

# CAN GOD SATISFICE?

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Three very prominent arguments for atheism are (1) the argument from sub-optimality, (2) the problem of no best world, and (3) the evidential argument from gratuitous evil. To date, it has not sufficiently been appreciated that several important criticisms of these arguments have all relied on a shared strategy. Although the details vary, the core of this strategy is to concede that God either cannot or need not achieve the best outcome in the relevant choice situation, but to insist that God must and can achieve an outcome that is *good enough*. In short, this strategy invokes *divine satisficing* in response to these arguments for atheism. (The widespread use of this strategy may have gone unnoticed because the appeal to divine satisficing is usually implicit.) In sections 1-3, the three arguments for atheism will be set out, and it will be shown that the relevant replies all employ this shared strategy. Section 4 will show that those who invoke divine satisficing have failed to establish that this is a coherent notion. Accordingly, these replies to three important arguments for atheism are, at present, incomplete.

## 1. THE ARGUMENT FROM SUB-OPTIMALITY

Suppose that there is a unique best of all possible worlds. Against this ontological backdrop, the following argument for atheism has been proposed:

- (1) If God exists, the actual world is the best possible world.
- (2) Probably, the actual world is not the best possible world.
- (3) Therefore, probably, God does not exist.

Robert Adams (1972) offers an indirect argument against (1), by criticizing two claims that might be thought to support it:<sup>1</sup>

- (Q) A creator would necessarily wrong someone (violate someone's rights), or be less kind to someone than a perfectly good moral agent must be, if he knowingly actualized a less excellent world instead of the best that he could.
- (R) Even if no one would be wronged or treated unkindly by the actualization of an inferior world, the creator's choice of an inferior world must manifest a defect of character.

Adams argues that God could actualize a world with the following characteristics:

- (S) none of the individual creatures in it would exist in the best of all possible worlds;
- (T) none of the creatures in it has a life which is so miserable on the whole that it would have been better for that creature if it had never existed; and
- (U) every individual creature in the world is at least as happy on the whole as it would have been in any other possible world in which it could have existed.

Against (Q), Adams thinks it obvious that if God were to actualize a world with characteristics (S), (T), and (U), God would neither wrong anyone nor be less than perfectly kind to anyone. Against (R), Adams claims that, far from manifesting a defect of character, God's choice of an inferior world could manifest the Judeo-Christian virtue of *grace*, which he defines as "... a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved" (97-8). Adams' indirect argument against (1) thus constitutes an implicit appeal to *divine satisficing*: Adams believes that so long as God chooses a world that is *good enough*, God need not actualize the best world.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF NO BEST WORLD

Many contemporary philosophers, following Aquinas, have suggested that there is no best possible world, but rather an infinite hierarchy of increasingly better worlds.<sup>3</sup> Against this ontological backdrop, some philosophers have mounted an *a priori* argument for atheism.<sup>4</sup> This argument can be expressed with reference to the following inconsistent set of propositions:

- (NBW) For every world *w*, there is a better world, *x*.
- (P1) If it is possible for the *product* of a world-actualizing action performed by some being to have been better, then, *ceteris paribus*, it is possible for that being's *action* to have been (morally or rationally) better.
- (P2) If it is possible for the world-actualizing *action* performed by some being to have been (morally or rationally) better, then, *ceteris paribus*, it is possible for *that being* to have been better.
- (G) There *possibly* exists a being who is essentially unsurpassable in power, knowledge, goodness, and rationality.

Critics of theism have urged that since this set of propositions is inconsistent, and that since (P1) and (P2) are plausible, defenders of (NBW) ought to reject (G). This amounts to an *a priori* argument for the *impossibility* of an essentially unsurpassable God on (NBW), and it has come to be called *the problem of no best world*.

Although they do not use the term 'satisficing', Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder (1994) implicitly invoke this notion in their response to the problem of no best world. They offer a two-step model of God's choice of a possible world on (NBW). God first identifies the objective axiological threshold below which no world is worthy of actualization, and above which all worlds are. God then selects from the latter group at random. Any world that results from this process, the Howard-Snyders believe, is good enough. They grant that, no matter what God does, he could always have created a better *product* by choosing a better world. But they deny that God's world-actualizing *action*, on this model, could have been improved. In short, they deny (P1) by appeal to divine satisficing: God cannot choose a best world, but God must and can select one that is good enough.

Timothy O'Connor (2008, Chapter 5) also implicitly appeals to satisficing in his response to the problem of no best world. According to O'Connor, the world God selects for actualization is a "super-universe" containing infinitely many universes, all of which exceed some objective axiological threshold  $\tau$ . O'Connor holds that there is no best such super-universe, since there is no highest transfinite cardinality that a set of threshold-surpassing universes can exhibit. O'Connor says that God may choose to create *any* such super-universe: they are all good enough. Although God could always have created a better super-universe, O'Connor says, it does

not follow that God's world-actualizing action could have been better. So O'Connor also deploys satisficing against (P1).

Bruce Langtry (2008, 74-78) steers clear of randomizers and super-universes, but his response to the problem of no best world explicitly invokes satisficing. Langtry asks what a correct theory of morality should say about agents – divine or otherwise – who are forced to choose one item from an infinite series of good and increasingly better outcomes. He answers:

It should recommend that they satisfice – that is, that they select some good state of affairs even though they could select a better one. Therefore it should not also recommend, of each available good state of affairs, that they not select that one. Therefore it should not declare that, whichever state of affairs they select, there is at least one alternative member of the hierarchy such that selecting it would be a morally better action (78).

Langtry similarly argues that a correct theory of rationality should recommend that agents in such situations satisfice (76-7). In short, Langtry denies (P1) on the grounds that God must and can satisfice by selecting a world that is surpassable, but good enough.<sup>5</sup>

So, while the details differ, these three responses to the problem of no best world involve the same strategy: they all concede that God cannot actualize the best possible world on (NBW), but they all insist that God must and can satisfice by choosing a good enough world.<sup>6</sup> Before turning to the next argument for atheism, it is worth noting that some critics of theism have tacitly agreed that God may satisfice on (NBW). Perkins (1983, 246-8) and Elliot (1993) both grant (NBW), and neither expresses any concerns about the idea that God can coherently be thought to achieve an outcome that is surpassable, but good enough. Instead, both authors argue, *a posteriori*, that the actual world is *not* good enough to be considered the result of an unsurpassable being's action. In effect, this is an attempt to mount an evidential argument from evil on the hypothesis of (NBW). Since this move does not directly engage the satisficing strategy – and, indeed, concedes its success – it will be set aside in what follows.

### **3. THE EVIDENTIAL ARGUMENT FROM GRATUITOUS EVIL**

The third argument for atheism is perhaps the most famous of all: the evidential argument from gratuitous evil. Following Hasker (2010, 305), let's say that a token or type of evil is *gratuitous* if and only if God, if he exists, antecedently knows he could prevent it in a way that would make the world overall better.<sup>7</sup> The (probable) occurrence of gratuitous evil has been thought to disconfirm theism in the following way:

- (4) If God exists, no gratuitous evil occurs.
- (5) Probably, gratuitous evil occurs.
- (6) Therefore, probably, God does not exist.

A common response to this argument is to defend a model of our epistemic circumstances and capacities according to which it is not reasonable to assert (5). This position has become known as *skeptical theism*, and it has generated a large and very technical literature.<sup>8</sup> Defenders and critics of this argument typically agree, however, that premise (4) is secure. And yet, a few philosophers have attempted to resist (4). One of these is Peter van Inwagen, who, in a series of important publications, defends the following “no minimum amount” claim:

- (NMA) For any amount of evil that suffices for God's purposes, there is some lesser amount that would serve God's purposes equally well.<sup>9</sup>

As some commentators have noted, (NMA) might be thought to entail something most theists take to be implausible: that God's purposes would be served equally well with *no* evil whatsoever (Jordan 2003, Schrynemakers 2007). But this is evidently not what van Inwagen intends.<sup>10</sup> It is better to treat van Inwagen as asserting either that there is no minimum positive *cardinality* of evil that suffices for God's purposes, or else that there is no minimum positive *ordinality* of evil that suffices for God's purposes (or perhaps both).<sup>11</sup> van Inwagen thinks that (4) entails the falsity of either construal of (NMA). But van Inwagen reasons in the opposite direction: from (NMA), via *modus tollens*, to the denial of (4). In other words, van Inwagen thinks that since God must permit some evil in order to achieve his purposes, and since there is no minimum purpose-achieving amount for God to permit, God just has to draw the line somewhere. So long as God prevents an adequate amount of gratuitous evil, the exact placement of this line is an arbitrary matter.<sup>12</sup> No matter where God draws this line, some evil will be gratuitous, in which case (4) can be resisted, and the evidential argument from gratuitous evil fails. If van Inwagen's argument is successful, the occurrence of gratuitous evil counts against neither God's goodness nor rationality.

Commentators on van Inwagen's argument have generally not noticed that it constitutes yet another implicit appeal to divine satisficing.<sup>13</sup> Since van Inwagen defends (NMA), he is evidently committed to the view that the *product* of God's action could always have been better (2001, 69; 2006, 97). But he emphatically denies that God's *action* could always have been better (1988, 167; 2001, 73-4; 2006, 102-3).<sup>14</sup> So when van Inwagen says that God must draw this arbitrary line, he is in fact suggesting that God must and can satisfice by preventing an amount of gratuitous evil that is good enough – and that God cannot be faulted for so doing.

The most common response to van Inwagen's argument has been to tacitly concede that God can, in principle, satisfice by preventing a good enough amount of gratuitous evil, but to argue, *a posteriori*, that the amount of gratuitous evil in the world vastly exceeds what we would expect to find, given theism.<sup>15</sup> This response is structurally similar to the claims of Perkins (1983) and Elliot (1993), mentioned above in section 2. In this context, the result is a modified evidential argument from gratuitous evil that appeals, not to the *bare occurrence* of gratuitous evil, but to the *quantity* of gratuitous evil found in the actual world. This modified argument will be set aside, however, for the sake of pursuing a direct response to van Inwagen, and to the other authors who appeal to divine satisficing.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. IS SATISFICING GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOD?

So, some important responses to three prominent arguments for atheism involve an explicit or implicit appeal to *divine satisficing*. But is this move legitimate? The Howard-Snyders and O'Connor both invoke divine satisficing in their responses to the problem of no best world, without showing that this notion is coherent. Indeed, since these authors assume (NBW), and do not deny (P2), it seems that they intend to hold these claims fixed, and to deny (P1) by merely insisting that (G) is true; namely, that God is possible. But of course (G) is precisely what the problem of no best world means to deny, so it will not do to simply *assume* the truth of (G) in a response: that is just to beg the question.

Things are different, however, when it comes to Adams' response to the argument from sub-optimality, Langtry's response to the problem of no best world, and van Inwagen's response to the evidential argument from gratuitous evil. All three authors appeal to human choice situations to motivate their arguments. They all defend the propriety of satisficing in human cases, and, after suggesting that the divine choice situation is relevantly similar, they conclude explicitly (Langtry) or implicitly (Adams and van Inwagen) that satisficing ought to be deemed an acceptable strategy for God. Here are representative samples of their analogies:

- Adams considers the case of a man who decides to breed goldfish instead of more excellent beings such as cats or dogs. Adams' point is that the breeder is satisficing by choosing a *good enough* species to breed, and that there is nothing immoral (or, one might add, irrational) in so doing, even if the breeder could have chosen a more excellent species (1972, 329).
- Langtry imagines a powerful being offering to prolong your life by a finite number of good days. He concedes that there is no best choice for you to make (since you could always choose a larger finite number), but insists that rationality requires you to satisfice by selecting a number that secures an outcome that is good enough for you (2008, 76).
- van Inwagen offers the following story: one thousand children have a disease that is fatal unless treated with a sufficient dose of medicine. But the store of medicine is limited. If the store is divided equally into one thousand units, all the children will die, since no individual dose will be sufficient. So if the medicine is given to either none or all of the children, all will die. Given this, van Inwagen argues, the medicine must be given to some and not all of the children (2001, 78-9; 2006, 109-111). van Inwagen's point is that those dispensing the medicine should satisfice, and that so doing is both morally and rationally defensible.

The remainder of this paper raises some worries for this move from human to divine satisficing.<sup>17</sup>

To begin, it is worth briefly revisiting the pair of seminal papers in which Herbert Simon introduced the concept of satisficing into the contemporary literature. He first argued that the ideal rational agent postulated by economists is a dangerous fiction (1955). Given our physiological and psychological limitations, no human being has enough information or computational capacity to do what traditional *optimizing* or *maximizing* accounts of rationality require: namely, to (1) identify every possible outcome of an action, to (2) determine the value of each one, and (3) to assess the probability of each one's occurring. These requirements can be avoided on the alternative, *satisficing* conception of rationality, on which the agent merely roughly divides outcomes into 'satisfactory' and 'unsatisfactory', and is permitted to select any one of the former. While this paper concentrated on features of the agent, his subsequent paper explored features of an agent's choice environment which also motivate satisficing (Simon 1956). Simon's emphasis was generally descriptive (1955, 104; 1956, 137), but he also suggested that there may be normative implications (1955, 101).

Clearly, this kind of satisficing was devised specifically for human agents who are limited in knowledge and power, and precisely *because of* those limitations. As Weirich (2004, 386) notes, many decision theorists have followed Simon in this approach, in order better to model "bounded" human rationality.<sup>18</sup> But of course it would be inappropriate to apply Simon's notion of satisficing to the divine case, since God, as traditionally understood, does not suffer from the relevant limitations of knowledge and power.

Other philosophers have discussed a different kind of satisficing, sometimes called *genuine satisficing* (Weber 2004; Henden 2007) or *blatant satisficing* (Mulgan 2001). This kind of satisficing claims that "a good enough option may be preferred to a better [and] it is assumed that a better option is included in a set of options that have been enumerated and evaluated" (Swanton 1993, 33). It has been defended by prominent philosophers (e.g. Slote 1989), and has been employed in many areas of philosophy, and indeed in other disciplines. This is surely the kind of satisficing at work in the analogies offered by Adams, Langtry, and van Inwagen. This kind of satisficing can (at least potentially) be applied to the divine case, since in the contexts of all three arguments for atheism discussed in this paper, it is generally taken for granted that God knows that better alternatives exist, and indeed knows the axiological status of each one.

Unfortunately, however, this kind of satisficing is enormously controversial. It has been criticized in various ways by, for example, Byron (1998); Richardson (1994); Mulgan (2001); Sorensen (1994, 2006); and Bradley (2006). Even idealized cases are contested. John Pollock (1983) famously imagines an oenophile deliberating about when to consume a bottle of EverBetter wine, which improves with each passing day. Pollock thinks that the oenophile is rationally permitted to satisfice, by drinking the wine on any day when it is good enough. But Sorensen, for example, demurs, stating unambiguously that in this case, “reason declares there is no permissible alternative” (2006, 214, and see also his 1994).<sup>19</sup> There is no space here to examine all the moves in the complex debate about genuine satisficing. But it is worth pointing out that there is something troubling about philosophers of religion responding to prominent arguments for atheism by uncritically invoking divine satisficing, when it is highly controversial whether human agents are (rationally or morally) permitted to satisfice.

Moreover, even if they were utterly uncontroversial in ordinary human cases, certain important arguments for genuine satisficing employ ideas that are inapplicable to the divine case. For example, Slote (1989) motivates satisficing by appeal to the virtue of *moderation*: one may turn down an afternoon snack or a second serving or dessert either because one feels no need for some additional good thing, or because one is perfectly satisfied as one is (10-20, 37-40). In contrast, Slote characterizes the habitual optimizer as lacking in spontaneity or self-sufficiency (42) and as excessively concerned with one’s own interests (45). But surely the defenders of divine satisficing would not likewise hold that God exhibits moderation by choosing an outcome far worse than some other he could choose at no extra cost, or that God would lack spontaneity or self-sufficiency, or exhibit excessive self-interest, in optimizing.

Here is another consideration deployed in favour of genuine human satisficing that is inapplicable to the divine case. Slote (1989) and Weber (2004) both appeal to the existence of multiple legitimate perspectives on a particular choice or option. In different ways, both philosophers argue that an agent can be rational in choosing an option that is worse from one legitimate perspective, since it is better from another legitimate perspective. They assume that there is no overarching objective perspective from which to assess choices. Henden (2007) offers compelling arguments against this line of thinking in ordinary human cases.<sup>20</sup> But even if Henden is wrong about this, it is perfectly clear that this appeal to multiple perspectives cannot be used to ground divine satisficing. After all, in their replies to all three arguments for atheism, defenders of divine satisficing insist that God may select an outcome that is *objectively* and *non-perspectivally* worse than others that might have been chosen.

Finally, then, let’s suppose that arguments for genuine human satisficing are found (or constructed) that are not only deemed successful, but that do not depend upon considerations that are irrelevant or inapplicable to the divine case. Even *this* would not be enough to defeat these three arguments for atheism, since there is an important difference between human cases and the divine case that has not yet been brought out. Defences of genuine satisficing in human cases seek to establish the rational or moral *permissibility* of choosing a worse option when a better one is known to be available. Suppose that they succeed, and that they are deemed to show, by analogy, that it is morally or rationally permissible for God to do likewise. The problem remains that God is not like any other agent. God is not merely supposed to be excellent, or superior, in goodness and rationality: God is taken to be *essentially unsurpassable* in these and other respects. So, even if it is shown that it is rationally or morally permissible for God to satisfice, this does not entail that God’s doing so is *logically possible*, given his nature.<sup>21</sup>

To see why, recall that Slote (1989) urged that part of the appeal of satisficing is to open up conceptual space for *supererogation*. Slote imagines a fountain of youth that emits life-and-happiness-giving rays: the closer one stands to the fountain, the more life and happiness one gains (111-123). But, of course, there is no closest possible position to the fountain, and so there is no best choice. Slote claims that there are distances from the fountain that would be rationally permissible – i.e. not irrational – to choose, even though closer distances could have been

selected instead. Slote thinks that we should reject the assumption that it is irrational to knowingly forego a better alternative, since to take it for granted amounts denying the very possibility of rational supererogation (115-16). On this view, however, two rational – i.e. not irrational – agents can differ in overall status. As Slote says, this move opens a “... gap between rationality and ideal rationality,” (121) such that “...it may be possible for an act (choice) not to count as irrational or bad ... though it is less than ideally rational, less than the best available” (115). A similar point can be made concerning morality: even if it is morally permissible for an agent to satisfice, that agent could be surpassed by another who instead performs a morally supererogatory act.<sup>22</sup> The upshot is obvious: establishing the rational or moral *permissibility* of divine satisficing is insufficient for showing that God – an essentially unsurpassable agent – can coherently be thought to satisfice.

In conclusion, then, those who wield divine satisficing against these three prominent arguments for atheism owe us more. If they wish to argue analogically from human cases to God, they must take care to rely only on arguments that do not depend upon features that are inapplicable or irrelevant to the divine case. Given the present state of the literature on satisficing, it appears that such arguments will be very controversial. Moreover, even if such arguments were to succeed in establishing the rational or moral *permissibility* of divine satisficing, this would not be enough: further work would still be needed to show that satisficing is consistent with essential divine unsurpassability. Voltaire famously remarked that the perfect is the enemy of the good. If divine satisficing proves unacceptable, then it will be fair to say that the enmity is mutual: ‘good enough’ is just not good enough for God.

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Another way to reject (1), of course, is to deny that there is a best possible world. This view will be discussed below, in section 2.

<sup>2</sup> David Lewis (1993, note 16) seems to have been the first to explicitly refer to Adams' God as a satisficer.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Plantinga (1974, 61); Schlesinger (1977); and Swinburne (2004, 114-5.)

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Rowe (2004); Sobel (2004, 468-479); and Wielenberg (2004).

<sup>5</sup> Langtry says more (than the Howard-Snyders and O'Connor do) about what sort of world would be good enough for God to actualize. He identifies the following sufficient condition: "non-disappointing in the light of the values that underlie the ranking of worlds, and moreover ... abundantly better than those worlds that only just barely escape the accusation that they are disappointing" (81). This is not a particularly substantive elaboration.

<sup>6</sup> An anonymous referee worries that this exposition of the Howard-Snyders, O'Connor, and Langtry is insufficiently charitable, since it fails to mention the following argument: "while it's true that for any action of creation there is a better action, it's also true that any action above a certain threshold is better than withholding from creation. Hence, rationality (or the moral demands of creating good) requires that God create something above a threshold." The referee is quite right that these authors are explicitly committed to the view that it is better for God to actualize a threshold-surpassing world that includes a created order than to refrain from creating entirely: see Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994, 262; O'Connor 2008, 112; and Langtry 2008, 60. (If God refrains from creating, the result is the *bare world*, which contains God and whatever other necessary existents there are.) But this claim is not essential to their response to the problem of no best world. Suppose that these authors were to hold that the bare world *does* surpass the threshold. They would then be committed to the view that God could choose the bare world without impugning his status as an agent essentially unsurpassable in rationality and morality. The core of these authors' response to the problem of no best world is not the claim that God must create something or other: it is, instead, the claim that God can coherently be thought to satisfice. As will be shown in section 4, this claim is under-motivated.

<sup>7</sup> The phrase "could antecedently know", in Hasker's formulation, has been replaced with "antecedently knows", since if God could know *p*, God knows *p*. Hasker here refines a definition of gratuitous evil offered by Rhoda (2010, 287-289), which Rhoda, in turn, takes to be an improvement over William Rowe's (1979) conception. Other critics of Rowe's account of gratuitousness include Alston (1991, 33-34) and van Inwagen (1991, 164, note 11). Rhoda's definition appears to be inspired by certain remarks by van Inwagen (2001, 69; 2006, 97).

<sup>8</sup> For recent surveys of this terrain, see McBrayer (2010) and Dougherty (2011).

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<sup>9</sup> See van Inwagen (1988, 167). In later articulations of this claim, van Inwagen sometimes replaces “evil” with “cases of intense suffering,” (1991, 164, note 11; 2006, 125), and sometimes with “horrors” (2001, 76; 2006, 106). But not all evils are cases of intense suffering, and, of course, not all cases of intense suffering are evil. As for “horrors”, van Inwagen defines this term very loosely as “certain particular very bad events.” (2006, 95). On this definition, it seems that not all evils are horrors, and it is not clear whether all horrors are evils. For the purposes of criticizing van Inwagen’s appeal to satisficing, however, nothing depends upon which formulation is used.

One further point is worth noting. van Inwagen’s account of God’s purposes is embedded within two stories (the *expanded free will defence* and the *anti-irregularity defence*), both of which are claimed to be true for all we know. (For the details of these stories, see van Inwagen 2006, 85-88, 113-134.) Strictly speaking, then, van Inwagen thinks that NMA is epistemically possible, and that this suffices to show that a neutral audience should suspend judgment concerning (4), in which case the argument from gratuitous evil should be deemed a philosophical failure. (For van Inwagen’s account of philosophical success and failure, see his 2006, 37-55.)

<sup>10</sup> See van Inwagen (1988, 167-8; 2001, 73; and 2006, 106, note 4).

<sup>11</sup> Jordan (2003) calls the former the Eleatic Assumption, and the latter the Ordinal Assumption.

<sup>12</sup> van Inwagen discusses God’s drawing arbitrary lines in his 2001, 73, and his 2006, 102.

<sup>13</sup> The only exception known to this author is Dragos (forthcoming). It is worth mentioning that a few decades ago, George Schlesinger invoked satisficing his far less technical response to the problem of evil. See, for example Schlesinger 1977, Chapters 9 and 10.

<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, van Inwagen’s argument is structurally similar to the denials of (P1) defended by the Howard-Snyders, O’Connor, and Langtry.

<sup>15</sup> See Drange (1998, 36-8); Russell (1996, 2004); Trakakis (2007, Chapter 12); and Fischer and Tognazzini (2007). It is worth noting that van Inwagen anticipated this response (1988, 168).

<sup>16</sup> Other criticisms of van Inwagen can be found in Stone (2003); Jordan (2003, 2011); and Schrynemakers (2007). These will not be discussed here: space does not permit examining them, and, moreover, none of them pertain to divine satisficing. They are, however, assessed by this author in a manuscript entitled “Peter van Inwagen on Gratuitous Evil”.

<sup>17</sup> Dragos (forthcoming) rightly chides Jordan (2011) for merely insisting without argument that van Inwagen’s appeal to satisficing is illegitimate. My goal here is to provide at least some of the needed argument.

<sup>18</sup> He cites Skyrms (1990) and Rubenstein (1998) as examples. Schmidtz (2004) is another.

<sup>19</sup> Dreier (2004) would agree. He defends a form of ethical satisficing, but argues that *rational* satisficing is incoherent. Schmidtz (2004), who defends satisficing in non-idealized contexts, would also agree, since he holds that “one’s choice is rational only if one does not recognize clearly better reasons for choosing any of one’s forgone alternatives” (38).

<sup>20</sup> Henden says that

in order for [an agent’s] reason as viewed from one of those perspectives, to be a rational ground for choice, it is not sufficient that it is good enough from that perspective: she must also have a reason for *choosing to view* her option from that perspective rather than the other perspective, and that reason must be better, or at least not worse, than whatever reasons she has for choosing to view it from the other perspective. Thus, the claim that there is no all-encompassing perspective from which the satisficer may view her reasons,

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amounts, I think, to abandoning the rational perspective altogether, since the rational perspective, by definition, is the all-encompassing perspective (349).

Henden himself defends a further sense of satisficing – *de dicto genuine satisficing* – on which an agent is rationally permitted to choose an option in cases where she knows that a better option is available in her set of options, but does not know which one it is. Clearly, this account of satisficing is also inapplicable to the divine case.

<sup>21</sup> Thanks to Luke Gelinas for helping to make this point clear. Dustin Locke has suggested that instead of invoking divine satisficing, the theist could instead pursue an alternate strategy: concede that God does something morally *impermissible*, but deny that this counts against God's unsurpassability. This strategy might seem available in the no best world case, in which – it could be argued – God *necessarily* does something morally impermissible. Space does not permit exploring this alternative.

<sup>22</sup> William Rowe (1993, 228; 1999, 102-3; 2004, 82) appeals to this point in his criticism of Adams (1972).

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