

Rescuing the (Open) Theistic Multiverse Against Two Recent Challenges

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Abstract

One theistic account of creation says that God created the best possible world in the form of a multiverse containing all and only all of the universes sufficiently good enough to create. Certain proponents of this view urge that it solves the problem of no best world and need not commit one to affirming divine middle knowledge. We address two recent challenges to the (open) theistic multiverse. First, Marshall Naylor argues that what he calls the Cantorian account of divine creation is better than any theistic multiverse account because it provides more satisfying answers to a number of philosophical problems (2020). Second, Elliot Crozat criticizes the open theistic multiverse by arguing that if God lacks middle knowledge, God cannot know infallibly that the universe *token* he creates will be the right *type* (i.e., sufficiently good enough for inclusion in the multiverse) (2019). We show that Naylor's alternative violates incredibly strong moral intuitions and that Crozat's objection fails to appreciate that on open theism God still knows all the possible future outcomes. Theistic multiverse accounts of divine creation in general, and one cojoined with open theism in particular, remain unscathed in the face of the criticisms offered by Naylor and Crozat.

Keywords: Theistic Multiverse; Divine Creation; Open Theism

Introduction

Some proponents of the theistic multiverse say that God created a universe containing all and only the sufficiently good enough universes worthy of creation. Some have urged that this multiverse is the best of all possible worlds (Kraay, 2010; Turner, 2014; Lougheed, 2014). This view might be appealing because it paves the way for a unique solution to the problem of no best world (see Almeida, 2006; Howard-Snyder & Howard-Snyder, 1996; Rowe, 2006; Rubio, 2020). This problem is an a priori argument which says that there is no best world for God to create. For any world God could create, it is easy to imagine a slightly better world such that there is no unique best world. The problem is that this means God's work of creation is necessarily surpassable which is supposed to be impossible. So, given that there is no best world, God is not justified in creating any world. Since theism holds that God created our world, if there is no best world, then God does not exist.

It has also been noted that if there is a best world, a problem for divine freedom emerges because it appears that God *must* create it. This poses a challenge to traditional theism which says that God is libertarian-free such that there are numerous alternatives from which God might choose. Even if the divine freedom worry can be adequately addressed, it seems obvious enough that our particular world is not the best. Just consider all of the ways in which it could be obviously better.

The theistic multiverse is appealing because it allows the theist to say that God did indeed create the best possible world while simultaneously acknowledging that our particular universe could indeed be better. The theistic multiverse is the best of all possible worlds and contains all and only the spatio-temporally isolated universes that are good enough to be created by God. Timothy Blank defends a theistic multiverse that is compatible with open theism, a view of divine foreknowledge that rejects middle knowledge (2018). Open theists believe that though God is omniscient, he does not have exhaustively definite foreknowledge of what humans will freely do in the future since there are no facts of the matter. According to Open Theists, the ‘future is partly comprised of possibilities’ and by creating a world with free creatures God enters into a somewhat risky venture because he cannot guarantee how each free agent will exert their power (Boyd, 2001, p. 91). We will not defend open theism here, but we simply observe that such a model would be appealing to those already inclined to accept open theism for philosophical reasons independent of disputes about divine creation. So, the open theistic multiverse is appealing to those theists who are looking for a solution to the problem of no best world and who are already predisposed to open theism.

We begin by outlining the basics of Blank’s multiverse proposal. We then turn to address Marshall Naylor’s claim that the Cantorian account of divine creation is better than any theistic multiverse account because it provides more satisfying answers to a number of philosophical problems (2020). While included in these is the problem of no best world, Naylor’s expectations for a successful model of divine creation extend far beyond that problem. We ultimately conclude that Naylor’s alternative is too morally counterintuitive. While Naylor is not directly addressing a theistic multiverse that assumes open theism, all of his objections would apply equally to an open theistic multiverse, as would our responses. To conclude, we address Elliot Crozat who specifically criticizes the open theistic multiverse by arguing that if God lacks middle knowledge, God cannot know infallibly that the universe *token* he creates will be the right *type* (i.e., sufficiently good enough for inclusion in the multiverse) (2019). We show that Crozat’s objection fails to appreciate that on open theism God still knows all the possible future outcomes. While there may be reasons to reject a theistic multiverse in general, or an open theistic multiverse in particular, such reasons are not found in the work of Naylor or Crozat.¹

Blank’s Open Theistic Multiverse

Blank entertains the possibility of a marriage between Open Theism (OT) and the Theistic Multiverse (TM). So, the core issue that is in need of resolution in Blank’s proposal is whether God can create a multitude of universes (this is a central tenet of TM), all of which are at or above an objective axiological threshold, without knowing exactly how each of those particular universes will unfold (this is a central tenet of OT) due to libertarian-free will (LFW).

Blank’s proposal makes use of three categories by which God can organize possible universes in order to decide which universes belong in his multiverse. These are as follows: Value-Incomplete universes (VI), Positively-Value Complete universes (PVC), and Negatively-Value

Complete universes (NVC). NVC universes are irredeemable. No matter what happens in them their value will never reach the requisite axiological threshold to merit inclusion in TM (Blank, 2018, p. 437). PVC universes are incorruptible. That is, if God surveys all possible outcomes in a universe and each one is above the axiological threshold, then God can create that universe knowing with certainty it will reach the threshold (Blank, 2018, p. 437). Finally, VI universes are those universes where some final outcomes are at or above the threshold and some are below (Blank, 2018, p. 437).

Imagine you are at a Theatre Festival with three different improv comedy acts you can attend. You are not sure which one to view so you ask a trusted critic who knows you well. Based on what she knows about the actors and props, for example, in each act and your comedic tastes, she tells you that Show 1 is no good. No matter what happens she can guarantee that you will not enjoy it. Show 2, though, is set up in such a way that no matter how the actors perform, the show will be good. Perhaps you are guaranteed to enjoy it because of some prop the director adds or the good looks of one of the actors or the story they begin with, for example. But your friend is not sure whether you will enjoy Show 3. The outcome is not guaranteed. It is possible you will enjoy it immensely, but there is a chance the actors will fail to satisfy any of your comedic tastes. If it is not immediately clear, Show 1 is NVC, Show 2 is PVC, and Show 3 is VI. Blank's proposal is that *if* Open Theism is true, and *if* God creates a multiverse, then God creates only PVC universes. Any apparently VI universes that God can rescue from falling below the threshold will be included in the set of PVC universes (Blank, 2018, p. 438). This is because the possibility of a divine rescue plan is part of God's pre-creational knowledge, such that if it is a successful rescue plan, then God will know (pre-creationally) that the universe in question will reach or surpass the objective axiological threshold (and therefore it is a PVC universe) (Blank, 2018, p. 439).² None of this implies that given an initial set of conditions, God knows precisely what will happen with respect to libertarian-free creatures. Instead, it is just that given God's power and knowledge, he is able to guarantee that given an initial set of conditions, he will be able to rescue the universe in question no matter what libertarian-free creatures do. All in all, Blank's model offers a unique solution to the problem of no best world because TM preserves the idea that God creates the best world *and* the intuition that things could have turned out better than they did.

Naylor's Criticisms of the Theistic Multiverse

In this section, we describe and respond to challenges to TM as found in the recent work of Naylor (2020).

Naylor's Five Desiderata

While we noted in the introduction that one of the philosophical problems that the theistic multiverse purports to solve is the problem of no best world, Naylor argues that we can measure the strength of any account of divine creation based on how well it addresses five desiderata in philosophical theology. These are:

- i. An account of divine creation should provide a solution to the problem of no best world.
- ii. An account of divine creation should have few or no gaps in metaphysical space.
- iii. An account of divine creation should provide a solution to the problems of evil.
- iv. An account of divine creation should preserve contingency.
- v. An account of divine creation should provide a solution to the problem of divine freedom (Naylor, 2020, p. 2).

Naylor says that it is possible no account of divine creation can meet all of these conditions and also acknowledges that they can be met in varying degrees. He further notes that '[a]n account which fails to find solutions to the problems of evil, and others like them, have almost no theoretical utility. An account which has almost no theoretical utility gives us fewer reasons to believe it is correct. Similar defenses can be made for the other desideratum' (Naylor, 2020, p. 2). These five desiderata are the criteria by which Naylor evaluates competing accounts of divine creation.

Multiverse Accounts and the Five Desiderata

According to Naylor, multiverse accounts of divine creation do not fare very well with respect to most of his five desiderata. Regarding (i), however, the multiverse accounts are successful. For the multiverse is the best possible world such that no other world surpasses it.

But with respect to (ii), Naylor argues that the multiverse accounts fail. He explains that '[i]t cannot both be true, necessarily, that God creates a multiverse which contains only overall good universes and there are no gaps in metaphysical space' (Naylor, 2020, p. 4). Here Naylor seems to mean that the theistic multiverse entails that universes we intuitively think are metaphysically possible turn out to be impossible (e.g., really evil universes).

Naylor believes that multiverse accounts also do not genuinely satisfy (iii). They may offer a superficial solution to the problem of evil, but only because multiverse accounts entail that each instance of evil that occurs in them is necessary. This means '[w]hatever evil found in morally imperfect universes is not eliminable because each universe necessarily exists in the multiverse' (Naylor, 2020, p. 5). Yet Naylor claims that 'it is intuitively true as well that some evil is eliminable. The problems of evil are solved in multiverse accounts, but their solution entails that no evil is eliminable' (2020, p. 5).³

With respect to (iv), Naylor holds that multiverse accounts fail to perfectly preserve contingency since there are some ways that a universe cannot be, given that God created them. For even the free actions of creatures cannot be such that they would push a universe below the threshold required for inclusion in the best possible world (i.e., in the multiverse). Thus, there are things that appear to be contingent (e.g., certain actions) that are not in fact contingent (Naylor, 2020, p. 5).

Finally, for Naylor, multiverse accounts fail to meet (v), since they cannot explain divine freedom. If God must always do the best and the multiverse is the best possible world, then God cannot fail to create the multiverse. This implies that God cannot do otherwise and hence is not free (Naylor, 2020, p. 5).⁴

The Cantorian Account and the Five Desiderata

In light of the failure of multiverse accounts to meet (ii) through (v), Naylor proposes an alternative account of divine creation based on ideas from Georg Cantor. Naylor explains that according to Cantor, 'God is absolutely and infinitely good such that he is essentially unsurpassably and undiminishably good. No necessary or contingent thing can add to or diminish God's goodness in quality or quantity' (Naylor, 2020, p. 6). On the assumption that God is a good-making feature of a world then any world with God is morally unsurpassable. On this view any world God creates, no matter what free creatures do in it, etc., is morally

unsurpassable. While Naylor does not name his account, we will refer to it as ‘the Cantorian account’ for the sake of clarity.

Naylor argues that the Cantorian account better satisfies the five desiderata for divine creation, and so it is superior to multiverse accounts. He seems to think that this is a reason to hold that the Cantorian account is true, and the multiverse account is false. Here is what Naylor says about the Cantorian account and the five desiderata.

With respect to (i), Naylor says that the problem of no best world is solved because any world God creates is, by definition, unsurpassable. For ‘[s]ince there can be no worlds of greater value, necessarily, God creates the best world. Whether worlds include many universes is inconsequential to the overall value of worlds’ (Naylor, 2020, p. 7). Regarding (ii), Naylor holds that modal space is preserved. This is because though every world on this view is unsurpassable in value, it is still the case that really awful things are genuine possibilities (Naylor, 2020, p. 7).⁵ For Naylor, the problem of evil in desideratum (iii) is also genuinely resolved since evil is eliminable. This is because every world is unsurpassable so there are no worlds God *must* create like there are on multiverse accounts (Naylor, 2020, p. 7). Contingency and hence (iv) is better preserved because really bad universes are genuinely possible on the Cantorian account.

Finally, with respect to (v) Naylor says that:

On the alternative account, God is free even though he cannot refrain from creating a best world. Every possible world in metaphysical space is a candidate for divine creation. For example, there are worlds where God made sentient beings and worlds where God made no sentient beings, all things being equal. There are worlds where God prevents every eliminable evil and worlds where God permits every eliminable evil, all things being equal (Naylor, 2020, p. 8).

Naylor therefore concludes that the Cantorian account of divine creation is superior to multiverse alternatives.

World Choice, Utility, and Moral Intuitions: A Rejoinder to Naylor

In this section, we identify a number of problems with the Cantorian account such that we have good reasons to reject it. All else being equal, multiverse accounts of creation remain a better option.

God’s Choice of a World Is Arbitrary

Naylor’s account is susceptible to a worry about the arbitrariness of God’s world selection. Libertarian-freedom and being able to act arbitrarily, though perhaps often conflated, are not the same. There needs to be some reason *why* God chooses to actualize one world over the others. Naylor might respond that since every world is the best, then God needs no such reason. However, if *every world is morally equivalent*, then God has no more reason to actualize one instead of another. In this scenario, it is arbitrary for God to create no matter which world he chooses. Affirming that God could be arbitrary requires a radical revisioning of perfect being theism that Naylor is probably unwilling to embrace.

Naylor might respond that God's choice is not arbitrary in the sense that the demands of rationality govern it and thus that there is a decisive reason for one option, which God nevertheless ignores in favor of a haphazard and irrational selection of another option. Rather, God's decision-making situation might be beyond the bounds of rationality, i.e., arational. For example, God's situation might be comparable to that of a painter who selects a particular color for his painting, even though other colors are equally aesthetically valuable, or to the choice of a novelist who selects one literary device over another, although each is equally valuable. There is no objectively decisive reason to pick any color (or literary device). It is not as if red (metaphor) is objectively better than blue (simile). The selection of one color (device) might be based on preference alone, but that does not make the choice unreasonable or irrational. A painter who cannot get a painting started because he lacks a decisive reason to choose between equally valuable colors would be a subpar painter. One would expect a good painter in such a situation to opt for a preferred color. The option is not irrational but instead arational. Similarly, one might expect that a perfect being is quite competent to choose a world based on preference on the assumption that there is no objectively decisive reason for any one choice-worthy world over any other choice-worthy world. A world-maker who gets stuck at the beginning of the world-making process because of an inability to decide between equally choice-worthy options, if the inability is merely due to a lack of conclusive reasons in an arational decision-making situation, would be an imperfect being.⁶

But for the very reasons stated, this line of thought could morph into an argument for atheism that trades on a different worry from the problem of no best world. Instead of worrying that for any world God creates, his work is surpassable, the problem becomes that for any world God creates is axiologically equivalent to any other possible world he could have created. We will show below why this is an implausible position; it requires violated extremely strong moral intuitions.⁷

Theoretical Utility

Near the beginning of his article, Naylor implies that an account with less theoretical utility than its competitors is less likely to be true than its competitors. This general point about theoretical utility is true. However, Naylor should have inserted a *ceteris paribus* clause when offering his five desiderata, for theoretical utility may indicate truth but only if *all else is equal*. In other words, theoretical utility only constitutes a reason to choose one theory over another if they are equal in every other respect. In the next subsection, we are going to suggest independent reasons (i.e., independent of the five desiderata) for rejecting the Cantorian account of creation and hence we are going to show that not all else is equal.

Moral Intuitions

The strongest objection to the Cantorian account is that it flies in the face of commonsense moral intuitions. Naylor appears to recognize this when he writes:

Perhaps an unattractive feature of the alternative account is that it is counterintuitive. We would expect worlds with pervasive suffering and injustice to be overall less valuable than worlds without those features instead of value equivalent. We would also expect God to be morally forbidden from creating worlds with pervasive suffering and injustice rather than permitted. Finally, perhaps it is counterintuitive to think that God contributes any value to universes or worlds at all. These aspects weigh against the

alternative account's believability in an important way not captured by the desiderata (Naylor, 2020, p. 8).

But instead of offering a specific reply to this worry, Naylor just repeats the fact that the Cantorian account fares better with respect to the five desiderata. He writes that '[t]he alternative account satisfies the desiderata despite how counterintuitive it seems. It makes theoretical sense despite the uncharitable, metaphysical circumstance' (Naylor, 2020, p. 9). The counterintuitive moral consequence is that worlds featuring preponderantly, or exclusively bad events, are, nevertheless, to be treated as good, and indeed, as unsurpassable worlds. But remember we have stated that Naylor's five desiderata need a *ceteris paribus* clause. Here is why: a view being more counterintuitive than another *is a way in which not all else is equal* between competing views. Some examples will help to demonstrate just how counterintuitive the Cantorian account is when it comes to morality:

World 1: This world contains nothing but bunnies with needles in their eyes.

World 2: This world contains nothing but bunnies who are happy.

The Cantorian account implies that World 1 and World 2 are both equally unsurpassable in value. But World 1 is obviously worse than World 2. Therefore, the Cantorian account is false. Or consider:

World 3: This world is identical to our world.

World 4: This world is identical to World 3 except no genocides have occurred in it.⁸

The Cantorian account implies that World 3 and World 4 are both equally unsurpassable in value. But World 3 is obviously worse than World 4. Therefore, the Cantorian account is false. Finally, consider:

World 5: This is a world containing libertarian-free humans who often go morally wrong. There is much rape, murder, and torture in this world.

World 6: This is a world containing libertarian-free humans who happen to never morally go wrong.

The Cantorian account implies that World 5 and World 6 are both equally unsurpassable in value. But World 5 is obviously worse than World 6. Therefore, the Cantorian account is false.

These examples serve to show just how counterintuitive the Cantorian account really is when compared to theistic multiverse accounts. Naylor is likely to respond by claiming that, be this as it may, his account still better satisfies the five desiderata (indeed, this is how he actually responds but without reference to specific examples). But notice that this response *assumes* the five desiderata take precedent over incredibly strong commonsense moral intuitions. But *why* should we choose the five desiderata over the competing moral intuitions? Naylor might cite theoretical utility. However, we have already explained there needs to be a *ceteris paribus* clause which would not in fact be met given the counterintuitive results of the Cantorian account, for the counterintuitive results are the evidence that not all things are equal. Finally, even if Naylor rejects the need for a *ceteris paribus* clause, he still needs to offer a reason *why*

theoretical utility should take precedent over incredibly strong moral intuitions.⁹ No such reasons are ever offered.

Finally, it will prove difficult for Naylor to simply deny the weight of intuitions. This is because earlier he suggests that multiverse accounts fail to genuinely address our intuitions about the problem of evil. Recall he says that multiverse accounts imply the rejection of our intuitions that instances of evil are eliminable. Likewise, he also appeals to intuitions in explaining why the multiverse leaves metaphysical gaps. For in a theistic multiverse, it turns out that some universes we *intuitively* think are possible (e.g., really bad universes) are not in fact possible. So, for Naylor's account to be consistent he cannot simply reject the value of intuitions. Naylor ultimately owes us an account of intuitions, including how they should be valued in philosophical argumentation. We are doubtful about the prospects of Naylor supplying an account of intuitions that keeps the intuitions he wants while simultaneously rejecting the ones that challenge his position.¹⁰

Crozat's Criticisms of the Open Theistic Multiverse

We now turn to explaining and responding to Crozat's criticisms which are specifically directed at the Open Theistic Multiverse (or 'OTM').

Crozat Rejection of the Open Theistic Multiverse: Types and Tokens

Crozat's main worry for OTM is that God cannot infallibly know whether a universe he creates will end up as PVC or NVC. This is because that while God has incredibly strong predictive power, he cannot be *epistemically certain* that libertarian-free creatures would not go so morally wrong that the universe they are in becomes NVC. In other words, God cannot ultimately guarantee the token of universe he creates will be the right type (i.e., end up as PVC). Even if the risk is relatively small, Crozat thinks a perfectly good God would never take such a risk given the possibility of extremely horrific consequences. To sum up, Crozat writes:

If God (logically prior to creation) infallibly knows universe types but not universe tokens, then (logically prior) he cannot infallibly match type with token. On OTM, God (logically prior) infallibly knows universe types but not tokens. Thus, (logically prior) he cannot infallibly accomplish the match. *Sans* an infallible match, he risks unwittingly creating a terrible token of NVC rank (Crozat, 2019, pp. 409–410).

Crozat explains that Blank introduces the concept of a divine rescue plan in order to guarantee a universe remains or ends up PVC (Crozat, 2019, p. 410). But he worries that the idea of a divine rescue plan cannot succeed for universes with libertarian-free creatures unless God has middle knowledge. Middle Knowledge is the category of God's knowledge that is neither contingent (within God's creative will and control) nor necessary (outside of God's control). Proponents argue that if God has middle knowledge, he can know what free creatures would do (outside of God's control) when placed in a particular situation (within God's creative will) (Flint, 2009, p. 275). This is for three reasons: First, Crozat believes that it is implausible to hold that divine rescue plans do not need the participation of the free creatures they are saving. In order to defend such an option he claims that 'we need an explanation of how the plan saves libertarianly free creatures without working through their morally significant actions, such as free behaviors and mental acts of thought, belief, choice, and so forth' (Crozat, 2019, p. 411). Without appealing to middle knowledge here, Crozat worries the only way out is for Blank to appeal to determinism.

Second, if God does not know infallibly the success of her rescue plan then:

God's risk-taking in actualizing a token with libertarianly free creatures includes the risk of creating a terrible universe which he cannot redeem. Blank's model does not solve this problem, but merely pushes it back a metaphysical step or two by introducing the axiological types and the rescue plan. On Blank's model, it is possible that God is mistaken about the success of his plan. This means that God could create an irredeemable universe token under the false belief that his rescue plan will save that universe. Such a view of God is disputable (Crozat, 2019, p. 411).

Third, on the other hand, if God does infallibly know that his rescue plan will succeed, then the easiest way to explain this knowledge is by appealing to Molinism (Crozat, 2019, p. 411). Finally:

Either the plan works through the morally significant actions of free creatures or not. If not, an explanation is required. If the plan works through the actions of creatures, either it works through their libertarianly free choices or not. If not, it appears to be causally deterministic. If the plan works through the free choices, then prior to creation either God infallibly knows that the plan would succeed or God does not infallibly know this. If the latter is true, then it seems God takes an unwarranted risk. If the former is true, then God has [Middle Knowledge] (Crozat, 2019, pp. 412–413).

Casting the Right Types and Tokens: A Rejoinder to Crozat

We think there are responses to these worries that come by way of (i) correcting Crozat's misunderstanding of both Open Theism and of Positively Value-Complete Universes and (ii) adding more details about what constitutes a divine rescue plan. We conclude that we can have our theistic multiverse without Molinism.

Open Theism and Positively Value-Complete Universes

The main problem with Crozat's criticisms of Blank's OTM is that he misunderstands the nature and function of Open Theism and Positively Value-Complete universes in Blank's account. On OTM, God has the ability to survey *all* of the possible options. But included in this survey is *all of the possible variations of free creatures along with all of the actions available to God*. This means that Crozat's claim that God cannot guarantee that the token universe he creates is the right type is simply false.

Now, one way for Crozat to resist this reply is to counter that what he really means is that given an initial set of conditions, God will not be able to know whether the resulting universes will all turn out good, or all bad, or some combination of the two.¹¹ It could be this point that really highlights the tension between Crozat and Blank. However, middle knowledge does not seem to be required for Blank's proposal. On open theism, God is still able to know all the possible ways that a universe can unfold, including the probabilities regarding which outcomes are more likely than others. What God cannot know for certain, is what possibilities will become actual, especially if he has endowed humans with libertarian-freedom. All of this seems especially so if God provides an initial set of conditions that guarantees a rescue plan will be available. This just requires God knowing all of the different ways a universe could unfold given those initial conditions.

Blank says that in light of Open Theism God will not create any VI universe (2018, pp. 37–39). This is because once God decides to intervene with a foolproof rescue operation, the universe in question is actually PVC. If God considers a particular universe and associated rescue plans and sees that there are scenarios where it is impossible to bring the universe above the threshold for inclusion in the multiverse, then God will refrain from creating such a universe. Again, this does not require that God must know which future becomes actual, he just needs to know all of the possible futures. And this is just what Open Theism says God knows. We will come back to the idea of divine rescue in the next subsection.

Furthermore, note that God does not have to match PVC universe types with tokens. *By definition*, any token of a PVC is above the required threshold. God does not have to worry about probabilities (i.e., the small chance that things will go really horribly wrong in the universe) since he can foresee all of the possibilities and so chooses universes based on having all of the options in front of him. In such universes all of the possible ways they could unfold will put them at or above the objective axiological threshold. Any universe in the PVC universe is guaranteed to remain above the threshold based on how Blank defines them. Finally, consider the example Crozak’s uses to motivate his objection:

Suppose Jones needs a new table. There are various types: dining table, coffee table, end table, patio table, and so forth. Jones requires a dining table. He obtains a catalogue from a local furniture store, selects a dining table type, and places the order. He is notified that the token will be delivered to his home in three days. Now, Jones knows the type he has selected. But he does not have infallible certainty about the token that will be delivered in three days. Given human intellectual and moral imperfection, it is possible that an error occurs and the expected token is not delivered. Three days pass. The delivery truck arrives at Jones’ home. In an improbable event, the driver extracts a coffee table from the bed of the truck. At this point, Jones knows that token does not match the type. He sends the coffee table token back to the store and requests a dining table token to match the type he ordered (Crozat, 2019, p. 413).

But this example misrepresents Blank’s view. Here is a closer analogy: Jones is not very picky. He picks up the furniture catalogue and surveys *all of the possible table options*. He then orders a table at random because they are all sufficiently good enough. However, if upon surveying the entire catalogue there is just one table not sufficiently good enough, then Jones will refrain from ordering a table at random. Jones is perfectly capable of possessing this type of information since he can see *all* of the tables in the catalogue. The same goes for God when deciding whether to create a universe and include it in the theistic multiverse. If God is deciding whether to create a universe and discovers that one or more of the possible outcomes for that universe will result in it being below the threshold, then God will refrain from creating that universe where those outcomes might become actual. Molinism is not required here, just knowledge of all of the possible outcomes of each universe (i.e., and not knowledge of which of the possible outcomes become actual). And God possesses such knowledge on Open Theism.

Divine Rescue Plans

At this point Crozat might object that *all universes* with libertarian-free creatures are bound to have at least one possible future where they go so morally wrong that they end up below the threshold. If this is right, then if God could know all of the possible outcomes, he would *never* be justified in creating a universe with libertarian-free creatures.¹² Indeed, if this reasoning is

successful, the existence of libertarian-free creatures would constitute evidence for atheism (see Schellenberg, 2004).

There is some textual evidence that Crozat does in fact endorse something like this reasoning. He examines the possibility of ‘a good-making, global event the occurrence of which is sufficient to guarantee the PVC status of any created universe’ (Crozat, 2019, p. 413). He further wonders whether some great good such as the Incarnation of God might be an appropriate global good-making candidate but ultimately rejects this possibility:

[S]uppose that all or vastly most libertarianly free humans freely reject God’s incarnational offer of atonement and freely reject the teaching. Given LFW [i.e., libertarian-freedom], this is possible. Plausibly, such a universe would be NVC. It would contain sufficient sin to require salvation, which is bad enough. It would call for God to employ the global event in an attempt to prevent descent into NVC, which is worse. However, in addition to these problems, God’s becoming incarnate and entering the world as savior and teacher only to be universally rejected by those needing him would constitute an incommensurable sin and an irredeemable evil (Crozat, 2019, p. 414)

And:

Arguably, for the Incarnation and Atonement to guarantee a PVC token, an additional factor is required: a sufficient number of fallen humans must freely accept God’s offer. Moreover, to plan this event in an infallible manner, God must know, logically prior to creation, that the event would be successful (that is, that a sufficient number of his would-be human creatures would freely accept his incarnational offer of atonement). But this knowledge of CCF [i.e., counterfactuals of creaturely freedom] requires God to have MK [i.e., Middle Knowledge]. Hence, Objection 1 is plausibly a support for MK, not an objection against it (Crozat, 2019, p. 414).

If Crozat is right to hold that if a large majority of creatures freely rejected God’s rescue it would be an ‘irredeemable evil’ such that the universe in question would fall below the threshold, then God simply would not create that universe. Again, God would know of this possibility before making the universe in question actual.

In addition, we also think that Crozat is mistaken about the purported value of divine rescue plans. This is because he seems to employ an overly narrow understanding of the value of the *offer* of divine rescue. The existence of a divine rescue plan is intrinsically valuable. While we do not deny that having libertarian-free creatures accept the offer of rescue is indeed good, it is a distinct good from the plan itself being available. If we are right about this, then Crozat cannot say that on Open Theism God cannot guarantee a rescue plan will bring a universe (with free creatures) above the threshold for inclusion in the theistic multiverse for the very existence of a divine rescue plan, we contend, could ensure that the universe in question is sufficiently good enough to be actualized. For example, it is possible that the Christian Atonement might be such a great good that any universe containing it is good enough to be included in the multiverse. Any sort of divine rescue plan where libertarian-free creatures are involved is an instantiation of divine grace. Morally perfect universes where no such rescue is needed might be better than the universes needing rescue. However, the rescue itself might be such a valuable act that any universe containing it is good enough to be included in TM.

To reiterate, this is no ad hoc reply since we think it was intended to be part of Blank's original account, though he perhaps was not explicit enough about it. Since the existence of a divine rescue plan is in itself a great good, then any world where such a plan is available might meet the minimum amount of goodness to be included in the theistic multiverse. And if it somehow does not, then God would know of this possibility in advance and refrain from making the universe in question actual. Again, all that is needed here is Open Theism, not Molinism.

Conclusion

Naylor's approach to evaluating multiverse accounts of divine creation is novel in trying to see how well they solve problems in philosophical theology. Offering a competing account within this context is interesting too. However, the Cantorian account of creation is a failure. Some worries we raised include the ideas that God's act of creation is arbitrary, and that Naylor's account of theoretical utility needs a *ceteris paribus* clause. The main worry that we raised is that the Cantorian account flies in the face of commonsense moral intuitions. Naylor's view implies that worlds where really awful things happen are of equal value to worlds where only good things happen. One strategy is to simply bite the bullet and admit that this is the philosophical cost of doing business. The point of our counterexamples, however, was to show that the bullet is just too big to bite. The philosophical costs of the Cantorian account of divine creation are too high. Finally, apart from the examples, Naylor never tells us why we should favor theoretical utility over such strong intuitions. He needs to offer an account of intuitions that is consistent with his own use of them. We are doubtful he can accomplish this without conceding our point. Multiverse accounts of divine creation remain a more palatable option than the Cantorian account offered by Naylor.

Crozat worries that Blank's OTM cannot guarantee that God creates universes sufficiently good enough for inclusion in the multiverse. But God can indeed guarantee this since he is able to survey *all* the possible outcomes for any universe he is considering making actual, even if he does not know beforehand which possible outcome will become actual. If any of those outcomes are below the threshold for inclusion in the multiverse, then God will refrain from actualizing the universe in question. Crozat is mistaken if he responds that in light of libertarian-freedom, universes will always have at least some awful possible futures. This is because there is a distinction between the value of being offered divine rescue and the value of accepting divine rescue. The latter is surely a good, but the former is a great enough good that it may well guarantee that the universe in question is sufficiently good enough for inclusion in the theistic multiverse. Contra Crozat, the OTM remains a plausible explanation of God's creative activity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Notes

1. Other objections have been raised to the prospects of a theistic multiverse, but we focus on these are they (i) two of the most recent; and (ii) we believe that addressing them helps us better understand the nature of the multiverse. For examples of other criticisms, see Johnson (2014) and Uckelman (2020).
2. We are agnostic what exactly counts as a rescue plan. But if they exist, God knows what constitutes them. Some examples may include (but are not limited to) Incarnation,

- Atonement, or universal salvation. These might be the sorts of things that bring a world from below the threshold up to the threshold or above it.
3. While some multiverse theorists claim it is a solution to the problem of evil (e.g., Turner 2014) others have explicitly argued that it is not (e.g., Kraay 2012). So there is no agreement among theorists about whether the multiverse satisfies (iii).
 4. See also Rowe (2006).
 5. Though the Cantorian account is by definition compatible with many terrible things happening in possible worlds, it is also by definition incompatible with there being overall bad worlds (or even suboptimal worlds) and many will of course think this makes modal space incomplete and so is in violation of desideratum (ii). Thanks to an anonymous referee for this observation.
 6. This rejoinder is taken, almost verbatim from an anonymous referee.
 7. For more on this topic see Johnston (2019).
 8. Of course, if no genocides occur then its unfolding history will be different from World 2. The occurrence of a genocide will shape the course of history in ways that would not occurred had the genocide itself not happened. So, it is identical inasmuch as possible given this important difference.
 9. We do not believe he can reasonably jettison the clause.
 10. One possible way out for Naylor is discussed in Climenhaga (2018) is based on the idea that all of the worlds God creates would be infinite, and each gradually getting better. We do not believe this would change intuitions about the cases. It would still be the case that not all worlds have the same value. Furthermore, even if it would be the case that all worlds eventually become very good worlds, a separate question emerges about whether the suffering involved in getting there is permissible. Indeed, this seems to parallel to the problem of evil based on all of the suffering involved in evolution. For more on this see, for example, Schneider (2020).
 11. Thanks to anonymous referees for pressing us to clarify this point.
 12. One could perhaps help make this argument by appealing to a concept like transworld depravity from Alvin Plantinga's freewill defense against the logical problem of evil.

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