Classical theism and modal realism are incompatible

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Abstract: The classical conception of God is that of a necessary being. On a possible worlds semantics, this entails that God exists at every possible world. According to the modal realist account of David Lewis, possible worlds are understood to be *real, concrete worlds* – no different in kind from the actual world. But, modal realism is equipped to accommodate the existence of a necessary being in only one of three ways: (1) By way of counterpart theory, or (2) by way of a special case of trans-world identity for causally inert necessary beings (e.g. pure sets), or else (3) causally potent ones which lack accidental intrinsic properties. I argue that each of these three options entails unacceptable consequences – (1) and (2) are incompatible with theism, and (3) is incompatible with modal realism. I conclude that (at least) one of these views is false.

Modal realism, counterpart theory, and necessary being

It is standard practice among philosophers to analyse modal claims in terms of possible worlds. For instance, on a possible worlds semantics, the proposition <Humphrey could have won the election> is true if and only if there is a possible world where Humphrey *does* win the election. For most philosophers, such a framework is relatively innocuous, since possible worlds are merely taken to be abstract entities which *represent* the various ways things could be. For David Lewis, however, possible worlds are just as real as the universe that you and I live in. On his view, for instance, since unicorns are possible, it follows that there are real, concrete worlds where real, material unicorns exist. This is 'modal realism'. Modal realism is often rejected simply because it is too *strange* (this is the 'incredulous stare' objection). But, there is a better reason for rejecting it, if one is a theist. For instance, Paul Sheehy (2006) has argued that the two views are incompatible. More recently, Ross Cameron (2009) has argued

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that Sheehy's criticisms are misguided, and that Lewis's modal realism is well-equipped to deal with them. Here, I will demonstrate that Cameron is mistaken. That is, I will argue that modal realism is incompatible with the classical version of theism, which maintains that there is but one God, where God is understood to be a necessarily existing, omniscient, omnipotent, morally perfect, omnipresent, and simple being (that is, lacking proper parts) responsible for bringing all of creation into existence.[1]

Now, Sheehy raises three difficulties for any theist looking to adopt modal realism, but here I will address only one of them. First, Sheehy points out that modal realism gives rise to a problem for God's omniscience, since God's knowledge of what is possible is either dependent on the existence of possible worlds (in which case his omniscience seems limited), or it is not (in which case, we cannot analyse propositions in the way that the modal realist does; namely, as sets of worlds). I will not address this problem here.[2] Second, Sheehy notes a problem for God's moral perfection that arises in the event that God creates *all* of the possible worlds (such that they completely exhaust the logical space).[3] For, if the amount of evil in *this* world gives rise to a problem of evil that conflicts with God's moral perfection, we should find it much more troublesome to learn that God has also created worlds where every human being endures nothing but unimaginable pain and suffering, with no chance for redemption. I will not address this problem either.[4]

It is Sheehy's third criticism which will be of greatest interest to metaphysicians, and it is also, I think, the most problematic. (Furthermore, it is the only criticism that Cameron attempts to address.) I am referring to the problem of reconciling God's *necessary existence* with modal realism. On a possible worlds semantics, <Necessarily, God exists> is true if and only if, at *every* world, God exists. But, for the modal realist, strictly speaking, nothing exists at more than one world. For Lewis, all individuals are 'world-bound'; that is, 'there is nothing that inhabits more than one world. . . . Things that do inhabit worlds – people, flames, buildings, puddles, concrete particulars generally – inhabit one world each, no more' (Lewis (1979), 126).

Rather than endorsing 'trans-world identity' (the view that some of the individuals in distinct worlds are numerically identical; i.e. literally one and the same thing), modal realists must instead adopt 'counterpart theory'. For example, though Lewis would agree that <Humphrey could have won the election> is true if and only if there exists some world where Humphrey *does* win the election, strictly speaking, the victorious Humphrey is only Humphrey's *counterpart* (or doppelgänger, if you will). On Lewis's view, there is another universe where someone exists who bears a striking resemblance to the Hubert Humphrey of our actual world, and that man became a US president – but that man is not numerically one and the same individual as *our* Humphrey. He is merely an individual who bears certain relevant relations of *similarity* to our Humphrey (i.e. he is one of Humphrey's 'counterparts'). This spells trouble for the claim that God

exists in *every* possible world. For, on counterpart theory, this amounts to nothing more than the claim that the being whom we call 'God' exists – strictly speaking – in the actual world only, but is said to exist *necessarily* in virtue of the fact that he has a God-*counterpart* in every other world. But, then, there is not really one God, but many – an infinite number of world-bound Gods, in fact – each of them residing in his own world. This picture is at odds with classical theism for two reasons: First, classical theism states that there is but *one* God, not many. Second, if each god creates nothing outside his own world, then it seems that none of them is responsible for *all* of creation (i.e. *everything* that exists; the set of *all* worlds). Rather, each god is responsible for creating only his little corner of it. On the other hand, if only one of these world-bound gods created absolutely everything, then it turns out that all but one of the 'gods' have created nothing at all.[5]

Alternatively, the counterpart theorist may claim that God really is just *one* individual thing, rather than many – namely, the mereological aggregate of all of the gods in each world. However, whereas the former proposal was incompatible with the claims that there is but one God, and he is responsible for all of creation, this latter proposal is incompatible with two others: For, if 'God' refers to the mereological aggregate of all of the god-counterparts, then God is not wholly present in the actual world (or *any* world, for that matter), and, furthermore, God has proper parts. But, God is generally understood to be both mereologically *simple* and *wholly present* in all places. Furthermore, it seems that, on this picture, the claim that 'there is but one God' is true only in a very unnatural sense. For, on this picture, God is 'unified' only in the same sense that my left arm, the Moon, and the Statue of Liberty are all 'unified' because they compose a single, scattered object (assuming that they even do so at all). Certainly, God would not be unified in the way that a classical theist would deem important, e.g. by having a unified will, or consciousness.[6] Finally, as Lewis himself admits, 'such a cross-world sum is not a *possible* individual. There is no way for the whole of it to be actual. No matter which world is actual, at most a proper part of it actually exists' (Lewis (1983), 39–40). As such, God would be, on this latter proposal, strictly speaking, what Lewis calls an 'impossible individual'. In sum, the conclusion that modal realism is incompatible with classical theism seems at least initially plausible. In the following two sections, I will examine two alternative approaches in which the modal realist may be able to help herself to a special case of trans-world identity (rather than counterpart theory) in order to reconcile the necessary existence of God with modal realism. I will argue that each of these proposals is at least as unsatisfactory as the above.

Modal realism, trans-world identity, and genuine abstract necessary being

The main problem with the portrayal of God as a necessary being just presented is that such a god only seems to be *quasi*-necessary. That is, God is a

'necessary' being only in virtue of the fact that things turned out such that there is a god-counterpart in every world. But, then, the fact that God exists *necessarily* rather than contingently is nothing more than an enormous cosmic accident. As Michael Jubien puts it, on modal realism, 'what passes for "necessity" is in effect just a bunch of parallel "contingencies"' (Jubien (2009), 75). Because God just *happens* to have a counterpart in *every* world, he achieves the title of 'necessary being'. But, if just *one* of those worlds happened to lack a god, then God's existence would instead be contingent. On this picture, God's necessary existence seems rather precarious – the result not of his divine perfection, but of something closer to luck. What is wanted by the theist is the sort of being who is what I will call '*genuinely* necessary'; i.e. necessary in virtue of his existing as *numerically one and the same being* in (or at) every possible world. In short, what is wanted is necessity as understood by those who endorse trans-world identity rather than counterpart theory.

As it turns out, there is room within modal realism for the existence of things that are genuinely necessary in this way. Indeed, David Lewis explicitly acknowledges the existence of such entities. Before elaborating, it will be helpful to identify the three categories into which Lewis divides all existing things. In his (1983), Lewis says that there exist:

(i)   *Possible individuals:* entities that exist wholly within a world; i.e. as a *part* of that world (e.g. planets, human beings, atoms, etc.).

(ii) *Impossible (cross-world) individuals:* entities that do not exist wholly in any world, but are composed of possible individuals from two or more worlds (e.g. the mereological aggregate of all of the god-counterparts, discussed in the previous section).

(iii) *Non-individuals (i.e. sets):* entities which do not exist *in* any world, but nevertheless exist 'from the standpoint of a world' because they are members of the domain according to which we evaluate the truth values of quantified sentences (Lewis points out that pure sets fall into this category).[7]

Immediately following his statement of the three categories just given, Lewis clarifies that the second axiom of modal realism – which he paraphrases as 'the principle that nothing is in two worlds' – applies only to those entities in category (i), the possible individuals. In other words, only the type-(i) individuals are world-bound individuals. This leaves entities of types (ii) and (iii), i.e. the so-called 'impossible individuals' and the 'non-individuals', as viable candidates for what I have called a 'genuinely necessary being', i.e. the sort of being that, rather than being bound to one world, literally exists (as numerically one and the same entity) either in or at every world. Now, we have already seen reason for the theist to reject the existence of a type-(ii) God; i.e. a God of the cross-world mereological aggregate variety. I will now turn to the question of whether or not God might be a being of type (iii).

Certainly, Lewis endorses the existence of necessary beings of this third variety; namely, the pure sets belong to this category. He writes: 'There will be many sets that even exist from the standpoint of all worlds, for instance the numbers' (Lewis (1983), 40). One of Ross Cameron's suggestions is that the theist accept the existence of a god of *this* sort, writing 'the theist should grant God the same status as the pure sets have' (Cameron (2009), 97). Sheehy (2009) criticizes this suggestion for being contrary to the goal of parsimony that the modal realist strives for (since it would entail accepting the existence of a new kind of abstract entity into one's ontology), but we can do better than that. For, there are three important differences between God, as he is traditionally understood, and an entity of type-(iii). As it turns out, any entity falling into Lewis's third category of being (a) is one to which the part–whole relation does not apply, (b) does not stand in spatio-temporal relations to other things, and (c) is causally impotent. I maintain that such a being is simply not the sort of thing which could be described as a deity. I will now examine each of these three features (a)–(c) in turn.

(a) *God and the part–whole relation.* The God of the theists is one to whom the part–whole relation applies. For instance, on classical theism, God is said to be *wholly* present in the world. David Lewis agrees, clearly stating that he understands deities (if they exist) to be *parts of* worlds:

> Maybe, as I myself think, the world is a big physical object; or maybe some parts of it are entelechies or spirits or auras or deities or other things unknown to physics. But nothing is so alien in kind as not to be part of our world, provided only that it does exist at some distance and direction from here, or at some time before or after or simultaneous with now. (Lewis (1986), 1)

For Lewis, the part–whole relation applies to type-(i) beings, or the so-called 'individuals'. However, it does *not* apply to type-(iii) beings, or the so-called 'non-individuals' (e.g. the pure sets):

> Provisionally, my ontology consists of iterative set theory with individuals. . . . I take it that the part–whole relation applies to individuals, not sets. Then no set is in any world in the sense of being a part of it. Numbers, properties, propositions, events – all these are sets, and not in any world. Numbers *et al.* are no more located in logical space than they are in ordinary time and space. (Lewis (1983), 40)[8]

(b) *God and spatio-temporal relations.* The God of the theists stands in spatio-temporal relations to things in the world (e.g. by virtue of being omnipresent, creating things in time and space, etc.). Lewis is again in agreement here. Now, for Lewis 'a world is a maximal mereological sum of spatiotemporally interrelated things' (Lewis (1986), 73). As such, one might suspect that modal realism rules out the possibility of the existence of gods and spirits, since such entities are traditionally thought to exist outside of space and time. But Lewis handles this criticism by pointing out that his worlds are compatible with the existence of non-spatio-temporal entities such as gods and spirits, so long as those entities are *related* to space and time in the appropriate way:[9]

> [S]pirits . . . are traditionally supposed to be outside of space. . . . I do not say that all worlds are unified by spatiotemporal interrelatedness in just the same way. So the interrelation of a world of spirits might be looser than that of a decent world like ours. If the spirits and their doings are located in time alone, that is good enough. (To make sense of that, maybe space and time would have to be more separable at the world of the spirits than they are at our world; but that is surely possible.) I can even allow marvelous Spirits who are spatiotemporally related to other things by being omnipresent – for that is one way among others to stand in spatiotemporal relations. (*ibid.*, 73)

But, as we have already seen, Lewis's type-(iii) beings are ones that exist outside space and time altogether. This is why, for instance, the pure sets are said to exist *at* worlds, rather than *in* them.[10]

(c) *God and causal efficacy.* The God of the theists is causally potent (or, rather, *omni*-potent). Lewis attributes causal potency to gods as well. He writes: 'The worlds are not of our own making. It may happen that one part of a world makes other parts, as we do; and as other-worldly gods and demiurges do on a grander scale' (*ibid.*, 3). However, abstract objects are traditionally thought to be causally inert. Gideon Rosen writes (2012): 'Indeed, if any characterization of the abstract deserves to be regarded as the standard one, it is this: An object is abstract if and only if it is non-spatial and causally inefficacious.' This is controversial, of course, but keep in mind that we are exploring the possibility that God is a genuinely necessary being ontologically on par with a *pure* set (i.e. a set which does not contain any non-set, or set of non-sets, etc., as a member), and it is far less controversial that *this* type of (pure) abstract entity is causally inert.

In sum, type-(iii) entities do not make suitable candidates for deities. The God of the theists is simply not an individual that is ontologically on a par with the pure sets (or any other entity which might fall into this category). For, both theists and Lewis agree that God (a) is one to whom the part–whole relation applies, (b) stands in spatio-temporal relations, and (c) is causally potent. Meanwhile, any entity classified by the modal realist as a type-(iii) entity will be one that *lacks* these features. Following Cameron's suggestion to 'grant God the same status as the pure sets have' would therefore deliver an impoverished deity who is neither omnipresent nor a creator.

Modal realism, trans-world identity, and genuine concrete necessary being

We began by establishing that, in order to satisfy the theist, the modal realist must supply a God who, if he exists, is 'genuinely necessary', i.e. wholly located in (or at) every possible world as numerically one and the same individual thing. Next, we established that a genuinely necessary being who merely exists 'at' every world (or, 'from the standpoint of all worlds') will not do. For, such a thing cannot be the omnipresent, causally potent creator that the theist requires. What is wanted, therefore, is a God who (if he exists) is wholly present *in* every world. In short, God must be a type-(i) being (or what Lewis calls a 'possible individual'). Let

us call such a being 'concrete', for lack of a better term. Note that applying this term to God seems to be in keeping with the standard usage of that label. For instance, Alvin Plantinga (1985, 90) writes: 'God . . . is the only concrete object that exists in every possible world.'[11]

Now, as we have seen, Lewis states that no entity of this sort enjoys trans-world identity, but rather only ever has *counterparts* in other worlds (recall that type-(i) entities are the ones to which 'the principle that nothing is in two worlds' applies). But perhaps there is room within modal realism to reject his claim. As Cameron points out, the modal realist may help herself to trans-world identity rather than counterpart theory for any individual that *lacks accidental intrinsic properties;*[12] and, 'Since God plausibly has His intrinsic properties essentially, there is thus no barrier to even the modal realist claiming that He literally exists in more than one world – indeed, that He exists *in* every world' (Cameron (2009), 100, emphasis mine). Here, we appear to have within modal realism a viable path towards a God of the sort that is posited by the classical theist. Namely, if all of God's properties are essential rather than accidental (which seems plausible), then the modal realist could grant that God is a genuinely necessary being – and by this she would not mean that God has *counterparts* in every world, nor that he is a cross-world *aggregate* of beings (one in every world), but rather that he literally exists in every world, wholly present as numerically one and the same individual.[13]

Unfortunately, this suggestion will not do either, for the following reason: whereas an abstract God ontologically on a par with entities such as pure sets was incompatible with classical theism because he *lacked* certain crucial traits, a concrete God of the sort just described is incompatible with modal realism because he *has* them. The modal realist simply cannot endorse the existence of a causally potent God who wholly exists in every possible world, for the simple reason that worlds of the modal realist are, by definition, *causally isolated*. Of his worlds, Lewis writes,

> They are isolated. There are no spatiotemporal relations at all between things that belong to different worlds. Nor does anything that happens at one world cause anything to happen at another. Nor do they overlap; they have no parts in common, with the exception, perhaps, of immanent universals exercising their characteristic privilege of repeated occurrence. (Lewis (1986), 2)

If every world shares numerically one and the same causally potent part in common – and not just a causally potent one, but an *omnipotent* one – then it would follow that they are not causally isolated. For, any causally potent being is surely causally related to itself. But, then, on the present proposal it would turn out that, for any two possible worlds, *u* and *v, u* has a part (namely, God) that is causally related to a part of *v* (namely, God). Alternatively, we may illustrate this point in a slightly different way: on the proposal being examined, it would be true that God exists at, say, worlds w_2 and w_3, and is wholly present in both worlds as a part of each. But, then, in that case, it would be true that a part of w_2 (namely,

God) caused a part of w_3 to exist (namely, the entire physical universe). So, on the present proposal, there would be causal relations across worlds – yet this is exactly what Lewis denies. To reiterate, for Lewis, 'the worlds are isolated: there is no causation from one to another' (Lewis (1986), 78). Lewis requires this causal (and spatio-temporal) isolation between worlds because it is their principle of individuation. That is, on modal realism, for any two possible worlds, *u* and *v, u* is numerically distinct from *v* if and only if there are no causal or spatio-temporal relations between them. It is worth noting that Stephanie Lewis's interpretation of David Lewis is consistent with the one I have presented here. She writes:

> [P]ossible worlds are causally insulated from one another, with no common members, and are such that nothing has causal impact on more than one world. Each world has its contents, and nothing that is in one world is in another. Something in one world may have counterparts elsewhere, but no individual can be in more than one possible world. This is what makes them possible worlds, distinct from one another, and is fundamental to David's mad-dog modal realism. (Lewis (2015), 218)

In short, the modal realist cannot help herself to the claim that two worlds share a causally potent concrete particular in common.[14] For, as we have just seen, Lewis's worlds are individuated by their spatio-temporal and causal isolation from one another – the result being that, if 'multiple' worlds *did* share a causally potent part in common, they would not be distinct worlds at all. David Lewis writes: 'Worlds are spatiotemporally and causally isolated from one another; else they would be not whole worlds, but parts of a greater world' (Lewis (1986), 84).[15] The existence of a genuinely necessary, causally potent God would therefore result in the collapse of the entire multitude of possible worlds (or, the 'pluriverse') into one enormous world – in which case there would no longer be any non-actual, possible worlds, but only the actual world (which would just be the pluriverse itself). Such a collapse would completely undermine modal realism, as well as the analysis of modal claims that it offers.[16] As Lewis himself admits (*ibid.*, 112), 'If the other worlds would be just parts of actuality, modal realism is kaput.' In sum, the proposal of this section (that God is a genuinely necessary, causally potent concrete being) fares no better than the proposal from the previous section (that God is a genuinely necessary, causally inert abstract being).

Finally, I should like to point out one further problem which *any* modal realist version of theism faces: On modal realism, <God creates w_3> would be necessarily true, since there is no world at which it is false. If God is *omnipotent*, however, then it should follow that he could have chosen *not* to create one of these worlds (say, w_3). In other words, on classical theism, the modal proposition <God could have failed to create w_3> should come out true. But, it does not.[17] So, the modal realist's God is one who lacks the power to have created a different number of worlds than he did in fact create. Thus, even setting aside the host of issues identified in this article, any theist looking to adopt modal realism will require a revisionary account of what it means to be 'all-powerful'.[18]

Conclusion

Here, I have explored three modal realist routes towards an account of God's necessary existence, and have found each of them to be unsatisfactory. (1) On counterpart theory, God is a necessary being in virtue of having a counterpart in every world (or else, in virtue of being a mereological aggregate of those counterparts). But such a proposal is incompatible with divine simplicity as well as the classical conception of God's role as the creator of *all* else that exists. This was the conclusion of the first section. The modal realist may help herself to trans-world identity in one of two ways. Namely, she may propose that God is a necessary being either in virtue of being (2) a causally inert (roughly, 'abstract') entity which exists *at* every world, or else (3) a causally potent (roughly, 'concrete') entity which exists *in* every world. But, option (2) will not do, precisely *because* such a being is causally inert – and this is incompatible with the theist's conception of God as a creator. On the other hand, option (3) will not do either, precisely because such a being *is not* causally inert – and this is incompatible with that central tenet of modal realism, which states that all possible worlds must be causally isolated. These were the conclusions of the second and third sections, respectively. Only one verdict remains available; namely, that the existence of the God of classical theism is, to use the words of Stephanie Lewis (2015), 'profoundly, fundamentally, completely, and utterly inconsistent with David's modal realist metaphysics of possible worlds'. We may only conclude therefore that either modal realism or classical theism is false.

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Notes

1. This list is obviously more extensive than the standard '3-Os' (omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence). But, there is precedence for extending the list of divine attributes as I have here. The following four divine attributes will be especially important to the thesis of this article. Below, I provide some (albeit, very brief) evidence for the claim that these attributes should be included in the classical version of theism, by way of the works of Augustine and Aquinas. (Note that the thesis of this article will not apply to those theists who reject them.)

    (1) **Creator:** *God is responsible for the existence of all of creation.*

    Genesis 1:1: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

    Augustine: 'God Himself . . . made the world . . . [T]he very order, changes, and movements in the universe . . . proclaim, however silently, both that the world was created and also that its Creator could be none other than God' (*City of God*, 11.4).

    Aquinas: 'Not only is it not impossible that anything should be created by God, but it is necessary to say that all things were created by God' (*Summa Theologica*, 1.45.2).

    (2) **Omnipresence:** *God is wholly present in all places.*

    Augustine: 'God is wholly present everywhere . . . He does not give one part of Himself to one half of creation, and another part to the other half, in equal shares, or less to a smaller part and more to a larger one; but He is not only wholly present to the whole universe, He is equally so to every part of it' ('Letter 187: On the presence of God', 17).

    Aquinas: 'whatever number of places be supposed to exist, God must be in all of them, not as a part of Him, but as to His very self' (*Summa Theologica*, 1.8.4).

    (3) **Unity:** *There is one and only one God, and this God is unified.*

    Augustine: 'there are not three Gods but only one' (*City of God*, 11.29).

    Aquinas: 'it is manifest that God is one in the supreme degree' (*Summa Theologica*, 1.11.4).

    (4) **Simplicity:** *God lacks proper parts.*

    Augustine: God's 'existence is simple and indivisible' (*City of God*, 8.6).

    Aquinas: 'There is neither composition nor quantitative parts in God . . . [I]t is clear that God is in no way composite, but is altogether simple' (*Summa Theologica*, 1.3.7).

2. Lewis's understanding of propositions is not essential to his modal realism, I think, so the modal realist need not be committed to the undesirable first horn of this dilemma, even if Lewis himself is.

3. Lewis (1986, 86) suggests that 'the worlds are abundant, and logical space is somehow complete. There are no gaps in logical space, no vacancies where a world might have been, but isn't' (with some minor qualifications added, *ibid.*, §1.8).

4. The following reply may be open to the theist modal realist: Perhaps the worlds do *not* exhaust logical space. Perhaps God only creates the 'good' worlds. In that case, propositions such as <It could have been the case that all humans suffered unimaginable pain throughout their lives without redemption> would be false. There is precedence for such a restriction on metaphysical modality by other theists. Plantinga, for instance, is happy to restrict metaphysical space to something narrower than logical space when he introduces his notion of trans-world depravity. On his view, <It could have been the case that all humans lived without sin> is false, even though it is logically possible that humans could have done so. For instance, see Plantinga (1974), section I.a.7.

5. We might be tempted to call that one creator god the true God here (while all of the other gods are mere imposters), but keep in mind that the one creator god would then be a mere *contingent* being rather than a *necessary* being. For, on modal realism, God is necessary only if he has a counterpart in every world (and imposters do not seem to make for suitable counterparts). In any case, the existence of a single, world-bound creator-god would be contrary to the modal realist's claim that all possible worlds must be causally isolated from one another. I say more about this claim below.

6. Consider also this: some theists may believe that God is one person. Others speak of God as three persons. On this modal realist version of God, however, he would be an *infinite* number of persons (assuming that each of the god-counterparts that God is composed of is an individual person).

7. Note that, in addition to sets, Lewis speculated that perhaps universals (at least, uninstantiated ones) are also entities of the third variety – though, he remained agnostic about their existence.

8. Though Lewis later questions the claim that the part–whole relation *never* applies to sets (Lewis (1986), 94), he maintains that 'I would not wish to say that any sets are *parts of* this or other worlds' (emphasis in original), and this is because 'a set is never part of an individual' (*ibid.*, n. 60).

9. What of the possible world where God creates nothing? Surely that is a metaphysical possibility. In that case, god would neither be spatio-temporal nor spatio-temporally *related*. Lewis's view seems to exclude the possibility of such an individual. The theist modal realist might supply one of two responses here: (1) She might insist that there is no such world, and that God *necessarily* creates, and therefore *necessarily* stands in spatio-temporal relations to other things. (2) She might argue that, on modal realism, all possible individuals must either be spatio-temporal, stand in spatio-temporal relations, or else *be able to* stand in spatio-temporal relations (for, surely God would still have possessed this latter ability, even if he had not created anything). In any case, let us set this problem aside, as it will be a moot point if the thesis of this article (that theism is incompatible with modal realism) is successfully established.

10. Lewis draws out this distinction as follows:

> [T]here is nothing that inhabits more than one world. There are some abstract entities, for instance numbers or properties, that inhabit no particular world but exist alike from the standpoint of all worlds, just as they have no location in time and space but exist alike from the standpoint of all times and places. Things that do inhabit worlds – people, flames, buildings, puddles, concrete particulars generally – inhabit one world each, no more. (Lewis (1979), 126)

11. Though, it is worth noting that Lewis describes some entities that are traditionally thought to be abstract as also existing '*in* the world'. For instance, the (impure) unit set of {David Lewis}, he says, exists *in the world*, because it is located wherever its member is located; he identifies events with the (impure) sets of space-time regions where they occur; and universals, he says, are *wholly located* wherever they are instantiated (Lewis (1986), 83–84). No matter. Regardless of how we delineate the distinction between 'abstract' and 'concrete', the question of this section remains as follows: is there room within modal realism for a causally potent, mereologically simple, wholly present, genuinely necessary being?

12. Lewis's reasoning for this conclusion has been recapitulated in several places (including Cameron (2009), 98–100), but I will give a brief overview of it here, in case the reader is unfamiliar. Consider Humphrey once more: he has ten fingers in the actual world, but he could have had nine fingers. Thus, Humphrey's ten-fingeredness is an intrinsic property of his that is not essential to him, but is, rather, accidental. On possible worlds semantics, this entails that, at some world, Humphrey has nine fingers. Now a problem arises: how can Humphrey have both ten fingers and nine fingers? These two claims are incompatible. The modal actualist (who believes that only the actual world exists) has no difficulty here. 'There is no Humphrey with nine fingers,' she says. 'It is only the case that he *could have* had nine fingers.' But, the modal realist cannot help herself to this response. On that view, there *is* a nine-fingered Humphrey out there in some other world. Nor will it do to index Humphrey's properties to worlds (i.e. we cannot say that Humphrey has the property of 'being ten-fingered at w_1' and 'being nine-fingered at w_2', for this is to treat such properties as *relational* rather than *intrinsic*). Lewis's answer, of course, is to adopt counterpart theory. On that view, it is not the case that Humphrey has ten fingers *and* (numerically one and the same) Humphrey has nine fingers. Rather, the individual named 'Humphrey' at the actual world has ten fingers, and some *other* (numerically distinct) individual named 'Humphrey' in another world has nine fingers. That man is not numerically one and the same man as our Humphrey – he is merely a *counterpart*. Thus, on modal realism, the problem of accidental intrinsics is avoided so long as we adopt counterpart theory for all of those individuals who have at least one intrinsic property accidentally (rather than essentially). However, this problem does not even arise for those entities whose intrinsic properties are all essential rather than accidental ones (and God is plausibly such an entity; i.e. if God is intrinsically F at one world, then it is plausible that he is intrinsically F at *every* world).

13. Sheehy's (2009) reply here is to point out that this would require the modal realist to revise her under-standing of the term 'actual'. Traditionally, the modal realist understands 'actual' to be an indexical term, where 'the actual world' refers only to the world that one is in, while all of the other worlds are the (non-actual) possible worlds. So, for instance, from my perspective, *this* world (call it w*) is the actual world, while, say, w_3 is just one of the possible worlds. On the present proposal, however, one of my world-mates (namely, God) also exists and is wholly present in w_3, in which case w_3 is actual from the perspective of someone who exists in my own world. Thus, a tension arises: for now there is a disagreement between

myself and one of my world-mates over whether or not w_3 is actual. This is an interesting observation, and Sheehy is right to recognize this tension, but here I aim for a better reply.

14. It is worth noting that the only sorts of accidental-intrinsic-lacking beings that Lewis posits as existing at more than one world are the causally inert pure sets. Indeed, Lewis expressed scepticism about the idea that a concrete particular – even one which lacked accidental intrinsic properties – could exist in more than one world (see Lewis (1986), 205–206, n. 6).

15. Note that Lewis does mention in passing (*ibid.*, 209) that one might attempt to redefine the individuation conditions for worlds, such that any worlds that overlapped in this way might still count as numerically distinct. Perhaps this could be done. I do not know. But, then, the burden of proof rests with the modal realist.

16. For example, if all Lewisian worlds were actual, then <Unicorns exist> would now come out true. Worse yet, if there is only one pluriverse, then <*Necessarily*, unicorns exist> would also come out true (indeed, given such a collapse, *all* things would turn out to be necessary beings, according to modal realism).

17. See Divers (1999, 235) for an explanation of why this proposition comes out false on modal realism. Of particular interest is his treatment of the proposition <There could be more worlds than there actually are in our logical space>.

18. There is a potential solution to this problem, but it does not recommend itself: such a proposition would come out true if there existed some sort of *meta*-modal framework. For instance, imagine that there existed a plenitude of concrete *pluriverses* such that, in *our* pluriverse (the actual pluriverse), God exists and created w_3. But, in at least one of the other (non-actual, possible, concrete) pluriverses, God exists and did not create w_3 (or, rather, some counterpart of w_3). But, this proposal generates more problems than it solves. First, it would send us back to where we started, so that we once again faced the problem addressed in the first section, above (for example, are the various gods of all the pluriverses one and the same god, or merely counterparts of one another?). Second, if the modal realist attempted to avoid that worry by proposing that numerically one and the same God is wholly present in every pluriverse (because he lacks accidental intrinsic properties), then every *pluriverse* would share a causally potent individual in common – in which case the multitude of pluriverses are not appropriately individuated. Finally, on this framework, <God created pluriverse-3> would still come out necessarily true, though it seems that an omnipotent being should have the power to choose *not* to create one of the pluriverses. In short, all of the objections raised in this article would surface once again.