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Klaas J. Kraay, ed., GOD AND THE MULTIVERSE: SCIENTIFIC, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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There are a number of medical ethicists who would change their view if their assessment of the moral status of a fetus changed.¹

A second worry a reader might have about the account of disagreement offered by Camosy involves the classification of ethical theories. Utilitarian theories are said to be a subset of teleological theories, which are a subset of consequentialist theories. Camosy appropriately anticipates confusion and so is careful to define consequentialist theories as those “which locate a primary moral concern in the consequences of one’s actions” (182). Theories are teleological if they are “concerned with achieving an end” and utilitarian if that end is “the end of maximizing utility” (182). His taxonomy differs from the usual classification of ethical theories and this might be due to his use of the indefinite article prior to *primary* in defining consequentialism. Consequentialist theories are often thought of as having a single primary concern, whereas a teleological theory (e.g., Aristotle’s account of *eudaimonia*) takes into account consequences but not only consequences. I do not wish to quibble with definitions here, but merely to point out that how we classify theories might affect our understanding of their similarity.

My worries with the arguments offered in this book require two qualifications. First, if Singer’s view shifts significantly in the future, as Camosy suggests it might, then the disagreement between Singer and Christians might become insignificant. Second, Camosy’s claim that Christians might learn from Singer because he is consistent is instructive. This suggests that the intended audience is not academic philosophers who already strive for consistency and take Singer’s work seriously, even if we disagree, but a group hostile to Singer, who the author believes lack a basic virtue of philosophical thought. If one is interested in reconciliationist ethics, the book will prove worthwhile. If one has taken Singer and consistency seriously, the book may be of less interest.

¹Consider, for example, Mary Anne Warren’s now famous article “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion,” *Monist* 57 (1973), 43–61.

God and the Multiverse: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Perspectives, edited by Klaas J. Kraay. New York: Routledge, 2014. 248 pages. \$140.00 (hardback).

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This edited volume by Klaas J. Kraay brings together twelve contributions which explore different philosophical, theological, and scientific issues surrounding the multiverse. The book is helpfully divided into five main sections.

The first section, "Physicists on God and the Multiverse," features two contributions from physicists. In his chapter "Puzzled by Particularity," Robert B. Mann offers both scientific and theological reasons for thinking that on theism a multiverse is unlikely. Mann argues that the multiverse is posited by physicists to avoid fine-tuning arguments for theism (31, 32). The alternative multiverse explanation to the existence of our universe is "driven by a desire to avoid cosmocentrism and any special assumptions that go along with it. [The multiverse] is a-teleological, in the tradition of methodological naturalism" (34, 35).

Mann has two main reasons for rejecting the plausibility of a theistic multiverse. First, normal scientific inquiry about the multiverse is impossible by definition because only our current universe is observable. Thus, multiverse theories are by definition unfalsifiable (35). Second, Mann believes that the scientific evidence for a multiverse makes it likely that every logically possible universe is concrete. This allows for a powerful theological objection against the theistic multiverse. If there is a multiverse, then there are many universes containing much more evil than ours (38). Thus, if the multiverse exists, the problem of evil becomes far more challenging to answer. While Mann admits that it is possible to imagine imposing an axiological threshold on the multiverse such that in order to be actualizable by God a universe must meet that threshold, current science does not support such a position (39).

Mann's piece highlights significant differences in motivation between physicists and philosophers of religion for postulating the theistic multiverse. For example, philosophers of religion have recently posited the theistic multiverse as a (partial) solution to the problem of evil. If our universe is in a multiverse, then the theist can respond to the problem of evil by pointing out that God did in fact create many universes much better than ours. Likewise, with respect to the problem of no best world, the theist can posit that God did indeed create the best possible world while preserving the intuition that our universe could not possibly be the best. The multiverse is the best possible world containing many different universes, including many better than ours. For the multiverse to succeed as a solution to these problems, however, there may need to be a minimum axiological threshold such that only universes above the threshold are included in the multiverse by God.

In "The Everett Multiverse and God," Don N. Page argues that the actual world is the best possible world containing a multiverse with many universes (50). He suggests that the laws of physics governing our universe are extremely mathematically elegant and beautiful. While humans would prefer that the world contain less evil than elegance, Page claims that God might have a much greater appreciation of the laws of physics and that their existence might therefore be very valuable to God (52). Page's account explicitly assumes that there can be no value in an object without a consciousness to experience pleasure from that object. Page speculates that there might be an inevitable trade-off between the

pleasure God derives from the mathematical elegance of the universes and the evils that inevitably result from the laws of physics. Page muses that "if it is indeed true . . . that God gets tremendous satisfaction from the elegant laws of physics that He creates, it would not be right to expect Him to give that up to the degree that would be required for a much smaller happiness that might be afforded His creatures if they were spared from evils like cancer and earthquakes" (54). Page concludes that while God could have used other laws of physics, or simply collapsed the quantum state in ours to avoid evil (i.e., perform intervening miracles) to avoid all natural and moral evil, it might have decreased the overall value of the world by decreasing the elegance of the universe and the pleasure he derives from it.

Both Mann and Page claim that if there is a multiverse then all logically possible universes are concrete. Note that if they are correct then the scientific evidence in favour of a multiverse cannot be appealed to as additional support for multiverse solutions to the problem of evil or the problem of no best world, since they require a threshold. This is an important, yet often neglected, tension between the scientific evidence for the multiverse and appeals to the theistic multiverse in contemporary philosophy of religion.

The second section of the book is called "Theistic Multiverse: Details and Applications." Jason L. Megill's paper, "An Argument for Modal Realism," argues for the conclusion that "there are at least two worlds that contain literally concrete entities" (94). Thus, Megill proposes a more modest version of Lewis's modal realism. I will not detail Megill's argument here, but his paper is important because he acknowledges that certain scientific multiverse theories cohere better with theism than others.

The many-worlds interpretations of quantum mechanics is that every universe has the same physical constants as our particular universe. Thus, not every logically possible universe is concrete (i.e., the ones with other physical constants). This is different from Tegmark's theory, which says any universe that can be described with a mathematical structure is concrete and is closer to implying that every logically possible universe is concrete. Megill explains that "if a view like Lewis's or Tegmark's is true, then all logically possible universes will be [concrete]; but then universes that are not worthy of actualization will be [concrete]. This would undermine the multiverse response to the problem of evil, if not theism itself" (108). But if restricted modal realism is true, or a multiverse theory which does not imply every logically possible universe is concrete, then it could be that only those universes worthy of creation exist (i.e., those above a certain axiological threshold). Megill's contribution is significant because he is one of the few philosophers of religion who seem keenly aware that not every scientific multiverse theory bodes well for theists wishing to use the multiverse as a solution to the problem of evil or the problem of no best world.

Donald A. Turner's "Revisiting the Many-Universes Solution to the Problem of Evil" is a response paper defending his position that the

multiverse can help respond to the problem of evil. Turner argues that God creates a multiverse containing every universe above some minimum threshold, perhaps those universes that contain a favourable balance of good over evil (114). As mentioned above, there are scientific reasons to doubt that the multiverse has a threshold. Here is a philosophical reason to doubt that there can be a threshold distinguishing which universes are included in a theistic multiverse: If certain counterfactual statements can obtain such that they would make our universe fall below the threshold, then they are not genuine possibilities. This is because God cannot actualize any universe below the threshold. Thus, any theistic multiverse with a threshold wreaks havoc on our common sense modal intuitions that things could have turned out otherwise (specifically that they could have turned out quite a lot worse).

The third section of the book is "Criticisms of Theistic Multiverses" and contains Michael Almeida's very provocative paper "Best Worlds and Multiverses," in which he argues that the theistic multiverse solutions to the problem of evil and problem of no best world fail simply because theists do not need solutions to those problems. Briefly, Almeida claims that a lot of the value of a universe is the result of agents' freely conforming to the requirements of justice. In order for such acts to be free (and hence valuable), it must be metaphysically possible for moral agents in a perfect universe to instead choose evil and actualize a bad universe (155). But this entails that there must be a universe where such evil actually occurs; otherwise, the morally good agents are not free and hence contribute no value to their universe. Thus, there cannot be good universes without correspondingly bad universes. Unpacking Almeida's ideas in detail would be a much larger project (he has published extensively on related topics), but it is worth noting that his account avoids denying our common sense modal intuitions that things could have genuinely turned out a lot worse. Still, Almeida's picture of modality might leave the theist puzzled about how God can coexist with so much evil.

The fourth section of the book is called Pantheistic Multiverses. In "Multiverse Pantheism," Yujin Nagasawa explains that "[m]ultiverse pantheism . . . holds that God is identical with the totality of all universes, that is, the multiverse that includes our universe" (177). Nagasawa claims that multiverse pantheism is a unique view and avoids certain major problems usually associated with traditional pantheism (178). According to Nagasawa, the most challenging objection to multiverse pantheism is the problem of evil. There is a much larger quantity of evil in the multiverse than in our single universe. On this view God "encompasses all possible forms of evil including utterly awful ones such as innocent people being tortured for a long time, possibly an infinite amount of time, for no reason. It is difficult to think that such a being is qualified to be God" (187).

The fifth and final section is "Multiverses and the Incarnation" which contains two papers, one by Robin Collins and another co-authored piece by Timothy O'Connor and Philip Woodward. The quality of these two

contributions is excellent, but I suspect that they will be of interest only to Christian theists, so I will not elaborate on them here. Given space constraints, I have also not discussed papers by Jeremy Gwiazda, John Leslie, Peter Forrest, and Michael Schryemaker. But all of their contributions merit study by philosophers interested in the multiverse.

Throughout this review I have highlighted some of the tensions between scientific accounts of the multiverse and the recent philosophical reasons theists have for a multiverse. There are, of course, deeper issues lurking here about the interaction between science and philosophy. A multiverse with a threshold coheres better with theism because it does not include every universe, and thus excludes extremely evil ones. However, it fails to preserve our modal intuitions that universes far worse than ours are indeed genuine possibilities. The scientific evidence is controversial, but both Mann and Page agree that if there is a multiverse, then every logically possible universe is concrete. This view preserves our intuitions that our universe could be a lot worse, since if there is a multiverse, then there really are other worse universes. But the theist will likely remain uncomfortable with this scenario because it entails such a large amount of evil (perhaps infinite?) co-existing with God.

The overall quality of the essays in this volume is excellent. They all make interesting and unique contributions to the multiverse literature. I was most fascinated by the papers from Megill, Almeida, and Nagasawa. The section on pantheism will be welcome to those who have recently criticized contemporary philosophy of religion for its narrow focus on Christian theism. This volume is important to any philosopher interested in the multiverse. I also predict that it will become required reading for any philosopher of religion wanting to research the connection(s) between God and the multiverse. I highly recommend it.

Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown, edited by Robert MacSwain and Taylor Worley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 313 pages. \$125.00 (hardback).

J. SAGE ELWELL, Texas Christian University

This volume of nineteen essays, with accompanying "Response" and "Postscript," comes out of papers presented at a 2010 conference hosted by the Institute for Theology, Imagination, and the Arts at the University of St. Andrews entitled "Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Conversations with the Work of David Brown." The book includes the twelve plenary papers from the conference and seven additional chapters. The book is