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On creating worlds without evil – given divine counterfactual knowledge

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Abstract: **An important question raised in the Molinist debate is, 'Given God's access to counterfactual knowledge, could God create a world in which free creatures always refrain from evil?' An affirmative answer suggests that God cannot possess counterfactual knowledge since such knowledge would allow God to create seemingly more desirable worlds than the actual world. However, Alvin Plantinga has argued that it is at least *possible* that every possible person is *transworld depraved* – meaning that each person *would* perform some wrong actions if *any* world in which that person is morally free were actualized. I argue that, given an infinite number of possible persons, the *probability* that everyone is transworld depraved is exceedingly low. In addition, I investigate whether there are enough possible persons vis-à-vis the number of moral choices per person so that God could create worlds *like the actual world*, except lacking in moral evil.**

Introduction

Advocates of middle knowledge are faced with the question, could God have created a world both devoid of evil and containing libertarian agents, given God's access to counterfactual knowledge?[1] The intuition behind an affirmative answer is that, if God knows what every possible person *would* freely do in every possible circumstance, then surely God could have chosen to actualize only those persons and those circumstances in which every person would always do right. Against this intuition, Alvin Plantinga has argued that, although there may be *logically possible* worlds containing creatures who always freely do right, it may, nevertheless, be *infeasible* for God to actualize any of these worlds just in case everyone is *transworld depraved*.[2] In general terms, a person is transworld depraved if she *would* perform at least one wrong action if *any* world in which she is morally free were actualized. Since it is, at least, logically possible that every possible person is transworld depraved, it is possible that no evil-free world is feasible for God to actualize.

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In what follows, I shall argue that although it may be *logically possible* that there are no feasible evil-free worlds, the *probability* that there are no such worlds is zero, if the number of possible persons is infinite. I first defend a probabilistic principle on which the probability that a given counterfactual of creaturely freedom is true is between zero and one. I then utilize my principle to show that, given certain plausible assumptions pertaining to the number of possible persons, the probability that everyone is transworld depraved is zero. Finally, I shall investigate whether there are enough possible persons for God to create worlds, like the actual world in terms of the number of people and quantity of moral choices, which contain no moral evil.

A priori probability of counterfactuals

In order to assess the probability that a given evil-free world is feasible, I propose the following probabilistic principle of counterfactuals (PPC):

PPC: for every counterfactual of creaturely freedom, C, $0 < Pr(C/K) < 1$, where K is the collection of necessary propositions.

PPC is based on the plausible supposition that if there are counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, then they are metaphysically contingent.[3] If a counterfactual is only true within a galaxy G of possible worlds, and is not true in every possible world, then the probability, *prior to what is contingently true*, that the actual world is a member of G is greater than zero and less than one.

To be sure, the *epistemic* probability of a counterfactual C for a subject S may be nearly 1, even if the a priori probability of C is not. For one might have good reasons to think that certain counterfactuals are true regardless of their objective, a priori probability. For example, consider the counterfactual, 'If Socrates were in Adam's place in the garden, Socrates would have refrained from eating the fruit'. If someone is able to estimate what Socrates would do in Adam's place, based on her justified beliefs about what Socrates did, in fact, do in the situations in which he lived, then the epistemic probability of such a counterfactual would not correspond with its objective probability. Or suppose that I have a compelling reason for thinking that the only way that there could be a world containing both God and evil in it is that every possible person suffers from transworld depravity (TWD). In this case, if my belief that both God and evil exist is justified, then I have a reason to think that certain counterfactuals about non-actual persons are true.[4] For example, if there is a world W in which a subject S makes a single moral choice, then I have a reason to think that if W were actualized, then S would fail to perform the right action in that choice. Therefore, the epistemic probability of counterfactuals need not conform to their a priori probability.

But suppose I succeed in establishing that the a priori probability of a proposition P is zero (or nearly zero). Then the burden of proof shifts to the person

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who believes P to explain why she thinks P is, in fact, true, despite its low probability. In addition, my probabilistic argument will utilize counterfactuals about *non-actual* persons, and it is difficult to think of reasons why these counterfactuals should be true or false. After all, non-actual persons have not shown us what they would do in various circumstances by acting in our world. Additionally, it seems implausible that one person's counterfactuals be significantly dependent on another person's counterfactuals. The counterfactuals about actual people might indicate what having a human nature makes people *likely* to do, but these counterfactuals do not *entail* what non-actual persons would do in various circumstances. Perhaps someone can come up some other reason for thinking that certain counterfactuals about non-actual persons are true, such as a reason for thinking that the only way there could be a world with both God and evil in it is that every possible person suffers from TWD. However, if my probabilistic argument is successful, then such a reason will need to be made explicit if my argument is to be undercut.

Is everyone transworld depraved?

We are interested in whether or not every *possible* person suffers from TWD. Plantinga suggests that a possible person is a possible instantiation of a personal *essence*. Thus, every possible person will be transworld depraved if every essence suffers from transworld depravity. Plantinga explicates the conditions for a transworld depraved essence as follows:

> An essence E suffers from transworld depravity if and only if for every world W such that E contains the properties *is significantly free in W* and *always does what is right in W*, there is an action A and a maximal world segment S′ [i.e. every possible state of affairs that includes S′ but isn't included by S′ is a possible world] such that:
>
> (1) S′ includes *E's being instantiated* and *E's instantiation's being free with respect to A* and *A's being morally significant for E's instantiation*;
> (2) S′ is included in W but includes neither *E's instantiation's performing A* nor *E's instantiation's refraining from A*;
> (3) If S′ were actual, then the instantiation of E would have gone wrong with respect to A.[5]

Plantinga explains that if an essence E is transworld depraved, then it is not within God's power to actualize a possible world W, such that E contains the properties, *is significantly free in W*, and *always does what is right in W*. Since it is *possible* that every essence suffers from transworld depravity, it is *possible* that there are no possible persons who would always freely do what is right if they were actualized.

However, we can use PPC to show that while it is *possible* that every essence suffers from TWD, the *probability* that every essence suffers from transworld depravity is zero, if the number of personal essences is infinite. For, consider

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those worlds in which a person P faces a single moral choice. If there are an infinite number of personal essences, then there will be an infinite number of worlds in which an instantiation of an essence faces a single moral choice, since there will be one such world per essence. For example, consider those worlds in which God creates P and tells P not to eat from a certain tree. P is free either to obey God or else to disobey God. Given an infinite number of essences which could be instantiated in the place of P, there are an infinite number of worlds in which an instantiation of an essence must decide whether to eat from the tree or refrain. Now for every world W in which the instantiation of an essence E makes a single moral choice, there is a corresponding counterfactual of the form, 'if E were instantiated in W, then the person to whom E belongs would freely make the right choice'. This counterfactual is either true or false. Since the truths of such counterfactuals are clearly independent (what the person whose essence is E_1 would do does not depend on what some *other* person whose essence is E_2 would do), we see from PPC that the probability that each of these counterfactuals is false approaches zero as the number of essences approaches infinity. Ergo, if there are an infinite number of essences, then the probability that every essence is such that a person who instantiates it would fail morally in W is zero.

But why think there are an infinite number of possible persons? I can think of two reasonable assumptions, each of which entails that there are an infinite number of possible persons. The first is that for every type, there are an infinite number of possible tokens of that type. According to this assumption, if there is even a single type of person, then there will be an infinite number of possible persons of that type.

The following thought-experiment illustrates why I am inclined to think that a type of person has an infinite number of possible tokens of that type. Suppose that God has the power to instantiate on a planet P a person of type X, where X contains that person's essential properties, excluding the property of being *this* person, if there be such a property. Suppose also that God has the power to instantiate another person of type X on a different planet P′, where P′ and P are located in different disjoint universes. If this much is granted, then would not God also have the power to instantiate another person of type X on a planet P″? In fact, would not God have the power to instantiate persons of type X on *any number* of planets? I see no reason why not. But if God could instantiate persons of type X on any number of planets, then the number of possible token persons of type X cannot be finite. For, if the number of token persons were finite, then there would exist an integer n, where n equals the number of token persons. In that case it would be false that God could create persons of type X on $n+1$ different planets. Thus, if God could create persons of type X on any number of planets, then the number of possible token persons of type X cannot be finite.

Admittedly, the above argument is not conclusive. It may be that there cannot be two persons of the same type. Moreover, even if God could create persons

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of type X on both P and P′, it may just be that there is a certain number, say *n*, of possible persons of type X. It is my intuition that any finite value of *n* would be arbitrary and *inexplicable*, and one should prefer to minimize the number of inexplicable items in one's ontology. However, others may have a different intuition.

The second assumption is that personal essences have degreed properties and so come in an infinite variety. This assumption is countenanced by Plantinga's account of personal essences, according to which some of the properties contained in a person's essence include world-indexed personality traits and temperaments.[6] If the traits range over a non-discrete continuum, then the number of distinct essences appears to be infinite. For, if a possible world is a maximal collection of compossible states of affairs, then I see no reason why, given that essences come in degrees, there is not a continuum of collections of compossible states of affairs, such that in each collection there is an exemplified essence containing a trait to a distinct degree. Even if personality traits vary *atomistically*, there still seems to be an infinite number of personal essences, since it seems reasonable to think that there is no limit to the range of certain traits, such as intellectual capabilities – for every essence that contains X degree of intellectual capabilities, there is an essence that contains X+1 degree of intellectual capabilities. Therefore, the assumption that there is a limitless number of ways in which personal essences can vary entails that there are an infinite number of possible persons.

If either of these assumptions is correct, then it follows that the number of possible persons is infinite, and thus, the probability that every possible person is TWD is zero. If someone grants that there are an infinite number of possible persons, but has positive reasons to think that every possible person is TWD, then that person might rationally remain sceptical of the conclusion that not every possible person is TWD, even though the a priori probability that not every possible person is TWD is zero. It would be too audacious a task for me to defend in this paper the claim that *every* rational person who considers my probabilistic argument above should agree that not every possible person is TWD. However, it suffices to say that, given PPC combined with an infinite number of people, we have at least a reason to think that it is highly unlikely that every possible person is TWD, and the burden has shifted to the sceptic who thinks otherwise.

Morally desirable evil-free worlds

Even if I have been successful in presenting a plausible case for the claim that *not* everyone suffers from transworld depravity, I have far from shown that it is feasible for God to actualize non-transworld depraved essences in *morally desirable* evil-free worlds. At best I have only shown that there are possible

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persons who would make the right choice in some world in which that person makes a *single* choice. However, as William Lane Craig suggests, it may be far more desirable to actualize a *largely* populated world in which the people are given *many* opportunities to make moral choices.[7] Moreover, if continuous libertarian freedom turns out to be *essential* to personhood, then the only way for God to actualize a world in which a person is faced with a single choice would be for God to annihilate that person as soon as she makes her choice. Surely, *that* situation is less desirable than creating a world in which persons live forever and make moral choices throughout their lives. But I have said nothing about whether an infinite number of possible persons would give God the means to create *morally desirable* worlds in which every person freely performs only good actions. Therefore, I now turn to the question of whether there are enough possible persons for God to create morally desirable, evil-free worlds.

A world will be defined as morally desirable if that world is just like the actual world in terms of the number of people and quantity of moral choices, and if no-one in that world ever freely performs evil acts. I want to investigate whether there are enough possible persons vis-à-vis the number of total moral choices in a world so that God could create worlds *like the actual world*, except lacking in moral evil. In order to pursue this investigation, we must answer a couple of questions. First, 'How many total independent moral choices are to be made in the actual world?' It seems that the following are the only three possible answers:

A1 the cardinality of the set of independent moral choices in the actual world is finite;
A2 the cardinality of the set of independent moral choices in the actual world is $\aleph_0$;
A3 the cardinality of the set of independent moral choices in the actual world is at least $\aleph_1$.[8]

The second question is 'How many total possible persons are there?' If we agree that the number of possible persons is infinite, then there are evidently only the following three possible answers:

B1 the cardinality of the set of possible persons is $\aleph_0$;
B2 the cardinality of the set of possible persons is $\aleph_1$;
B3 there is no *set* of possible persons.

If our answer to the second question involves a larger cardinality than does our answer to the first question, then one can show, given PPC, that there is probably a world like the actual world in terms of the number of choices and persons, such that if that world were actualized, every person would freely perform only good actions.

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How many total independent moral choices are to be made in the actual world?

Let us analyse each possibility, starting with A1. I can think of at least three ways in which A1 would be the correct answer to how many different moral choices there are in the actual world. The first way is if every person, even if everlasting, remains free for only a finite number of choices. Clearly, the total number of choices in the actual world would be finite if each person makes only a finite number of choices. Now, even if we agree that at least some persons will live forever, it might still be the case that people are only given a finite number of free moral choices (assuming that continuous libertarian freedom is not essential to personhood).

A sophisticated form of this scenario has been defended by James Sennett. He argues that a person in heaven enjoys a *proximate compatibilist conception* of freedom, according to which he has in his causal past certain libertarian free acts that serve to give him a *character* that prevents him from performing evil acts in heaven.[9] Therefore, there may be at least some justification for thinking that there are only a finite number of libertarian choices in our future. Another way in which the total number of independent moral choices might be finite is based on the intuition that some counterfactuals logically *depend* on others. For example, consider a counterfactual C: 'If John were offered 10 dollars to kill Susan, John would freely try to kill Susan'. Consider also the counterfactual, C′, 'If John were offered a billion dollars to kill Susan, John would freely try to kill Susan'. It seems that if C were true, then C′ would also be true. If this is the case, then we can conceive of a set S that consists of John's most *foundational* counterfactuals, such that (i) if every counterfactual in S were morally negative, then every other counterfactual about John would also be morally negative; and (ii) no counterfactual in S is dependent on any other counterfactual. If S is a finite set, then the cardinality of *independent* moral choices for John is finite even if there are an infinite number of distinct counterfactuals corresponding to every one of John's future choices. If every person has a finite set of most foundational counterfactuals, then the total number of independent moral choices in the actual world is finite.

A final way in which the total number of independent moral choices is finite is for each person to have a finite number of *types* of counterfactuals pertaining to future choices and for these counterfactuals to count across all token counterfactuals of the same type. Let me explicate my distinction between a type of counterfactual and a token counterfactual. A counterfactual type is built out of a *type* of state of affairs, SA, where SA corresponds to some set of properties that states of affairs can have, excluding the property of *thisness* if there are such properties. Thus, a counterfactual type is a counterfactual of the form 'if person P were in a *type* of state of affairs, SA, P would freely perform action A'. A token counterfactual has the same form, except it replaces a *type* of state

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of affairs with a *particular* state of affairs. Perhaps token counterfactuals are logically dependent on their corresponding counterfactual types. For example, suppose there is a married man named Alex who every day finds himself tempted by the sight of a certain prostitute on his way home from work. If it is true that, *were* Alex confronted with the prostitute, he *would* freely resist marital unfaithfulness, then the truth of that single counterfactual might explain why Alex would, in fact, resist in each of the repeated confrontations with the prostitute.

One might respond that, even if counterfactual types count across counterfactual tokens of the same type, it is simply never the case that a person makes multiple choices that are qualitatively indiscernible. For example, Alex's memories (and other psychological states) serve to make each encounter with the prostitute a different *type* of experience. Thus, even if counterfactual types count across counterfactual tokens, it may be unreasonable to think that there are only a *finite* number of counterfactual types pertaining to our future choices.

However, one might hold that there are only a finite number of independent counterfactual types, if one thinks that the independent counterfactuals are those counterfactuals that are built out of states of affairs that are *counterfactually relevant* to the free activity of the agent, as Thomas Flint suggests.[10] For example, the state of affairs of a leaf falling off some tree in Nigeria seems clearly irrelevant to Alex's choice of whether to succumb to temptation, and thus it seems reasonable not to include that state of affairs in the counterfactual pertaining to Alex's choice concerning the prostitute. Similarly, one might argue that not every psychological state is relevant to every new moral choice and those that are relevant come in a finite variety. Thus, it may yet be the case that there are only a finite number of counterfactual types for agents even if those agents will make libertarian choices indefinitely, and if types count across tokens, then we have a third scenario in which in which A1 would be true.

Let us turn now to A2: the cardinality of the set of independent moral choices in the actual world is $\aleph_0$. If none of the above accounts of our moral choices are right, then A2 might be true just in case each person (or at least some person) makes an independent moral choice after every interval of time of a certain finite length. If this is how things are, then the cardinality of the set of counterfactuals about a person is $\aleph_0$, since there is a one-to-one correspondence between a set whose members correspond to finitely spaced moments on an infinite timeline and the set of natural numbers.[11] For, every moment on the timeline can be represented by a distinct natural number, and every natural number can be mapped to a distinct moment on the timeline.

Regarding A3, we can boost the number of moral choices up from $\aleph_0$ to $\aleph_1$ by admitting that persons *continuously* make independent choices over time.[12] This is because $\aleph_0$ denotes the cardinality of an infinite set that is too small for the points on a continuum to map onto, while $\aleph_1$ denotes the proper cardinality for

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a one-to-one correspondence with the points on a *continuum*. I must confess that this situation seems wildly implausible, considering that it entails that, when I choose A, there is no immediately next choice I make, but at any later time I've already made an infinity of choices. Nevertheless, A3 might be true if time is continuous, and people are able to make independent choices across a continuum.

How many total possible persons are there?

Although I've already offered several reasons to think that the number of possible persons is infinite, I have not yet specified what sort of infinity is involved. Either the cardinality of possible persons is $\aleph_0$, $\aleph_1$, or else there is no cardinality of all the persons. The cardinality would be $\aleph_0$ if personal types of essences vary *atomistically*, while the cardinality would be at least $\aleph_1$ if personal essences vary *continuously*. Finally, it has been shown that some collections are too large to be sets and have no cardinality.[13] Although, this option is beyond our scope to pursue here, it suffices to say that the collection of *tokens* of a type may turn out to be too large to be a set.

What sorts of evil-free, feasible worlds are there?

The chart below illustrates how the number of possible persons vis-à-vis the number of independent moral choices informs the probability that certain types of worlds are feasible and evil-free.

	Finite number of independent moral choices	$\aleph_0$ independent moral choices	$\aleph_1$ independent moral choices
Finite number of persons	?	0	0
$\aleph_0$ persons	1	?	0
$\aleph_1$ persons	1	1	?
$>\aleph_1$ persons	1	1	1

The numbers in the boxes indicate the approximate probability that there is a feasible, evil-free world in the absence of countervailing reasons, given both the number of possible persons indicated in the corresponding row and the number of moral choices indicated in the corresponding column. A question mark indicates that the probability is either indeterminate or indeterminable.

The probabilities are calculated based on the following premise:

(P) If the cardinality of the set of possible persons is infinitely larger than the cardinality of a set M of independent moral choices in the

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actual world, then there is an exceedingly high probability that there exists a possible world *w*, such that:

(1) the cardinality of independent moral choices in *w* is equal to the cardinality of set M;
(2) *w* contains no moral evil;
(3) *w* is a feasible world.

P basically states that, if there are infinitely more possible persons than there are moral choices in the actual world, then God can find a person who would freely perform only right actions in a world in which she performs just that many moral choices. P is easy to demonstrate when the number of moral choices is finite:

Consider a world *w* that has only one non-divine person who faces *n* independent choices, where *n* is the number of independent choices in the actual world. For each choice in *w* there is a corresponding counterfactual. Let S be the set of all such counterfactuals. Now by PPC, each member in S has at least a small chance of turning out to be true (morally positive). There is a member *m* of S that has the smallest chance of being true of any other member. Let *p* equal the probability of *m* being true.[14] The probability that every member in S turns out true is $>p^{\wedge}n$, where *n* is the number of choices in S. Let $q=p^{\wedge}n$. Since *q* is >0 for every *n*, it follows that the probability ε that every member in S turns out true is >0. Given an infinite number of possible persons, there are an infinite number of worlds containing a single non-divine person facing *n* choices. As just shown, each of these worlds has a positive probability ε_1 of being evil-free. The probability that none of these worlds are evil-free is $(1-\varepsilon_1)*(1-\varepsilon_2)\ldots = \mathrm{Lim}_{n\to\infty}[1-(\varepsilon)]^{\wedge}n=0$. Thus, if there are infinitely more possible persons than there are moral choices in the actual world, *and the number of independent moral choices is finite*, then it is very likely that there is an evil-free feasible world containing just that many moral choices.

If there are infinitely more possible persons than there are moral choices in the actual world, *and the number of independent moral choices is* $\aleph_0$, then it would similarly *seem* to be very likely that there is an evil-free feasible world containing just that many moral choices. However, I know of no way to prove this using standard arithmetic.[15] Thus, it appears that my probabilistic argument cannot be expressed in terms of standard probability calculus when dealing with a transfinite number of choices.

I do not regard this lacuna as all that significant. The reason is that this case is based on the implausible assumption that the number of *independent* moral choices in the actual world is transfinite. I've already given several reasons why one might doubt this assumption. If the number of *independent* moral choices is not transfinite, there might still be an infinite number of moral choices. But in that case, the probability that they are all morally positive would be greater than

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zero, and since $\text{Lim}_{n\to\infty}[1-(p)]^n = 0$ if $p > 0$, the probability that there are no evil-free, feasible worlds with that many moral choices is zero.

There is a more significant objection to my probabilistic argument that deserves attention. The objection is this. Even if there are evil-free feasible worlds with as many choices as there are in the actual world, there is no reason to think that there are also evil-free, feasible worlds with as many choices *and as many persons* as there are in the actual world. For, some persons may do only right in a feasible world in which other creatures do significant wrong. Thus, my probabilistic argument for premise P is insufficient to warrant the conclusion that there is an evil-free feasible world with as many choices *and persons* as there are in the actual world.

In order to answer this objection, it would suffice to show that premise P′ is true:

(P′) If the cardinality of the set of possible persons is infinitely larger than the cardinality of the set M of moral choices in the actual world, then there is an exceedingly high probability that for every n (where $n \subset Z$), there exists a set P of n possible persons and a possible world w, such that:

(i) w contains the persons in P;
(ii) the cardinality of moral choices in w is equal to the cardinality of set M;
(iii) w contains no moral evil;
(iv) w is a feasible world.

P′ basically states that, if there are infinitely more possible persons than there are moral choices in the actual world, then God can find a subset of persons of any size who would freely perform only right actions in a world containing just that many moral choices. It turns out that P′ is as easy to prove as is P.

Consider a world w containing m moral choices and n number of persons. For each choice in w there is a corresponding counterfactual. Let S be the set of all such counterfactuals. Now by PPC, each member in S has at least a small chance of turning out to be true (morally positive). There is a member m of S that has the smallest chance of being true of any other member. Let p equal the probability of m being true. If the members of S are *independent* of each other, then the probability that every member in S turns out true $> p^n$, where n is the number of choices in S. Let $q = p^n$. Since q is > 0 for every n, it follows that the probability that every member in S turns out true is > 0. If *not* every member of S is independent, then the probability that every member in S turns out true is greater than p and is thus > 0. Hence, the probability that every member in S is true is strictly greater than 0. Given an infinite number of possible persons, there are an infinite number of worlds containing n persons and m choices. As just shown, each of these worlds has a positive probability ε_1 of being evil-free.

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The probability that none of these worlds are evil-free is $(1-\varepsilon_1)*(1-\varepsilon_2)\ldots = \mathrm{Lim}_{n\to\infty}[1-(\varepsilon)]\wedge n=0$. Thus, if there are infinitely more possible persons than there are moral choices in the actual world, then it is very likely that there is an evil-free feasible world containing as many moral choices and persons as there are in the actual world.

The objector is worried about persons who may only do moral good in a feasible world in which others do significant wrong. But why worry about such people? Given PPC, it is highly probable that, if there are an infinite number of persons, then there are an infinite number of persons who would freely do moral good in feasible worlds *that lack others who do wrong*. As a result, as we've already shown via the probabilistic argument in the preceding paragraph, if there are an infinite number of persons, it is highly likely that there are *enough people who would freely do moral good in worlds that lack others who do wrong*, such that there is an evil-free feasible world containing as many moral choices and persons as there are in the actual world.

Now return to the chart above. Notice that in the most plausible cases, the probability that there is an evil-free, feasible world like the actual world is 1. The probability can only be zero if there are a finite number of possible persons, or else persons are *continuously* making independent moral choices, and I have offered reasons to doubt both of these scenarios. Also, I have given three plausible scenarios in which there would only be a finite number of independent choices, and if any one of these scenarios describes the actual world then, given an infinite number of persons, the probability that there is an evil-free, feasible world like the actual world is exceedingly high, in the absence of countervailing reasons. Therefore, it looks as though we have a probabilistic reason to think that there are in fact evil-free, feasible worlds with as many persons and independent moral choices as there are in the actual world.

Conclusion

To be honest, I have not arrived at a conclusion that I enjoy. I am sympathetic to Molinism because of its theological fruitfulness.[16] But now it looks as though God's access to His counterfactual knowledge gives Him the means to create evil-free worlds that enjoy just as many moral choices as the actual world. Why then didn't God create one of these worlds instead? I can think of only two possible reasons. One is that God might desire a world in which creatures freely sin *so that* His mercy and justice can be expressed – so that people can know, via experience, the depths of God's character. This is a form of supralapsarianism, since God's decree that there be redemption would be prior to His decree to permit evil choices.[17] Another reason for not creating an evil-free world is that, although the *quantity* of moral choices in some evil-free worlds may be on par with the actual world, the *quality* of moral choices cannot be

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on par. For richly admirable moral acts, such as forgiving a repentant person, responding to guilt by repenting, rescuing someone from evil, overcoming an addiction, and sympathizing with someone who has been abused are all moral actions that would be impossible in a world in which no one freely commits evil.[18]

However, I am not sure whether these goods permit God to create a world with moral evil rather than one without moral evil. Whatever we make of these possible answers to why God did not create an evil-free world, it is clear that if I am right about the sorts of evil-free worlds that are feasible for God to create, *given His counterfactual knowledge*, Molinists are now faced with a new question: 'Why didn't He create one of the morally desirable evil-free worlds instead of the actual world?' If no satisfying answer is forthcoming, then Molinists will be forced to rethink their commitment to counterfactual knowledge or else to present a reason to doubt the feasibility of actualizing morally desirable evil-free worlds that undercuts the probabilistic argument presented in this paper.[19]

Notes

1. William Lane Craig asks whether God could have created a world in which every libertarian agent freely receives Christ given God's access to counterfactual knowledge in '"No other name": a middle knowledge perspective on the exclusivity of salvation through Christ', *Faith and Philosophy*, **6** (1989), 172–188, repr. in William Hasker, David Basinger, and Eef Dekker (eds) *Middle Knowledge: Theory and Applications*, Contributions to Philosophical Theology 4 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 226–243.
2. Alvin Plantinga *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 28–55.
3. The contingency of counterfactuals is consistent with the Lewis–Stalnaker analysis of counterfactuals.
4. Plantinga suggested this reason to me in personal correspondence (September 2003).
5. Plantinga *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 52–53.
6. *Ibid.*, 72.
7. Craig '"No other name"', 238.
8. I am assuming that there cannot be more than $\aleph_1$ choices, since there cannot be more choices than could be mapped onto a continuum of time.
9. James F. Sennett 'Is there freedom in heaven?', *Faith and Philosophy*, **16** (1999), 75.
10. Thomas P. Flint *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 245.
11. Two cardinalities can be shown to be equal based on the Schroeder–Bernstein theorem: if the cardinality of A is less than or equal to the cardinality of B and vice versa, then they have the same cardinality, where the cardinality of set A is less than or equal to the cardinality of set B if there is a bijection between A and a subset of B. Since there is a bijection between the points on a discrete line and a subset of the natural numbers and visa versa, the cardinality of the set of points on a discrete line is equal to the cardinality of the set of natural numbers.
12. I'm assuming that the Continuum Hypothesis (CH: a set of points on a line corresponds one-to-one with the set of real numbers) is true when I use $\aleph_1$ for the cardinality of the number of points on a continuum. If CH is false, then I just take $\aleph_1$ to denote the cardinality of the set of points on a continuum.
13. Alexander R. Pruss 'The cardinality objection to David Lewis's modal realism', *Philosophical Studies*, **104** (2001), 167–176.
14. If there are multiple members that *tie* for having the least probability of being true, then let m be any one of these members.
15. One might express the above intuition as follows: $\text{Lim}\ (_{n\rightarrow\aleph_x}\ [1-(.5)\wedge n]\wedge\aleph_{x+1})=0$, where $\aleph_x$ is the number of moral choices, and $\aleph_{x+1}$ is the number of possible persons. But this limit is not a defined limit within standard arithmetic, and so my probabilistic argument cannot be made precise for those cases involving a transfinite number of independent moral choices.

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16. Molinism provides, in my opinion, the best way to account for divine sovereignty in a world of libertarian agents.
17. Charles Hodge *Systematic Theology*, abr. edn, Edward N. Gross (ed.) (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1988, orig. 1873), 326.
18. I am grateful to Alexander Pruss, who mentioned these second-order goods to me as an alternative to supra-lapsarianism for the Molinist.
19. Special thanks to Alvin Plantinga, Alexander Pruss, William Hasker, Luke Van Horn, David Wright, Nathan Ballantyne, and an anonymous referee for this journal for their helpful comments and suggestions.

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