God, then God stands in dependency relations to things; if one and the same God exists in multiple worlds and God is necessarily sovereign, then God in w stands in dependency relations to things in other worlds; but, if it is illegitimate to say in some world that something in that world stands in a relation to something else in another world, then God in w cannot stand in dependency relations to things outside w ; but, if God in w cannot stand in dependency relations to things outside w , then it seems that the doctrine of divine sovereignty is false, since it is not true of God in w that He stands in dependency relations to everything that exists. Now, I am unsure that this argument gets off the ground, given that there seems no reason to deny that it is true in w that a transworld being, that resides in w and u , bears relations to things in u , since counterpart theory allows it to be true in w that an individual x bears a relation to an individual y in u . And, one might think that sovereignty is satisfied if 'impossibly, there exists something not sustained by God' is true – and, on Lewisian theism, that *de re* impossibility claim is true, since

spatiotemporal properties, but were counterpart-theory *not* to require that spatiotemporal relations hold between counterparts, then modal realist metaphysics would be imperilled. I shall not discuss this concern, but for a response, see Noonan and Jago (2017).

there exists no world in which something is not sustained in existence by God. However, if one were not satisfied by the transworld identity response to the contingency argument, one could follow Cameron's (2009) other, and Almeida's (2017a; 2017b) and Collier's (2021a) accepted, proposal for accommodating God on Lewisian theism: God exists from the standpoints of all worlds.

4.3 Standpoints of Worlds

For other things – pure sets, for example – that do not vary in their intrinsic properties across worlds, Lewisian theism has the resources to employ the standpoints of worlds mechanism, instead of counterpart theory or transworld identity. Here is Lewis (1983: 39-40): *x* exists from the standpoint of a world, and is thus 'in' that world,³⁵ in the most broad sense, by "belonging to the least restricted domain that is normally – modal metaphysics being deemed abnormal – appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications". On this account then, God exists from the standpoints of all worlds in much the same way that pure sets exist from the standpoints of all worlds.

Now, Almeida (2017a: 7) claims that the problem that he levies at taking God to exist in worlds through transworld identity is "easily avoided" on the standpoints of worlds view – he contends:

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.

³⁵ I use inverted commas for 'in' when speaking of something's belonging to a world by existing from its standpoint (and thus being 'in' that world) as to not confuse this type of belonging to a world with counterpart theory or with transworld identity.

However, the problem (if it is a problem) of conflation still arises, unless there exist worlds in which God is intrinsically *F* and there exist worlds in which He is not intrinsically *F* – but if this is the case, then God is not necessarily simple. Here is why. From the doctrine of divine simplicity, necessarily, if God is *F*, then God is necessarily *F* (26). So, if in *w* God wills to create *w*, and necessarily God's will is intrinsic, then in *u*, God wills to create *w*. So, in all worlds, God wills to create *w*. However, if God's nature is the set of all His essential attributes (as per Almeida), then God's will to create *w* is set-theoretically conflated with God's being, say, omnipotent – the set identified with His omnipotence is identical with the set identified with His will to create *w*. So, we still have conflation. But, as I write above, this may not be a problem for Lewisian theists (or at least it may not be a *specific* problem for Lewisian theists), since on modal realism, there are many set-theoretic conflations, and a set-theoretic account of properties may be rejected anyway. But, do we have the second part of Almeida's objection? That is, is it the case that there lies volitional inconsistency within God such that it is true in *w* He wills to create *w* and *u*? *Contra* Almeida, it seems that we do have volitional inconsistency (if we do not avail ourselves of rigid-designators). For instance, taking God to exist from the standpoint of *w*, it is true in *w* that God wills to create *w*, but it is also true in *w* that He wills to create *u*, given that necessarily, if God is *F*, then God is necessarily *F*, and we are assuming necessarily, God's will is intrinsic. However, Lewisian theists can again appeal to rigid-designators to solve the problem. Accordingly, it is not inconsistent that it is true in *w* that God wills to create *u* – in *w*, His will to create *u* does not compete with His will to create *w*, since He does not will to create *w* with both the qualitative features of *w* and the qualitative features of *u*; instead, it is true in *w*, that God wills to create *w* with *w*'s qualitative features, and

it is also true in w , that He wills to create u (as a world distinct from w) with u 's qualitative features. This solution, I think, is perhaps hinted at by Almeida above, but as we saw earlier, it can also be employed by supporters of transworld identity. A question thence arises: is it theoretically permissible that God's necessity be construed in terms of His existing from the standpoints of all worlds? My present task, however, is not to answer that question; indeed, others have grappled with answers to that question elsewhere.³⁶ The question I need to answer here is: does (27) come out false when we construe God's necessity in terms of His existing from the standpoints of all worlds? If we employ rigid-designators for both worlds and God, then I think it does: it is not true that God's will varies world-to-world – it is just fixed for different worlds such that truths about what God wills for u hold in w , and *vice versa*; but God does not will for w to be like u or that w be a part of u . This, as I argued above, is no more strange and invokes no more volitional inconsistency within God, *mutatis mutandis*, than its being true in Ghana that God wills to create both Australia and Ghana – it is true in Ghana that He wills to create Ghana, and it is true in Ghana that He wills to create Australia, but He does not will to create Ghana/Australia with the qualitative features of both Ghana and Australia. (Again, we could levy a Tomaszewski-style objection to this use of rigid-designation, but if what I write above is correct, then it can equally apply here.) And so, taking God to exist from the standpoints of all worlds, and employing rigid-designation for worlds, allows Lewisian theists to render (27) false – it is not true that there are intrinsic differences in God across worlds. Thus, by taking God to exist from the standpoints of worlds, Lewisian theists can retain God's necessary simplicity and His will's (necessary) intrinsicity,

³⁶ See Vance (2016) and Collier (2019b) for arguments against construing God's necessity in terms of His existing from the standpoints of all worlds, and see Cameron (2009), Almeida (2017a; 2017b), Collier (2021a) for arguments in favour. See Paper 2.

and they do not incur total modal collapse, and no volitional inconsistency within God results.

And so, whilst taking God to exist in worlds through counterpart theory runs into trouble, since it renders (27) true, and thus we have another argument *contra* a counterpart-theoretic account of God's necessity, taking Him to exist in worlds either through transworld identity or from the standpoints of worlds allows Lewisian theists to reject (27), and thus allows them to deny the soundness of the contingency argument.

5 Theistic Ersatzism

At this point, however, one might wonder how Lewisian theism can solve the problem in a way that theistic ersatzism cannot. Here is how. Recall (27): God's possibly willing to create a world w , wherein the universe has n atoms (where $n < 10$), presents a possible intrinsic difference in God from His possibly willing to create a world u , wherein the universe has m atoms (where $m > 10$). Now, on theistic ersatzism, to avoid there being a possible intrinsic difference in God, it must be true that necessarily, God wills in w what He wills in u , and this theistic ersatzists can accommodate. However, on theistic ersatzism, total modal collapse is incurred by accommodating the truth of this claim. On theistic ersatzism, transworld identity is employed for analysing *de re* modal predications of actual world objects. So, let us predicate possible attributes of God. God willed our universe to have chickens, but it seems true that God possibly wills our universe to lack chickens. So, there needs to be a world such that God wills *our* universe to lack chickens – and it is *our* universe here, and not a counterpart of our universe, since transworld identity is employed to analyse *de re* modal claims. So,

taking an ersatz world to be, say, a set of propositions (*pro* Adams (1974)), we then have a world w that contains the proposition: <God wills to create our universe without chickens>. Now, since we are assuming the truth of the claim ‘necessarily, if God is F , and F is intrinsic, then God is necessarily F ’, and since we are assuming necessarily, God’s will is intrinsic, we then get: necessarily, if God wills A in the actual world, He wills A in all possible worlds. However, given this, and since on theistic ersatzism *our* universe exists in w , through transworld identity, we then have all true propositions concerning God’s will that hold in the actual world also holding in w ; thus, we have, in w , the proposition: <God wills to create the universe with chickens>. But, then, in w , we have the subset of propositions: {<God wills to create the universe with chickens>, <God wills to create the universe without chickens>}. But then, we have volitional inconsistency within God, and since necessarily, if God wills A , A occurs, we thence have inconsistency within worlds. But, if we have inconsistency within a set of propositions, that set of propositions does not qualify for world-hood, since worlds are, by ersatzism’s world-definition, consistent set-theoretical structures; thus, w is not a world. So, on theistic ersatzism, only one world exists: the actual world. But, even if I am wrong here and w *does* qualify for world-hood, volitional inconsistency within God is bad enough. However, on Lewisian theism, this problem is avoided: by using counterpart theory when analysing the *de re* modal properties of our universe, we can have an infinite plurality of worlds with universes that differ in infinite qualitative ways from our universe with no inconsistency within either God or worlds.

6 Conclusion

Herein, I have argued (*contra* Tomaszewski) that a valid version of the argument for the contingency problem can be supplied, and have demonstrated how Lewisian theism can render the valid version unsound, by exploring the various ways in which God can be said to exist in worlds. Counterpart theory is unavailable, and we thence have an additional argument against construing God's necessity in counterpart-theoretic terms; but, taking God to exist in worlds either through transworld identity or from the standpoints of worlds allows Lewisian theists to render (27) false, and thence the contingency argument unsound. Moreover, I have shown that theistic ersatzism cannot be employed to render the argument unsound in the way that Lewisian theism can, since inconsistency within worlds and within God is generated. Thus, Lewisian theism has another advantage (over theistic ersatzism): it can render unsound an argument for "the most apparently intractable problem for the doctrine of divine simplicity" (Oppy 2014: 99).

Paper 6

An Argument for God's Existence: Advanced Modalising

1 Introduction

Lewis's (1986) modal realism employs the standard biconditionals of possible worlds semantics:

- (1) Possibly, P iff there exists some world w such that in w : P ,
- (2) Necessarily, P iff in all worlds w : P .

Moreover, on modal realism, we have the existential claim:

- (3) Many worlds exist.

Now, the (T)-axiom, ' $A \rightarrow \Diamond A$ ', seems universally true. So, from the (T)-axiom and (3), we infer:

- (4) Possibly, many worlds exist.

Given (1), for (4) to be true,

- (5) There exists some world w , such that in w : many worlds exist

must be true. But, (5) is false, since, on modal realism, worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, and, in Divers's (2002: 44) words, "what is the case at a world is what is in a world". To see this, some explanation of that ontology is required. An infinite plurality of worlds exists; worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals; there is no overlapping of worlds: i.e. worlds are not spatiotemporally or causally connected to other worlds, and a world's parts are not spatiotemporally or causally connected to another world's parts.¹

Given this world-ontology and given that what is true of a world is what is in that world, (5) is false: as a(n) (improper) part, each world only has itself, since worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals; thus, a world cannot have as parts other worlds. Since (5) is false, (4) is false; so, it is impossible that many worlds exist – but clearly many worlds *do* exist, and since we think the (T)-axiom is universally true, (4) should be true. Moreover, as Lewis (1986: 126) notes, "the character of the totality of worlds is not a contingent matter"; thus, it is not just that many worlds exist, or that possibly many worlds exist, but that necessarily, many worlds exist. How, then, can the claim 'necessarily, many worlds exist' (and thereby (4)) come out true on modal realism, given its metaphysics and (1) and (2)? This is the advanced modalising problem: seemingly true advanced modal claims cannot be verified by (1) and/or (2) with modal realist metaphysics.²

So, what should modal realists do? Revising (1) has proven the most popular strategy. But, this strategy fails, I believe. However, all is not lost. Herein, I argue:

¹ See the Prologue, Lewis (1986) and Divers (2002) for more on modal realism's ontology of worlds.

² See Divers (1999) and Jago (2016) for more.

positing a necessarily existent, omniscient and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being, provides modal realism with a strategy that verifies advanced modal claims with no need to revise (1). That is, positing such a being solves the problem, not with semantics, but with, what I argue is a harmless or at least a justified, ontology. I denominate modal realists who posit such a being 'Lewisian theists', since the being is sufficiently God-like to justify the title 'theist' – however, strictly speaking, modal realists, to avail themselves of this strategy, need not predicate of such a being other classically divine attributes, such as, say, omnibenevolence. However, at the end, I suggest: classical theism (or at least a very similar theism) might have the best account of modal realist worlds. If I am right in all this, then, from modal realism's advanced modalising problem, I will have provided an abductive argument for a classical God-like being. Thus, all modal realists, if they think that the advanced modalising problem is sufficiently troubling, should be Lewisian theists.³

Here is the plan. In section 2, I examine what I take to be the best extant, secular strategies for advanced modalising, and offer some novel objections thereto. In section 3, firstly, I provide a novel, but ultimately flawed, secular strategy that utilises sets to verify advanced modal claims; such a strategy, however, establishes the groundwork for my preferred strategy: positing a classical God-like being. And secondly, I propound this strategy, and supply an abductive argument for a classical God-like being. And, in section 4, I conclude with some modal realist reasons for predicating of this being other classically divine attributes.

³ The term 'Lewisian theist' is Collier's (2021a; 2021b; 2019a). Herein, I use the term slightly loosely, as my abductive argument for a classical God-like being is not an argument for classical theism.

2 The Best Extant Advanced Modalising Strategies

Initially, modal realists might be tempted to concede that (1) is not perfectly general and that (4)'s truth is primitive; that is, (4) is true, not because it is an instance of (1), but because *it just is*. Conceding this, however, forswears modal realism's oft-cited chief advantage: its modal reductionism – anything modal is reducible to something non-modal. Thus, modal realists require a modally reductionist advanced modalising strategy.

I shall consider three strategy-types: the first concerns revising (1), where most of the best extant, secular advanced modalising strategies are tokens of this strategy-type; the second concerns the semantic role of the possibility-operator; and the third concerns utilising some entity or entities within worlds to verify advanced modal claims.⁴

Many tokens of the first strategy-type appeal to counterpart theory, which is employed to analyse *de re* modal claims.⁵ The counterpart-relation is a resemblance/similarity relation, and respects the intrinsic and extrinsic properties of individuals (and is neither transitive nor symmetric), and that, with the exception of being reflexively held, holds between non-identical individuals across non-identical worlds. So, we have the biconditionals:

- (6) x is possibly F iff there exists a world wherein there exists a counterpart of x that is F .

⁴ Many advanced modalising strategies are available; I have chosen what I think are the best. I do not consider Hudson's (1997) and Roca-Reyes's (2018) respective strategies (although Roca-Reyes's strategy also falls prey to my objection to tokens of the first strategy-type).

⁵ See the Prologue, Paper 1 and Lewis (1986: ch4; 1968) for more on counterpart theory.

- (7) x is necessarily F iff in all worlds, there exists a counterpart of x that is F .

Many tokens of this strategy-type do away with quantifying over worlds, but instead quantify over counterparts, and specifically reject the requirement that counterparts of $a_1, \dots, a_n$, for claims like ‘possibly, $A(a_1, \dots, a_n)$ ’, are worldmates (that is, parts of the same world) – thus, “embedded quantifiers” are not restricted “to any particular world” (Jago 2016: 633). (This, of course, has the consequence that *de dicto* claims are interpreted as *de re* claims – more on this below). For instance, Jago (2016: 633), following a suggestion made by Harold Noonan, proposes something like the following:

- (8) Possibly, $A(a_1, \dots, a_n)$ iff there exist respective counterparts of $a_1, \dots, a_n$, $a'_1, \dots, a'_n$, such that it is the case that: $(A)a'_1, \dots, a'_n$.

Since the counterpart relation can be reflexive, every a_i can have itself as a counterpart; thus, $a_1, \dots, a_n$ renders-true ‘possibly, $A(a_1, \dots, a_n)$ ’ – and so (4) is true.

However, (8) has problems. Jago (2016) notes that a *de dicto* possibility claim, like ‘possibly, no chickens exist’ is false, since it is read in a way that is unrestricted to any world. To avoid this, Jago suggests that one may interpret *de dicto* possibility claims as *de re* claims concerning the actual world. Thus, the following is generated: ‘possibly, the actual world is such that therein no chickens exist’. Since the actual world has counterparts that lack chickens, the claim is true. Thence *de dicto* possibility claims are analysed as *de re* possibility claims that concern the actual world, restricting quantifiers thereto. However, this analysis cannot be generalised. As Jago (2016: 634)

highlights, the claim “[i]t is possible that there exists something that is not part of our world” cannot be rendered-true, since it is interpreted as: “there exists a counterpart w of the actual world such that, at w , something is not part of w ”. The problem is that, restricted to w , is that ‘something’– but in w there is not that something to quantify over, so the claim is necessarily false.

A similar account, advanced by Sanson (2016) – which extends Yablo’s (1999) and Yagisawa’s (1992) independently developed modal analysis – I believe avoids Jago’s problem for (8). Here is the strategy. Yagisawa (1992) and Yablo (1999) propose the following (which finds expression in Sanson (2016: 55)):

(9) Possibly, P iff at some thing: P .

‘Thing’, here, can be taken to extend to all quantifiable concrete individuals (which includes worlds). Accordingly, Sanson (2016: 55) extends (9):

(10) Possibly, P iff at some things: P .

Since ‘some things’ does not modify the quantifier such that it is restricted to any particular world – but, instead, restricts the quantifier to collections of things sometimes spread across logical space – Sanson’s strategy verifies (4).

Now, I believe (10) avoids Jago’s problem, since its quantifier is restricted, albeit not to worlds, but simply to ‘things’ (which can include worlds). Accordingly, there are quantificational domains such that, within them, it is not true that chickens exist. For instance, at the quantificational domain consisting of my shoes and my wallet, it is not true, at those things, that chickens exist. So, *de dicto* claims need not be

interpreted as *de re* claims. However, there are two major objections to (10) (one Jago's (2016), the other mine), but since they also concern (8) and the following strategy, I shall provide them later.

Jago (2016) thinks that the best advanced modalising strategy entails rejecting the condition that counterparts cannot surpass in size any world; thus, counterparts of individuals can be larger than worlds. Accordingly, the right-half of (1) should read 'some plurality of worlds exists such that, at that plurality: P'. More precisely (the following finds expression in Jago (2016: 636)):

- (11) Possibly, $A(a_1, \dots, a_n)$ iff there exist worlds $w_1, \dots, w_n$ and respective counterparts of $a_1, \dots, a_n$, $a'_1, \dots, a'_n$, where every a_i is a part of the plurality of $w_1, \dots, w_n$, and, at the plurality of $w_1, \dots, w_n$, it is the case that: $A(a'_1, \dots, a'_n)$.

So, Jago thinks that (11) verifies (4). However, there are problems.⁶ First, as Jago (2016) notes, (11) distorts the notion of truth *simpliciter*, where P is true *simpliciter*, on modal realism, iff P is true relative to the world in which P is uttered. (11), however, quantifies over *pluralities* of worlds; thus, there are two options: truth *simpliciter* is truth relative either to a world or to a plurality of worlds. The first option ends in trouble. Worlds are sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals; so, truth *simpliciter* is truth relative thereto. Moreover, for restricted quantificational contexts, it is analytic that truth *simpliciter* is truth relative to a world. However, on (11), it is false, say, that 'only two chickens exist and those two chickens are not spatiotemporally connected', but it

⁶ Jago (2016) does not demonstrate that (11) can be used as an analysis of *de dicto* claims; I shall take it that there is some legitimate way that all *de dicto* claims can be taken as *de re* claims, with (11) as the analysis. That is, I shall give Jago the benefit of the doubt here, and discuss other problems with (11).

could be true. The problem, says Jago (2016: 637), arises from the fact that, analytically, this claim is false *simpliciter*, and whatever is false, analytically, is impossible.

The second option is equally troubling. On this option, truth *simpliciter* is truth relative to a plurality of worlds (that includes the world of utterance). But, since many pluralities of worlds, that include the world of utterance, exist, we have two sub-options: is P true *simpliciter* iff P is true relative to some such pluralities, or to all such pluralities? If the latter, the set of what is true *simpliciter* is inadmissibly small. If the former, a contradiction arises: both ‘no chickens exist’ and its negation are true *simpliciter*. So, Jago (2016: 637) notes, “we must reject this option”. But, Jago thinks, the second horn can be rebutted if one, like Bricker (2001), rejects the indexicality of ‘actuality’ – but doing so is incompatible with modal realist metaphysics.⁷ So, modal realists cannot accept (11). (Jago thinks the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of (8), and I also think the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of (10)).

But, (8), (10) and (11) face a more general problem that Jago has not noticed.⁸ In fact, *any* strategy that seeks to revise (1) in a way similar to (8), (10) and (11) faces this problem – and since revising (1) is the most popular strategy-type, my objection should present a significant concern, if I am right.

Recall that, on (8) and (10), modal claims are rendered-true by individuals’ qualitative features, with no requirement that a world exists such that all the individuals $a'_1, \dots, a'_n$ reside therein to render-true ‘possibly: $A(a_1, \dots, a_n)$ ’; and, on (11), modal claims are rendered-true by the qualitative features of pluralities of worlds (where each counterpart of $a_1, \dots, a_n$ must reside in the selected plurality of worlds, but need not

⁷ McDaniel (2006) also rejects actuality’s indexicality.

⁸ The Brickerian also faces this problem, and so does Roca-Reyes (2018).

reside in any particular world, and again there need not exist any world wherein all counterparts of $a_1, \dots, a_n$ reside). The problem here concerns the question: what renders modal claims true? On modal realism, modal truth is parasitic upon worlds, where worlds are maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. Moreover, it seems conceptually true that something is a world iff it plays the world-role – the starring role of the world-role is the rendering-true of modal claims (and quite plausibly the performing of this role is sufficient for something's being a world).⁹ Broadly, the world-role is a role (plausibly exclusively) played by entities of the same ontological kind.

However, on (8), (10) and (11), respectively, what performs the world-role may be something ontologically different from maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. On (8), for instance, *counterparts* play the world-role (where those counterparts may not be identified with maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, but with their inhabitants); and, on (11), for instance, *pluralities* of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals play the world-role.¹⁰ So, if modal realists are uneasy about abandoning actuality's indexicality, since it requires a violation of modal realist metaphysics, modal realists should be especially uneasy about accepting (8), (10) or (11). By adopting (8), (10), or (11), modal realists adopt a different world-ontology.¹¹

⁹ There are also sub-roles: truth-relativising (P is true in w) and providing locations for *possibilia* (x exists in w).

¹⁰ I say 'may', as maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals can be counterparts themselves.

¹¹ Now, on (8), one may say: 'But, on Lewis's account, counterparts render *de re* modal claims true, so why is there a problem? The only difference is: there need not be any one world wherein all counterparts of $a_1, \dots, a_n$ reside.' This is false: counterpart theory appeals to worlds and their representations of certain things through their having certain parts; it is the qualitative features of worlds that render-true *de re* modal claims. A world represents *de re* that ducks exist by having a part that sufficiently resembles an actual world duck; worlds, that is, play world-roles by being composed in certain ways. So, the above response miscarries: it is not duck counterparts *themselves* that render-true the claim 'my duck is possibly fat'; rather it is a world that represents something that sufficiently resembles my actual world duck, where that duck is fat, that renders-true the claim.

The problem, however, is worse than I have hitherto given cause to believe. Originally, when analysing (4), ‘worlds’ were identified as maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. But, since the world-role, under, for instance, (11), is performed by a *plurality* of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, what ‘worlds’ refers to in (4) is unclear. Indeed, on (11), (4) may be elliptical for:

(4*) Possibly, many pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals exist.

But, we originally thought that (4) meant:

(4**) Possibly, many maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals exist.

Interpreting (4) as (4**), however, does not seem faithful to the original advanced modalising problem: we wanted to know if modal claims concerning multiple entities that perform the world-role are true, and, if not, how we should revise our semantics so that they be true. (4**) does not satisfy this, since, on (11), the world-role is performed by something different from maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. Thus, we have (4*). But, if (4) is correctly interpreted as (4*), the following results when we analyse (4*) by (11):

(taking ‘world’ as a plurality of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals)

- (12) Possibly, there exist many pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, $a_1, \dots, a_n$, iff there exist many pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, $w_1, \dots, w_n$, and there exist respective counterparts of the pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, $a_1, \dots, a_n, a'_1, \dots, a'_n$, where every a_i is a part of the plurality of the pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, $w_1, \dots, w_n$, and, at the plurality of the pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, $w_1, \dots, w_n$, it is the case that: there exist many pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, $a'_1, \dots, a'_n$.

But, here, a token of a different entity-type has been posited to play the world-role: a plurality of pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals. If worlds are now pluralities of pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals, are there many of them? If not, then (4) is false; so, there must be many of them, if (4) is true. But, if there are many of them, we can apply the (T)-axiom to get the following: 'possibly, there exist many pluralities of pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals'. Employing (11) to analyse this resultant claim involves positing a token of yet a different entity-type to play the world-role: a world is a plurality of pluralities of pluralities of maximal mereological sums of spatiotemporally connected individuals... Clearly, this process is objectionably repeatable. The problem is generated by there

being ‘worlds’ referred to early in the modal analysis, and then a token of a different entity-type being posited to play the world-role at the end of the analysis.¹²

Likewise, for (8) and (10), there is a problem of interpreting (4). (4) was originally interpreted as (4**), but under (8) it may instead be interpreted as:

(4***) Possibly, many counterparts exist.

Since counterparts, on (8), play the world-role, we may think that (4***) is more faithful to the original advanced modalising problem. But, if so, (4***) is rendered-true if there exists, in all logical space, only two spatiotemporally connected individuals. This is so, since there is no worlds-modifier for quantification over counterparts, and since the counterpart-relation can be reflexive, there will be two *relata* for the counterpart-relation that holds between an individual and itself, and if there are two individuals in logical space, then (since individuals can have themselves as counterparts) it will be true that there are many counterparts. But this seems not right: ‘possibly, many worlds exist’ would be true if, say, in all logical space, only two spatiotemporally related photons existed. (*Mutatis mutandis*, this is also true of (10)).

So, let us consider the final extant advanced modalising strategy: Divers’s (1999) redundancy analysis. Divers’s strategy relies upon the notion that non-modal quantificational sentences can be interpreted restrictedly, such that their quantifiers are restricted to the world of utterance, or unrestrictedly, such that their quantifiers range over all logical space. According to Divers (1999: 229), “the semantic function of a possibility operator on a non-modal quantificational sentence is always that of

¹² (11) might also face a technical problem: maybe we cannot have superplural quantification (or even super-superplural quantification). (11) is committed to superplural quantification when analysing (4), read as (4*), as we saw in (12). If superplural quantification is non-viable, then (11) is also non-viable. See Linnebo (2017) for more on plural quantification.

quantifying in, by way of a variable that is already reserved for worlds". Thus, when the sentence 'in w : P ' is prefixed with the possibility-operator, the sentence is modified to 'some world w exists such that in w : P '. However, by understanding the possibility-operator's semantic function in this way, when a quantificational sentence lacks 'in w ', a possibility-operator has nothing to modify; thus, when prefixing a quantificational sentence, which lacks 'in w ', with the possibility-operator, no semantic function is performed thereby. Thus, if this is so, unrestricted interpretations of quantificational sentences, which lack 'in w ', and which are prefixed with the possibility-operator, have the same content as their corresponding non-possibility-operator-prefixed quantificational sentences. Now, (4) is to be read unrestrictedly, or else it be false. (4) also has no instance of 'in w '. Thus, the possibility-operator does not modify the sentence, and so (4) has the same content as 'many worlds exist'. Divers's strategy, thence, avoids (4)'s being read as (5); the possibility-operator has no semantic function in (4), and so (4) is not to be interpreted as an instance of the form 'some world w exists such that in w : P '.

This strategy, however, faces a problem, as noted by Jago (2016: 630-1). The problem concerns unrestricted quantificational sentences which, when prefixed with the necessity-operator, should, but do not, change in truth-value. Take my horse, George, who is fatter than another worldly horse, Sam. It should be contingent that George is fatter than Sam. This claim must be read unrestrictedly, since its restricted reading commits George and Sam to being worldmates, which they are not – so we have: '(in logical space), George is fatter than Sam'. On Divers's strategy, this sentence can be prefixed with the necessity-operator and its truth-value does not change. But, it should be contingent that George is fatter than Sam – that is, prefixing

the sentence with the necessity-operator should make the sentence false. Thus, modal realists should reject Divers's strategy.

The above strategies I take to be the best extant, secular strategies; all fail. I now provide two new strategies.

3 Two New Advanced Modalising Strategies

The two strategies I now develop attempt to solve the advanced modalising problem not with semantics, but with ontology that is already available to or harmonious with or justified on modal realism; that is, both strategies keep (1), but the first strategy (SET) appeals to sets, and the second (KNOW) posits a necessarily existent, omniscient, supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being (i.e. something like the classical God). SET – which, in an inchoate form, has been suggested to me a few times (specifically at a conference in Aberdeen (March 2019)) – ultimately fails, but KNOW succeeds: thus, if I am right, I will have given modal realists an abductive argument for a classical God-like being.

3.1. SET

For Lewis (1983: 39-40), pure sets exist – in the broadest sense – ‘in’ a world by existing *from its standpoint* by “belonging to the least restricted domain that is normally – modal metaphysics being deemed abnormal – appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications”.¹³ However, impure sets exist – says Lewis (1986: 83) –

¹³ Henceforth I use ‘in’, using inverted commas, to show that I am speaking of something's being in a world by existing from its standpoint.

“where their members *are*”. SET proposes that all pure and impure sets exist from the standpoints of all worlds. Although SET is not wholly faithful to Lewis’s view of the location of impure sets, this is not the grandest of violations of Lewisianism – SET does not, for instance, revise (1) or the individuation conditions for worlds, and nor does it posit tokens of an additional entity-type to play the world-role; it simply moves ‘where’ impure sets are located, and from whose standpoints they exist.

From the above, sets of worlds are not located where their members are located, but exist from the standpoints of all worlds. Thus, a world w exists such that the set containing the worlds u and v , $\{u, v\}$, exists ‘in’ w . If $\{u, v\}$ exists ‘in’ w , then, given (1), it is *possible* that $\{u, v\}$ exists. Moreover, for any set, necessarily, if a set is membered, its members exist somewhere. So, it is true ‘in’ w that u and v exist somewhere – they do not exist in w , but it is true that they exist (unrestrictedly, somewhere in logical space), since they are members of a set that exists ‘in’ w , and, necessarily, if a set is membered, its members exist. So, SET satisfies modal realism’s requirement that “what is the case at a world is what is in a world”, since sets exist ‘in’ the world in one way (the standpoint way) (Divers 2002: 44). This machinery can be used to verify (4): (4) is true, since a world w exists such that, in w , it is true that many worlds exist, since, ‘in’ w , $\{u, v\}$ exists, and since necessarily, if a set is membered, its members exist, u and v exist. But, u and v do not exist in w , as, say, parts of w , since SET rejects that impure sets are located where their members are located; all impure sets exist from the standpoints of all worlds. Thus, on this strategy, it is not true that, say, I exist as, say, a part in all worlds since my singleton exists ‘in’ all worlds; instead, it is true ‘in’ all worlds that my singleton exists, and my singleton’s concrete member exists in the actual world ($@$). So, ‘in’ w , where $w \neq @$, it is true that my singleton

exists, and thus it is true that I exist somewhere in logical space; that is, 'in' w , it is true that I exist as a world-part of $@$, not of w .

There are problems with SET, however.

The first concerns how SET verifies claims like 'in w , chickens exist'. This claim is true even if chickens are not world-parts of w , since impure sets that have chickens as members exist 'in' w . Thus, no world exists such that therein it is true that chickens do not exist.

A response, here, is straightforward. The claim 'in w , chickens exist' is ambiguous. If it is disambiguated as: 'in w , it is true that, in logical space (i.e. unrestrictedly), chickens exist', then the claim is true, since, in w , there exist sets that have chickens as members, and necessarily, if a set is membered, its members exist (but not necessarily as world-parts of the world in which that set exists). If it is disambiguated as: 'in w , sets that have chickens as members exist', then it is true. If it is disambiguated as: 'in w , it is true therein that chickens exist as world-parts of w ', then if chickens do not exist in w as world-parts of w , then it is false. So, once the claim is properly disambiguated, the problem disappears.

Another problem concerns the conditions for a set's belonging to a world. Recall Lewis (1983: 39-40): a set exists from the standpoint of a world by "belonging to the least restricted domain that is normally – modal metaphysics being deemed abnormal – appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications". The rub comes from the phrase "normally appropriate". Whilst it might be normally appropriate to include my laptop's singleton in the least restricted domain over which we evaluate quantifications at $@$, it might not be normally appropriate to include $\{u, v\}$. If this is so, then $\{u, v\}$ ought not exist from the standpoint of (at least) $@$.

A response is forthcoming. Firstly, it is not clear that our intuitions regarding actual world quantifications say much about pure sets: pure sets do not reside in worlds in the way that concreta do; they are neither spatiotemporally nor causally related to worlds – why, then, when we quantify over the totality of @, should we expect to find pure sets? Well, we might think that pure sets should exist from @’s standpoint (partly) because they exist *out there somewhere in logical space*, but lie very much within @’s ordinary catalogue of existence. What lies in this ordinary catalogue is perhaps subject to change and context dependent. Why then, need $\{u, v\}$ be excluded from being amongst entities that exist from @’s standpoint? For SET-advocates, $\{u, v\}$ – like, say, the empty set – exists *out there somewhere in logical space*, but very much lies within their ordinary catalogue of existence.

But secondly, there might be stronger reason to include (at least some) sets of worlds and world-parts in the least restricted domain that is normally appropriate in evaluating truth at the actual world of quantifications than to include pure sets therein. We might think that if a world w , or one of w ’s parts, is a member of a set s , and sets exist from the standpoints of worlds, s should exist from w ’s standpoint. Since, for example, the set $\{@, u, v\}$ includes the actual world, we might expect $\{@, u, v\}$ to be included in the least restricted domain that is normally appropriate in evaluating the truth of quantifications at @. But, given modal realism’s use of Zermelo-Fraenkel axioms plus the axiom of choice (ZFC), necessarily, if $\{@, u, v\}$ exists ‘in’ @, then so does $\{u, v\}$ and so does $\{u\}$ and $\{v\}$. So, if there exists a set of all worlds – something I discuss later – then all world-singletons exist ‘in’ all worlds.

But, thirdly, if the phrase “normally appropriate” raises difficulty, it seems open to modal realists to revise the conditions for existing from the standpoint of a world; since the location of impure sets has been revised, revising accordingly the conditions

for existing from the standpoints of worlds is not too outlandish. Since we are dealing with advanced modal claims, SET-advocates could say that $\{ @, u, v \}$ does not exist 'in' worlds in normal contexts, but does in contexts that are abnormal (or advanced); that is, SET-advocates could posit the following type of 'being in a world' relation:

- (12) Something exists from the *furthest standpoint* of a world by belonging to the least restricted domain that is *abnormally appropriate* in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications, where 'abnormally appropriate' refers to truth-evaluative contexts that concern advanced modal claims.

So, in abnormal quantificational contexts, all sets exist from the (furthest) standpoint of some world. But that does not mean that all impure sets' concrete members exist in that world – it is simply that, in abnormal contexts, those sets exist from the (furthest) standpoint of that world. So, something x is said only to exist from the (furthest) standpoint of a world w when the context is such that x ought to be included in the domain for evaluating w 's quantifications. And, perhaps, this should not worry modal realists, since Lewis (1986: 95) contends that what is actual is not "inflexible".¹⁴

Now, there is another worry. Since, on modal realism, propositions are taken as sets of worlds and properties are taken as sets of their instances, all propositions and all properties exist from the (furthest) standpoints of all worlds. So, for example, a property exists 'in' a world, despite having no instances therein. This perhaps seems wrong.

¹⁴ See Lewis (1986: ch1.9) on actuality.

A response is forthcoming: by *not* allowing impure sets to exist from the (furthest) standpoints of worlds, modal realists are committed to saying that, restrictedly speaking, certain propositions (i.e. those that are not true of the world of utterance) do not exist – thus, modal realists are committed to saying that what propositions there are is contingent. But it seems that what propositions there are is non-contingent, only (for contingently true propositions) their respective *truth-values* are contingent, not their existence. Likewise, *mutatis mutandis*, for properties. Thus, it seems that all propositions and properties *should* exist from the (furthest) standpoints of worlds; the universe of propositions and properties is non-contingent. So, there is reason for SET-advocates to deny the set-theoretic principle that, necessarily, if a membered impure set exists ‘in’ a world, its concrete members exist therein. But, this does not entail a rejection of the more basic principle that, necessarily, if a membered impure set exists, its members exist. That principle is true, just an impure set’s members might not exist in *this* world, but in *that* world instead – but, in all worlds, it is true that those members *exist*, they just might be world-parts of different worlds within logical space.

But, SET faces another problem. Examine how SET renders-true some advanced modal claims. Take the claim: ‘possibly, Jack, in w , and Jill, in u , are not worldmates ($w \neq u$), but there exists a maximal mereological sum of Jack and Jill, v ’. SET can verify this claim: ‘in’ @ (for example), there exist enough sets (e.g. $\{w\}$ and sets for all w ’s parts, $\{u\}$ and sets for all u ’s parts, and $\{v\}$ and sets for all v ’s parts) such that, it is true, ‘in’ @, that Jack, in w , and Jill, in u , are not worldmates, but there exists a maximal mereological sum of Jack and Jill, v ’. Take another claim: ‘possibly, Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ’. For modal realism, relations are n -tuples of related individuals. On SET, to account for the (advanced) possibility of this relation, there

must exist a set containing all the sets of ordered pairs (2-tuples) of individuals that instance the *fatter than* relation, such that the ordered pair (Jack, Jill) = $\{\{Jack\}, \{Jack, Jill\}\}$ is a member thereof. Is there such a set? SET says yes. On SET, both $\{Jack\}$ and $\{Jill\}$ exist 'in' all worlds, and if Jack is fatter than Jill, then given ZFC, there exists 'in' all worlds $\{\{Jack\}, \{Jack, Jill\}\}$, which is well-ordered according to magnitude of fatness.¹⁵ $\{\{Jack\}, \{Jack, Jill\}\}$ is a member of the set of all instances of the *fatter than* relation, which, for SET, exists 'in' all worlds. So, there is a world w such that in w it is true that Jack is fatter than Jill, despite Jack's not being a worldmate of Jill. So, the claim 'possibly, Jack is fatter than Jill' is true.

The problem, however, is that 'Jack is fatter than Jill' is also *necessary*. If it is sufficient for its being possible that Jack is fatter than Jill that there exists a world 'in' which the set of all ordered pairs of individuals that instance the *fatter than* relation exists and $\{\{Jack\}, \{Jack, Jill\}\}$ is a member thereof, then since $\{\{Jack\}, \{Jack, Jill\}\}$ exists 'in' all worlds, as being a subset of the set of all ordered pairs that instance the *fatter than* relation, it is then necessary that Jack is fatter than Jill; that is, it is true in all worlds that Jack is fatter than Jill.

But, it is not disastrous that 'Jack is fatter than Jill' is necessarily true in one sense. Recall that, for Lewis, necessarily, logical space is the way it is. Now, if a domain is necessarily the way it is, all its subdomains are necessarily the way they are. So, assuming logical space is necessarily the way it is (and that SET can render this true), @ is necessarily the way it is, and so I am necessarily the way I am. *In one*

¹⁵ Some might worry about the phrase 'Jack is fatter than Jill', since some might think that this transworld-relation is not permitted on modal realism. Divers (2014) has noted this problem, specifically for transworld-relations of spatiotemporal magnitudes: if the *relata* need be spatiotemporally related, then a problem for counterpart-theory concerning contingent spatiotemporal properties arises, but if the *relata* need not be spatiotemporally related, then Divers believes that, among other things, Lewisian metaphysics is threatened. I shall not concern myself with this worry, since it affects all modal realisms discussed herein. For a response, see Noonan and Jago (2017).

sense. But, *in another sense*, it is contingent that I am the way I am, since I have a qualitatively distinct otherworldly counterpart. That *de re* modal properties of (at least some) individuals vary across worlds is all good. With this in mind, one could note that whilst it is true in all worlds that Jack is fatter than Jill, since $\{\{Jack\}, \{Jack, Jill\}\}$, as a subset of the set of all ordered pairs that instance the *fatter than* relation, exists 'in' all worlds, it is still contingent that Jack is fatter than Jill, since Jack has a counterpart, $Jack_c$, in some world i , that is thinner than Jill, in u , and $\{\{Jack_c\}, \{Jack_c, Jill\}\}$ is a subset of the set of all ordered pairs that instance the *fatter than* relation and exists 'in' all worlds. So, SET provides contingency after all, whilst allowing sense to be made of its being necessarily true that *Jack*, and not *Jack_c*, is fatter than Jill.¹⁶

But there is another problem. I have just mentioned that Lewis thinks that logical space is necessarily the way it is. But, then, 'in' all worlds, does SET need the set of all worlds to exist? Now, however, Pruss's (2001) cardinality objection looms.

Pruss (2001: 171) provides his unrestricted principle of recombination: "for any thing and any number n (possibly infinite), there is a possible world that contains exactly n duplicates of that thing". Moreover, Pruss notes that current physics permits more than one boson to occupy the same spatial region. From this, Pruss (2001: 171-172) provides his objection:

For a *reductio*, suppose that the collection of all possible worlds forms a set, W . Let n be any cardinality greater than the cardinality of this set (for instance, by Cantor's diagonal argument, we can let n be the cardinality of the power set of W). Assuming the Axiom of Choice, there then exists an infinite number n^* , not less than n , which has the property that there are exactly n different infinite cardinalities between $\aleph_0$ (the cardinality of the set of integers), inclusive, and n^* , exclusive. The number n^* is denoted by $\aleph_n$, the n th element in the aleph sequence. In other words, there exist exactly n distinct cardinal numbers m satisfying the inequality $\aleph_0 \leq m < n^*$. The unrestricted principle of recombination then says that for every such number m , there is a possible world, call it w_m ,

¹⁶ In 3.2, I examine more thoroughly the relationship between contingency and necessity.

which contains exactly m photons. Now, if m and m' are different, then w_m and $w_{m'}$ are distinct since then they contain different numbers of photons. Hence, there are at least n distinct worlds of the form w_m , since there was one such world for every value of m satisfying $0 \leq m < n^*$, and there were n values of m satisfying that inequality. Hence, there are at least n distinct possible worlds, which contradicts the assumption that n was greater than the cardinality of W . Therefore, we have a *reductio ad absurdum* of the assumption that the collection of all possible worlds forms a set.

Thus, Pruss (2001: 172) contends: “the unrestricted principle of recombination entails... that the collection of all possible worlds is not a set”.¹⁷

Now, I think even if no set of all worlds exists, SET can still verify the claim ‘necessarily, logical space is the way it is’. Every world’s singleton exists ‘in’ all worlds – so, it is true, in all worlds, that all worlds exist. Sure, the Axiom of Choice in relation to the universe of world-singletons throws up a problem, but it is worth noting that Pruss’s objection affects all modal realisms discussed hitherto.

However, there is a specific problem for SET that arises from Pruss’s objection, the obvious solution to which renders SET less acceptable than the next strategy (KNOW). Recall the claim: ‘possibly, Jack, in w , and Jill, in u , are not worldmates ($w \neq u$), but there exists a maximal mereological sum of Jack and Jill, v ’. This should have a corresponding proposition. Since it is true ‘in’ all worlds, it should be identified with the set of all worlds. But, there is no set of all worlds. In an effort to avoid positing non-set abstract objects to play the proposition-role, modal realists could identify propositions as ideas in the mind of a necessarily existent, omniscient, and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating being; that way, propositions are not identified with additionally posited non-set abstract objects, thus no violation of parsimony occurs.¹⁸

But, then it is not clear why one would espouse SET over my next strategy, KNOW,

¹⁷ Pruss (2001: 172-173) has another argument which does not rely upon the Axiom of Choice.

¹⁸ See Craig (2016; 2014) for this account of abstracta. See Gould (2014) and Davidson (2019) for more on God and abstracta.

since KNOW avails itself of such a mind to do just this and other things. Also, solving the problem in this way undercuts part of the independent motivation for contending that all impure sets exist ‘in’ all worlds: the universe of propositions is necessarily the way it is.¹⁹

So, SET verifies advanced modal claims without revising (1) or the individuation conditions for worlds. But, given Pruss’s objection, SET cannot provide corresponding propositions for advanced modal claims, without breaking qualitative parsimony, (plausibly) unless a necessarily existent, omniscient, and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining mind is posited.

I shall now demonstrate that, by appealing to the mind of a necessarily existent, omniscient, and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being, modal realism can verify advanced modal claims in a way that avoids Pruss’s objection, without revising (1) or the individuation conditions for worlds, or violating qualitative parsimony.

3.2. KNOW

On this strategy, I assume that, necessarily, if the necessarily existent, omniscient, and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being knows that P, P is true. (Hereafter, for simplicity, I refer to this being as ‘God’, and to KNOW-advocates as ‘Lewisian theists’). Moreover, necessarily, for any true proposition P, God knows that P.²⁰ So, on Lewisian theism, given God’s necessary existence and omniscience,

¹⁹ Although, I do think Pruss’s objection can be rebutted by Lewisian theists by arguing *à la* Pruss (2019) that all infinite sets have the same cardinality; but this can wait for another day.

²⁰ For variants of this definition of omniscience, see Swinburne (2016; 1993) – and for alternative definitions, see Zagzebski (2007), Plantinga (1974b), Davis (1983) and Gale (1991). I shall ignore disputes concerning the definition and the scope of the quantifier therein.

in all worlds, God knows all true propositions, where His knowledge is infallible. So, necessarily, if 'a world exists such that therein chickens exist' is true, God knows it is true; and, necessarily, if God knows 'a world exists such that therein chickens exist' is true, then it is true. And, if 'a world exists such that therein chickens exist' is true, then in all worlds God knows this. The hope, then, is that Lewisian theists can posit a necessarily existent and omniscient being to verify advanced modal claims.

So, how does KNOW verify advanced modal claims? Take the claim (A) 'possibly, Jack, in w , and Jill, in u , are not worldmates ($w \neq u$), but there exists a maximal mereological sum of Jack and Jill, v '. Now, (from logical space's perspective) A's non-modal version A^* is true; but on the original analysis A^* is not true in any particular world, and thus A comes out false on (4). Lewisian theists, by positing God, can, I think, make it the case that in a world A^* is true. Here is how. Since God exists in @ (since He exists in all worlds), and since (necessarily) God knows A^* (since (necessarily) He knows all true propositions), and since necessarily, if God knows P, P is true, and since it is the case that P in a world w iff in w it is true that P, it is therefore the case that in @ it is true that A^* ; but, if it is true in @ that A^* , then A is true on (4). That is, A is true on (4), since there exists a possible world @ such that in @ it is true that A^* – and this is because God exists in @, He knows that A^* , and His knowing A^* entails A^* 's truth. This, however, is not to say that A^* is true *because* God knows it; it is merely to say that A^* is true 'in @' because God knows it and (necessarily) if He knows P, then P is true, and God is one of @'s inhabitants and "what is the case at a world is what is in a world" (Divers 2002: 44). That is, God's knowledge does not make A^* true; it only makes A^* true 'in @' – that is, God's knowledge contributes to @'s being such that in @, A^* is true. Here is another example: 'possibly, Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u '. Since God exists in @ (since He exists in all worlds), and since

(necessarily) God knows the claim's non-modal version, 'Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ' (since (necessarily) He knows all true propositions), and since necessarily, if God knows P , P is true, and since P is the case in a world w iff in w it is true that P , it is therefore the case in $@$ that 'Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ' is true; but, if it is true in $@$ that 'Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ', then 'possibly, Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ' is true on (4). This is not to say, however, that the claim 'Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ' is true *because* God knows it; it is merely to say that 'Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ' is true 'in $@$ ' because God knows it and (necessarily) if He knows P , then P is true, and God is one of $@$'s inhabitants and "what is the case at a world is what is in a world" (Divers 2002: 44). That is, God's knowledge does not make 'Jack, in w , is fatter than Jill, in u ' true; it only makes the claim true 'in $@$ '. Now, again, like with SET, this claim comes out necessary *in one sense* (since in all worlds, God knows it is true), but it is still contingent *in another sense* (since God knows that Jack has a counterpart, Jack_c, in some world i , that is thinner than Jill, in u).²¹ And like SET, KNOW satisfies modal realism's requirement that "what is the case at a world is what is in a world", since God exists in the world in some sense, and, in the world, He knows everything about logical space, and (necessarily) if He knows P , then P is true (Divers 2002: 44).²² Moreover, since Lewisian theists avail themselves of God's knowledge to verify advanced modal claims, God needs to exist necessarily and be necessarily omniscient – otherwise, worlds would exist such that therein it is false, say, that 'logical space is shaped in such-and-such a way', for in these worlds, either God would not exist or would exist but not know this claim's truth.

²¹ I say more about this below.

²² Below I say more about how God exists in worlds.

Now, on KNOW, a change to modal realism is necessary: the identification of propositions. As noted, SET-advocates must identify propositions with something other than sets of worlds; one economical way of doing this is to identify propositions with divine ideas. Lewisian theists must also do this – or something similar – if God is to know all true, advanced modal propositions, for otherwise, given Pruss’s objection, there would not exist the proposition that logical space is shaped in such-and-such a way, but this is needed on KNOW if it is to be true that logical space is necessarily the way it is.²³ But this, I think, is not a problem for Lewisian theism, and is, in fact, a virtue. Here I enumerate some virtues of the theory.

If all propositions can be identified with (perhaps members of a subgroup of) divine ideas – and so it is required of God that He be a necessarily supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being – then Lewisian theism does not violate qualitative parsimony, since members of an additional ontological category are not posited to play the proposition-role, since God and so His ideas are concrete, and standard modal realism accepts the ontological category of the concrete. And, if *all* abstracta can be identified with divine ideas and so only concreta exist (since God and so His ideas are concrete), then if one, *prima facie*, were worried about, strictly-speaking, violating Lewisian metaphysics, Lewisian theism can allay this worry by offering a significantly more qualitatively parsimonious ontology than that offered by standard modal realism. Further, if one thinks that the universe of propositions does not vary across worlds, Lewisian theists can account for this by maintaining that God’s ideas do not vary world-to-world; but equally, if one thinks that the universe of propositions does vary world-to-world, Lewisian theists can alternatively maintain that

²³ I do not take a stand on whether Lewisian theists should identify propositions, along with other abstracta, with divine ideas over divine concepts, over divine thoughts, etc.

at least some of God's ideas vary world-to-world – the theory can be suitably flexible on such matters. Moreover, if one were perturbed by the fact that propositions as sets of worlds (and properties as sets of their instances) fail to allow for hyperintensional distinctions, and perhaps one also thought that sets of worlds are not appropriate for truth-bearing, and perhaps thought that tokens of a type of mental state are more appropriate, then one would likely be attracted to KNOW's proposal for propositions (and properties).²⁴

Additionally, depending upon how God exists in all worlds, making such a move might allow Lewisian theists to dispense with the concept of something's existing 'in' a world by existing from its standpoint. Indeed, were counterpart theory, or perhaps transworld identity, to be invoked to account for God's necessity, then, since pure sets have been either dispensed with altogether or located within God's mind, nothing would exist from the standpoint of a world. Now, whilst classical theists might worry about there being only one God in logical space and so might favour transworld identity (or indeed the standpoints of worlds mechanism), non-classical Lewisian theists might not harbour such worries. And so, Lewisian theism would provide more theoretical economy than standard modal realism: there would, at most, be two ways of existing in a world (i.e. wholly as a part of a world (and so counterpart theory is used) and (perhaps) wholly as a part of several worlds (and so transworld identity is used)), rather than three.²⁵

²⁴ For those attracted to impossible worlds, and who hold the biconditional 'impossibly, P iff there exists an impossible world in which: P', KNOW can offer an account thereof. An impossible world could be taken as a collection of ideas in God's mind, the conjunction of which does not map onto what is true of/(in/at) a Lewisian world. So, positing impossible worlds can be ontologically innocent.

²⁵ See Papers 1 and 2 for more. Whilst I favour a standpoints-of-worlds view for Lewisian (classical) theism, I think that counterpart theory might be able to do the work required for Lewisian non-classical theists.

Further, it may be that by positing God, more sense can be made of the accessibility relation's universality (– which means it holds between all worlds such that any world is accessible to any other (i.e. any world can 'see' any other); thus, metaphysical possibility and necessity are modelled, respectively, by existential and universal quantification over all worlds, with the accessibility relation placing no restrictions upon the domain of quantification). Now, taking the accessibility relation as universal renders both the (4)-axiom, ' $\Box A \rightarrow \Box \Box A$ ', and the (5)-axiom, ' $\Diamond A \rightarrow \Box \Diamond A$ ', valid, and such axioms should be valid within modal realism. However, as Melia (2003: 91) notes, "[i]n the context of absolute necessity, the notion of *accessibility* is not a natural idea". Lewisian theists, however, can make at least more conceptual sense of how any world is accessible to any other: a being exists in all worlds that has knowledge of the existence and qualitative features of all worlds: such a being can epistemically 'see' all worlds – all worlds are epistemically accessible to God.²⁶

Thus, there is good reason for modal realists to posit a necessarily existent, omniscient, supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being. In all worlds, what is taken as abstract on standard modal realism, for Lewisian theism, is concrete by being located within God's mind, and so even fewer ontological primitives are given – i.e. instead of positing abstract sets and concrete individuals, Lewisian theism only posits concrete individuals – and perhaps hyperintensionality is thereby gained, and 'the universe of propositions does not vary across worlds' can thereby be verified.²⁷ Thus, KNOW provides all the benefits that SET provides, and more, and avoids all its costs (especially, Pruss's objection).

However, there are some worries for KNOW.

²⁶ God, then, supplies a metaphysical underpinning of the accessibility relation's reflexivity, symmetry and transitivity (under KT5).

²⁷ See Craig (2016; 2014) on locating abstracta, like propositions, within God's mind.

Like with SET, there is a worry that ‘in w , chickens exist’ will be true even if in w chickens are not world-parts of w , since God knows that some chickens exist somewhere in logical space. Thus, no world exists such that therein it is true that chickens do not exist. Like with SET, however, this problem can be avoided by properly disambiguating the claim ‘in w , chickens exist’ – if what I said in SET’s response hereto is right, then, *mutatis mutandis*, KNOW can provide the same response.

There is another, connected worry. Why is it true that necessarily, if God knows that P , P is true? Well, because in every world in which God exists, if He knows that P , P is true. But, here a problem seems to arise: God still knows, say, that chickens exist, in worlds such that therein chickens do not exist – so it seems not true that necessarily, if God knows that P , P is true. A response here is simple, and again involves disambiguating ‘chickens exist’: God’s knowledge that P is such that P is either world-modified or unrestricted; so, God knows that chickens exist as world-parts of the worlds, $w_1, \dots, w_n$, and God knows that chickens exist (unrestrictedly) somewhere in logical space; He knows these things in all worlds.

Another worry might be: what happens to the truth of an advanced modal claim A ’s non-modal version A^* in w if there exist two omniscient beings in w – one God and another not? Well, insisting that A^* would still be true in w is perhaps no more bizarre than its being true that ‘a flock of chickens exist as world-parts of w ’ is verified by w even though in w there exist two separate flocks of chickens – one flock would be sufficient to verify the claim. Likewise, for any advanced modal claim A ’s non-modal version A^* , it will still be true in w that A^* , even if A^* would be true with there existing only one omniscient being in w .

There are, however, more formidable worries for KNOW: Firstly, if a necessarily existent, omniscient and supremely intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being can be posited to allow worlds to render-true advanced modal claims, why not dispense with Lewisian worlds altogether, and contend that such a being itself renders-true all modal claims?²⁸ A response here is simple. It is plausible that dispensing with Lewisian worlds would highly likely lead to modality's non-reducibility. Indeed, modal notions, like consistency, would highly likely be appealed to in providing a world-ontology, since worlds would likely be identified with things like maximally consistent sets (or groups or collections or what have you) of divine ideas. But, presumably modal realists are drawn to their theory in large part because of its modal reductionism. Whilst, yes, it is true that Lewisian theism can provide other benefits as well – for instance, a deflationary account of intensional entities like propositions, and qualitative ontological parsimony such that only concrete individuals exist – Lewisian theism's chief benefit, I take it, is its modal reductionism. Thus, at the modal metaphysics market stall, I believe Lewisian theism would be of little purchasing interest to modal realists if the seller cried: 'you can buy the truths of advanced modal claims by just positing God, but I'm afraid I'd have to take your modal reductionism'. Indeed, to receive modal reductionism, modal realists thought an infinite plurality of worlds was worth buying, regardless of advanced modalising worries – so why would they give that up here?

Connected to the above, one might think the following. To verify all (advanced and standard) possibility claims, Lewisian theists need to quantify over one world only, since therein God knows all the (advanced and standard) non-modal versions of all true possibility claims. Thus, one might wonder: what work are these other worlds

²⁸ See Leftow (2012) for this type of view.

doing, regarding the verification of possibility claims? A response here is simple: there needs to exist an infinite plurality of worlds for God to know, in some world, about the qualitative features of other worlds; without such worlds, it would not be true, in some world, that God knows that all (advanced and standard) true possibility claims' non-modal versions are true.²⁹ A more pressing worry, however, is the following (and one may have harboured this worry when reading about SET, since a similar worry applies thereto). On KNOW, all true (advanced and standard) possibility claims are necessity claims, since in all worlds God knows all true non-modal versions of all (advanced and standard) true possibility claims. Thus, 'necessarily, two worlds exist such that therein chickens exist as world-parts of those worlds' is true, since its non-modal version is true in all worlds, since in all worlds God knows it. And, 'necessarily, a world exists such that chickens exist as world-parts therein' is true, since its non-modal version is true in all worlds, since in all worlds God knows it, and since we might think that given that in cases of advanced modalising it is sufficient for necessity claims to be true that God knows in all worlds that the non-modal versions of such claims are true, it should be sufficient in cases of standard necessity claims. So, is contingency lost?

Let us start with standard modal claims. Lewisian theists can accept that it is sufficient in cases of standard modalising for a standard necessity claim to be true that God knows in all worlds that its non-modal version is true, but deny that this, along with God's knowledge of all the (advanced and standard) non-modal versions of all true modal claims, entails modal collapse. Like with all true advanced modal claims, it

²⁹ One may be tempted to think that we can simply appeal to David Lewis to guarantee the truth of advanced modal claims (rather than God). He knew much about Lewisian worlds after all. This, however, will not do. First, Lewis is a contingent being, and so there will exist worlds at which advanced modal claims are not true, since Lewis will not exist therein. And secondly, Lewis does not know many factual things about many worlds; he did not know that I would be born, and so he did not have knowledge of me, let alone my counterparts, and let alone any advanced modal claims that involve me. God, however, is necessarily omniscient and necessarily existent.

is true *in a sense* that all true standard modal claims come out necessary: if ‘possibly, w exists such that therein chickens are world-parts of w ’ is true, for example, then it is true in all worlds that w exists such that therein chickens are world-parts of w , since in all worlds, God knows this. But, this does not entail that there is no contingency in logical space: the claim can be taken to be a *de re* modal predication of w , and w has a counterpart u that lacks chicken-world-parts. (I examine *de dicto* possibility claims below.) That it is both necessary in one sense and contingent in another that chickens are world-parts of w is a virtue of Lewisian theism: after all, for Lewis, logical space could not have been otherwise, but contingency still exists therein. Another virtue of the theory is that unrestricted claims, like ‘(unrestrictedly) chickens exist’, come out necessary; there should be no world in logical space that is such that therein it is true that in logical space no chickens exist. However, the restricted claim ‘a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein’ comes out necessary, but so does the claim ‘a world exists such that chickens are not world-parts therein’, and this might seem troubling. But, it is not troubling: it *should* be the case that necessarily, a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein, and necessarily, a world exists such that chickens are not world-parts therein; these two worlds are possible, and the total set, collection, plurality, or what have you, of possibilities is necessarily the way it is. What would be troubling would be if the truth of the claims ‘necessarily, a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein’, and ‘necessarily, a world exists such that chickens are not world-parts therein’, entailed that there exists a world w such that chickens are world-parts of w and chickens are not world-parts of w ; but KNOW does not allow this. Nor does KNOW allow the truth of the conjunction ‘necessarily, a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein & necessarily, it is not the case that a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein’ – the second conjunct is

denied. Does this mean, however, that claims like ‘a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein’ admit of no contingency? No: (taking the claim to be a *de dicto* possibility claim) it is contingent: ‘possibly, a world exists such that chickens are world-parts therein’ is true and ‘possibly, a world exists such that chickens are not world-parts therein’ is true, since there exist worlds to satisfy these respective claims. So, we have contingency.

For advanced modal claims, lots of the above is applicable – but here is an example of *de dicto* contingency. ‘Possibly, two worlds exist such that therein chickens are world-parts of those worlds’, taken as a *de dicto* possibility claim, is – in a sense – contingent: sure, God knows the non-modal version of the claim is true in all worlds, but God also knows in all worlds that ‘two worlds exist such that therein chickens are *not* world-parts of those worlds’ is true, since two worlds exist in logical space that lack chicken-world-parts. So, we have contingency.

The last worry concerns KNOW’s being *ad hoc*. Now, like with many informal objections, this might be a matter of taste and feel rather than something more substantive. However, I am not sure that it is *ad hoc* – and at any rate, if it is, it is no more troublingly *ad hoc* than it would be for modal realists to posit, say, universals or tropes, to solve problems concerning properties. Further, Lewis (1986: 3-5) thinks that, generally, if something can do good theoretical work, then there is good reason for positing that something; God can do good theoretical work, and so there is (*ceteris paribus*) good reason for positing God. And here is where Lewisian theists have good reason to posit God; by doing so, they can: retain modal reductionism; avoid Pruss’s objection, whilst providing a qualitatively parsimonious ontology, by not positing abstracta, by identifying propositions and properties (and perhaps sets if we need them at all) with divine ideas; provide hyperintensionality, and perhaps a more

palatable account of truth-bearing; perhaps dispense with the concept of something's existing from the standpoint of a world (and thereby gain greater theoretical economy); make more conceptual sense of the accessibility relation's being universal; and, verify advanced modal claims (like (4)), and thus modal realism comes out necessary, by revising neither the characterisation of worlds nor (1). Since Lewisian theism can do all this by positing a necessarily existent, omniscient and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being (much like the classical God), we have good reason to posit such a being.

4 Conclusion

So, here is my abductive argument: All the best extant, secular advanced modalising strategies fail; SET can do good theoretical work concerning advanced modalising, but fails with respect to the consequences of Pruss's objection; by positing something like the classical God, KNOW avoids such consequences, and provides many other theoretical benefits as well, and verifies advanced modal claims. So, KNOW is the best strategy. Thus, if modal realists think that advanced modalising is important, they should espouse KNOW and be Lewisian theists.

But, before I finish, I shall say something about why one might wish to go further than I have, and contend that God is not just a necessarily existent, omniscient and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being, but has other classical divine attributes as well. If one being created and/or sustains all worlds, or is omnipresent therein, then there is a good story as to why that being has knowledge of other worlds and why that being exists in all worlds. Moreover, there is a good causal story as to why those worlds exist at all: they are not said to exist simply because it

would be jolly theoretically handy if they did,³⁰ rather God created them and perhaps did so because of His maximal-generosity, which perhaps entails His (at least) creating worlds populated with creatures capable of leading good lives and capable of loving Him.³¹ And so, positing something more like the classical God than a God that is only necessarily existent, omniscient, supremely-intelligent, and idea-generating-and-sustaining, might provide Lewisian theists with a good causal story as to why worlds exist and why God knows about them. The battle would then concern how classical theism is compatible with modal realism: but that battle is not mine here. I have simply provided an abductive argument for the existence of a necessarily existent, omniscient and supremely-intelligent, idea-generating-and-sustaining being, and that is enough for one day.

³⁰ O'Connor (2008: 22) raises this sort of worry: in short, Lewis's account of why something is necessary is not satisfactory: "we are [merely] told" that, say, something is necessary, without anything "that accounts for why this is so". Lewisian theism, if it goes further than I have herein, can answer his worry.

³¹ This, I admit, is very speculative; but, I am merely sketching out reasons for going further than I have herein. For the connection between God's generosity and modality, see O'Connor (2008).

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