

**ARTICLE**

# God and gratuitous evil (Part II)

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**Abstract**

In contemporary analytic philosophy, *the problem of evil* refers to a family of arguments that attempt to show, by appeal to evil, that God does not (or probably does not) exist. Some very important arguments in this family focus on gratuitous evil. Most participants in the relevant discussions, including theists and atheists, agree that God is able to prevent all gratuitous evil, and that God would do so. On this view, of course, the occurrence of even a single instance of gratuitous evil falsifies theism. The most common response to such arguments attempts to cast doubt on the claim that gratuitous evil really occurs. The focus of these two survey papers will be a different response – one that has received less attention in the literature. This response attempts to show that God and gratuitous evil are compatible. If it succeeds, then the occurrence of gratuitous evil does not, after all, count against theism. In the prequel to this paper, I surveyed the literature surrounding the attempts by Michael Peterson and John Hick to execute this strategy. Here, I survey the attempts due to William Hasker, Peter van Inwagen, and Michael Almeida, respectively.

Here is one prominent argument for atheism:

1. If God exists, no gratuitous evil occurs.
2. Gratuitous evil occurs.
3. God does not exist.

And here are two distinct conceptions of 'gratuitous evil':

GE1 Any instance of evil the occurrence of which is not necessary for the occurrence of some greater good.<sup>1</sup>

GE2: Any instance of evil which God, if God exists, antecedently knows it to be certain or probable that *he could prevent* in a way that would make the world overall better than it would otherwise be.<sup>2</sup>

In the prequel to this paper (entitled 'God and Gratuitous Evil (Part I)'), I discussed attempts to establish the compossibility of God and GE1 due to Michael Peterson and John Hick. Here, I discuss attempts to establish the compossibility of God and GE2 due to William Hasker, Peter van Inwagen, and Michael Almeida, respectively.<sup>3</sup> These attempts, if successful, would justify resisting premise (2) of the argument above. As noted in the prequel paper, in the literature on the problem of evil, an important distinction is drawn between "moral" and "natural" evil: the former denotes evil caused by the actions or omissions of moral agents, while the latter refers to evil not caused by such agents. In what follows, I will add "M" or "N" to the above acronyms, as needed, to distinguish these two forms of evil.

## 1 | HASKER

In three important publications, William Hasker has argued that, given a certain account of God's nature and plan for humanity, premise (1) can reasonably be resisted ('The Necessity of Gratuitous Evil', 'Can God Permit "Just Enough" Evil?', and *The Triumph of Good over Evil*).<sup>4</sup> The latter two concentrate only on moral evil, while the former extends the basic argument to natural evil as well. Hasker believes that if God were to prevent GE2, we would come to know this. He offers two related reasons.<sup>5</sup> First, he claims that one of God's chief purposes in creating rational beings is to bring them to knowledge of his nature. This knowledge, Hasker supposes, would surely include the proposition that God, due to his essential moral goodness, prevents all GE2 ('Necessity' 39; 'O'Connor on Gratuitous Natural Evil' 391; 'Can God Permit' 92; *Triumph* 197). Second, Hasker claims that if God were to prevent humans from gaining this knowledge, this would amount to a "pervasive policy of deception" ('Necessity', 37) or a "massive disinformation campaign" ('Necessity', 39). Hasker takes this to be morally objectionable; unworthy of God. Hasker's argument here turns on what we would come to *know* about God's nature and policies, but it could surely also be put, more modestly, in terms what we would come to *reasonably believe*.

Hasker next imagines what would happen if we were to come to know (or, let's hereafter add, reasonably believe) that God prevents all gratuitous evil. If God were known or reasonably believed to prevent all GME2, he argues, morality would be undermined ('Necessity', 27–29; 'Can God Permit' 86; *Triumph* 192). This is because our motivation to act morally would be seriously impaired when we realize that any moral evil that occurs is non-gratuitous. After all, why refrain from performing or permitting moral evil when you are confident that God will ensure that any moral evil that occurs is non-gratuitous? Equally, Hasker thinks that if God were known or reasonably believed to prevent all GNE2, then something very important would be reduced or eliminated: namely, our "motivation to acquire and/or respond in accordance with any or all of" goods such as "knowledge, prudence, courage, foresight, cooperation, and compassion" ('Necessity' 38–9). This is because we would be confident that any natural evils that occur would also be non-gratuitous – so why bother trying to minimize or prevent them? This line of reasoning, of course, is similar to that proposed by Hick, which I discussed in the prequel to this paper.

Hasker believes that God deems it very important for human beings to place a high priority on fulfilling moral obligations, and, in particular, for them to assume major responsibility for the welfare of their fellow human beings ('Can God Permit' 82; *Triumph* 191). Hasker also thinks that God deems it very important that human beings respond to natural evil by acquiring and exhibiting the various goods mentioned above. Let's say that God's "plan for creation" involves these priorities. Hasker thinks that God's preventing all gratuitous evil would compromise his plan for creation, and, accordingly, that God will not prevent all gratuitous evil. Pulling all this together, Hasker's challenge to (1) can be expressed as follows:

- (a) If God prevents all GE2, this fact is known or reasonably believed by us.
- (b) If we know or reasonably believe that God prevents all GME2, then our motivation to behave morally is undermined.
- (c) If we know or reasonably believe that God prevents all GNE2, then our motivation to acquire or develop various goods ( $g_1 \dots g_n$ ) in response to natural evil is undermined.

Therefore,

- (d) If God prevents all GE2, then the motivations mentioned in (b) and (c) are undermined.<sup>6</sup>
- (e) God's plan for creation includes ensuring that the motivations mentioned in (b) and (c) are not undermined.

Therefore,

- (f) It's not the case that God prevents all GE2.<sup>7</sup>

I now discuss the major objections to Hasker that have appeared in the literature.

### 1.1 | Hasker's argument is self-defeating

Hasker's strategy can appear paradoxical, even self-defeating. If God must permit GE2 in order to prevent various goods from being undermined, then it seems as though these evils are no longer gratuitous: they are permitted precisely for the sake of securing these outweighing goods!<sup>8</sup> In reply to this objection, Hasker offers the following analogy ('Can God Permit' 89; *Triumph* 195). Suppose that a musical performance is rewarded with sustained and enthusiastic applause from the audience. Any individual audience member's clapping could surely be prevented without compromising the phenomenon of applause. But if someone were to prevent *every* member of the audience from clapping, there would be no applause. Similarly, Hasker says, while God could surely prevent *any individual instance* of GE2 without compromising the relevant goods, God could not prevent *every* such instance without compromising these goods. So any particular *instance* of GE2 is, after all, gratuitous – but the *class* of permitted or actual GE2 serves an important function in God's plan for creation, and so it is not gratuitous.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2 | We would not reasonably believe that God prevents all gratuitous evil

This objection attacks Hasker's (a). It can be pressed in either a general or a specific fashion. One example of the former is motivated by William Wainwright, who, according to Hasker, cautions that many propositions entailed by God's essential nature are not and cannot be known (or, let's again add, cannot be reasonably believed) by creatures like ourselves. And perhaps, one might say, (1) is such a proposition. Hasker responds in two ways. First, he asserts that it does not seem plausible to think that (1), if true, would be a proposition we could not know or reasonably believe. Second, he points out that if it could not be known or reasonably believed by creatures like ourselves, then premise (1) of the argument from gratuitous evil could not be advanced in the first place.<sup>10</sup>

William Rowe offers a more specific version of this objection: "If God really is in the paradoxical corner Hasker thinks He is in, then clearly the best course is not to make his presence and policy so decisively known that his very purposes for human life are undermined, if not defeated ... Surely, other things being equal, God will judge that our lack of decisive knowledge of His presence and policy is better than letting horrendous, gratuitous evils abound in the world ('Ruminations' 85). Hasker might reply by flatly denying that it is metaphysically possible for God to deceive. Alternatively, he might resist Rowe's axiological evaluation, perhaps – more ambitiously – by claiming that divine deception really would be worse than God's preventing all gratuitous evil, or – more modestly – by claiming that Rowe has not shown otherwise. In advancing either the modest or ambitious form of the latter reply, Hasker could appeal to the fact that a policy of divine deception would conflict with God's desire for us to come to know his nature. To this move, however, Rowe has a retort: he points out that many theists believe that "God will wait for the next life to provide us with a decisive knowledge of his nature and actions" ('Ruminations' 82). But Hasker could reply by pointing out that if Rowe endorses the claim that God would ensure that we never discover his policy of preventing all gratuitous evil in this lifetime, Rowe can no longer reasonably assert premise (1) of the argument for atheism at issue.

### 1.3 | Our moral motivations would not be undermined

This objection attacks Hasker's (b), or his (c), or both. The objection amounts to holding that if we knew or reasonably believed that God prevents all gratuitous evil, the relevant motivation would not be undermined. Several critics have argued that the motivation to follow a *deontological* account of morality, in particular, would not be undermined by the knowledge or reasonable belief that God prevents all gratuitous evil (Rowe, 'Ruminations' 82; Keller, *Problems of Evil* 13; Rhoda 291; Himma 132).<sup>11</sup> This challenge can be made vivid by appeal to actual theists, many of whom hold *both* that God prevents all gratuitous evil *and* that they are indeed subject to a deontological moral system. Hasker has responded by granting that there are such theists, and has speculated that they simply fail to see the tension in their worldview. He has also noted that, lamentably, many theists have indeed allowed their belief that God prevents all gratuitous evil to compromise their moral motivation ('Necessity' 393; 'Can God Permit' 87–9; *Triumph* 193–195).

Perhaps there are theists whose moral motivations are undermined by their belief that God prevents all gratuitous evil. But this is quite irrelevant to the point emphasized by Hasker's critics, which is that many theists do *not* find this. As for Hasker's claim that such individuals have failed to see the tension in their worldview, this smacks of question-begging, since of course Hasker's critics on this point think that there is no tension whatsoever between the relevant components of these individuals' worldview.

Gelinas (565–6) briefly offers an intriguing argument that specifically targets (c): he asserts that it is plausible to think that we could be motivated to develop the relevant goods ( $g_1 \dots g_n$ ) in response to *moral evil* alone, without any need for natural evil whatsoever. If this is so, then God could prevent all GNE2 without jeopardizing his plan for creation. The most direct way for Hasker to respond would be to claim that there are some goods that (i) we can only be adequately motivated to develop in response to GNE2, and that (ii) are of such importance to God's overall plan for creation that it would be worse for God to prevent all GNE2 than to permit some to occur. This would be an intricate response, involving many complex value judgments, and it is difficult to see how it might succeed. Gelinas (566) rightly notes that Hasker thinks, on independent grounds, that moral activity itself (including morally evil actions) can only occur a world governed by natural laws, and that any such world is prone to natural evil. Another move Hasker could make, then, would be to extend this argument to show that God's plan for creation involves not only the possibility of natural evil, but also the possibility of GNE2.

### 1.4 | There is excessive gratuitous evil

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, in response to Hasker's argument, many authors have alleged that the world contains *excessive* gratuitous evil.<sup>12</sup> Hasker replies to this charge ('Necessity' 35–37; 'Chrzan on Necessary Gratuitous Evil' 424–5), but it should be stressed that this complaint is irrelevant to an assessment of Hasker's argument for the compossibility of God and GE2.

## 2 | VAN INWAGEN

In a series of important publications, Peter van Inwagen defends the following provocative "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>13</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, 'Evil and van Inwagen'; Schrynemakers). But this is evidently not what van Inwagen intends.<sup>14</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). 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 GE2, the exact placement of this line is an arbitrary matter.<sup>15</sup> No matter where God draws this line, some evil will be gratuitous, in which case (1) can be resisted. If van Inwagen's argument is successful, the occurrence of GE2 counts against neither God's goodness nor rationality. I now discuss the major objections to van Inwagen that have appeared in the literature.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.1 | NMA is false

Stone, Schrynemakers, and Jordan ('Evil and van Inwagen', 'Is the No-Minimum Claim True?') all criticize NMA by maintaining that pain and suffering are not infinitely diminishable, since there is a practical lower bound below which differences in the duration or intensity of the relevant stimuli can no longer be detected. Accordingly, they say, it is not true that for *any* amount of evil that suffices for God's purposes, there is some lesser amount that would also suffice, and so NMA is false.

Dragos offers an innovative reply to this criticism of NMA. He says that van Inwagen could concede to his critics that pain and suffering are not infinitely diminishable, while nevertheless denying that this defeats NMA. After all, van Inwagen might say, NMA concerns *evil*, not pain and suffering, and perhaps *evil* is infinitely diminishable, even if pain and suffering are not. Jordan, Schrynemakers, and Stone could reply that the possible infinite diminishability of *evil simpliciter* is just a red herring, since the argument from gratuitous evil can simply be reformulated as an argument from gratuitous pain and suffering, without any loss in plausibility.<sup>17</sup>

Cullison offers a more promising reply to this finite diminishability objection. According to Cullison, while Stone, Schrynemakers, and Jordan might be right that there is a practical lower bound below which differences in the duration or intensity of pain and suffering cannot be detected *by the sort of creatures that we are*, there is no reason to suppose that God couldn't have made us with more sensitive apparatus. Indeed, Cullison asserts, "there is no minimum limit to how fine-grained God could have made our apparatus" (123).<sup>18</sup> If Cullison is right, then van Inwagen is, after all, entitled to his key claim that there is no minimum positive cardinality or ordinality of pain and suffering that suffices for God's purposes – assuming, of course, that God's purposes don't require exactly the sort of creatures that we are.<sup>19</sup>

## 2.2 | Criticism of the 'vagueness interpretation'

Michael Schrynemakers claims that van Inwagen misformulates his own argument. According to Schrynemakers, van Inwagen should not have taken himself to be defending NMA, but instead:

NSC: There is no sharp cut-off between amounts of evil definitely sufficient for God's purposes and amounts definitely not sufficient.<sup>20</sup>

Certainly, there are passages in van Inwagen's writing which support this interpretation.<sup>21</sup> NSC holds (or at least entails) that "sufficient for God's purposes" is a vague predicate.

Of course, the most direct response to NSC is simply to reject it, by endorsing *epistemicism* about vagueness. Stone (268) briefly flirts with this response. Van Inwagen, however, dismisses this, vividly calling it a departure from the "bright world of good sense" (*The Problem of Evil*, 107).

Jeff Jordan offers a different response to NSC, arguing that it cannot be used to undermine (1):

Even if it is vague whether [amounts of evil] V1 or V2 are sufficient for obtaining [divine purpose] E, the fog of vagueness does not obscure that one has reason to choose V1 over V2 [given that V1 is a smaller amount]. Borderline cases ... will be ranked not just by their respective quantities of pain and suffering, but also according to their moral desirability, with the greater the quantity, the lower the rank (Is the No-Minimum Claim True? 126).

It is doubtful, however, that borderline amounts like V1 and V2 are germane to this discussion. This is because it is surely reasonable to expect God to choose an amount (whether cardinal or ordinal) of pain and suffering to which the predicate “sufficient for God's purposes” *definitely* applies. If so, then the “vagueness interpretation” of van Inwagen's argument does not add anything new, since the question remains whether there is a smallest amount of pain and suffering to which the predicate “sufficient for God's purposes” *definitely* applies.

### 2.3 | Divine satisficing is under-motivated

Dragos claims that van Inwagen's argument constitutes an appeal to divine satisficing, and Kraay endorses this interpretation (“Can God Satisfice?”, ‘Peter van Inwagen on Gratuitous Evil’).<sup>22</sup> As Kraay sees it, van Inwagen reasons by analogy from the moral and rational permissibility of human satisficing to the moral and rational permissibility of divine satisficing. Kraay further argues that this move is insufficiently motivated, since (a) it is enormously controversial whether it is rationally or morally acceptable for human agents to satisfice; and since (b) some of the best-known arguments in favor of human satisficing fail to transfer to the divine case; and since (c) even if it were established that divine satisficing is rationally or morally *permissible*, van Inwagen would still need to show that it is compatible with essential divine unsurpassability.

Tucker shares Kraay's worries about satisficing, but argues that it is a mistake to treat van Inwagen's argument as invoking this notion (137ff). Instead, Tucker argues, van Inwagen actually appeals to *motivated submaximization*. According to Tucker, the *satisficer* aims to promote the good to some suboptimal degree purely for its own sake. On the other hand, the *motivated submaximizer* has a different motivational structure: she aims to promote the good as much as she can, and chooses a suboptimal option because she has a special consideration or competing aim that motivates her to choose the good enough over the better (134). Tucker argues that in van Inwagen's account, God is a motivated submaximizer, because God has a special consideration in play, viz.: there is no minimum amount of permitted evil that suffices for God's purposes. According to Tucker, the claim that motivated submaximization can be appropriate is widely endorsed and well-defended, and so this provides good reason to think that van Inwagen's argument succeeds.

### 2.4 | There is excessive gratuitous evil

Interestingly, many commentators on van Inwagen's argument tacitly concede that, in principle, there is nothing amiss with God's permitting some gratuitous evil – so long as God does not permit too much. They continue by arguing, *a posteriori*, that the amount of gratuitous evil found in the actual world is excessive.<sup>23</sup> Again, such arguments can be set aside as irrelevant to the question of whether van Inwagen succeeds in establishing the compossibility of God and gratuitous evil.

## 3 | ALMEIDA

In his 2012 monograph entitled *God, Freedom, and Worlds*, Michael Almeida defines gratuitous evil as follows:

G<sub>0</sub>: The evil state of affairs E is gratuitous in W iff E obtains at W and it is true at W that there is some actualizable world W' such that W' [is more valuable than] W and W' does not include E (176).

This definition is equivalent to my GE2. Almeida argues that it is false that, necessarily, God prevents the occurrence of every instance of gratuitous evil. In other words, *God exists* and *gratuitous evil occurs* are consistent (175–9; 192–3). He defends this by appeal to a series of “impossibility arguments”, which form the centerpiece of his book. I now briefly review these.

Almeida argues, in turn, that the following propositions are necessarily false:

- 3.3. Necessarily, an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being brings about *the best possible world* and the best possible world includes no evil states of affairs at all.
- 3.4. Necessarily, an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being brings about *the best actualizable world* and the best actualizable world includes no evil states of affairs.
- 3.5. Necessarily, an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being brings about *a good enough world* and a good enough actualizable world includes no evil states of affairs.

Almeida assumes that *best possible* worlds, *best actualizable* worlds, and *good enough* worlds feature libertarian-free moral creatures who fulfill the requirements of beneficence and justice. But he urges that these demands cannot be fulfilled unless it is metaphysically possible for these agents to go wrong. This is because, on Almeida's view, morally significant actions can only be performed by agents who exhibit libertarian freedom, and this kind of freedom requires there to be many alternate metaphysical possibilities in which the agents choose wrongly. Now, if propositions 3.3–3.5 were indeed true, there would be no metaphysically possible world which features so much as a single instance of moral evil. But this cannot be, given the stipulated requirements of morally significant action. Accordingly, Almeida deems 3.3–3.5. to be necessary falsehoods (138–160).

Since there are many metaphysically possible worlds in which agents go wrong with respect to the requirements of beneficence and justice, and since God, qua metaphysically necessary being, exists in all those worlds, then God's existence is compatible with the occurrence of such evils. But according to Almeida, God could have prevented these evils at no cost – by actualizing a best possible world, a best actualizable world, or a good enough world. Accordingly, these evils satisfy Almeida's definition of gratuitous evil above (and so they are also instances of GME2). As Almeida puts it: "...it's a consequence of the impossibility arguments that the proposition <God exists> and the proposition <there exist gratuitously evil states of affairs> are broadly logically consistent. The impossibility arguments show that God can co-exist with gratuitous evil" (179).

Almeida next offers a parallel argument designed to show that there are worlds that include both God and GNE2. Almeida assumes that among the best possible worlds, the best actualizable worlds, and the good enough worlds "we should expect to find worlds in which significantly free beings satisfy the requirements of beneficence by preventing every state of affairs that includes the pain and suffering due to natural events" (162). But it cannot be the case, Almeida argues, that God *necessarily* actualizes such a world, and the reasoning is familiar: if it were true that God necessarily actualizes such a world, then there would be no metaphysically possible worlds in which creatures fail to satisfy the requirements of beneficence, but such worlds must exist in order for there to be libertarian morally significant actions (162–5). And of course, such worlds feature both God and GNE2 – which means they are compossible. Finally, Almeida extends his reasoning in order to show that God's existence is compatible with (some) gratuitous *animal* suffering. He urges that some non-human animals have significant moral freedom, and then offers a parallel argument designed to show that the possibility of "evolutionarily perfect worlds" in which every instantiated creature freely goes right with respect to every morally significant action *requires* that there be possible worlds in which these creatures fail to go right. In such worlds, of course, God co-exists with gratuitous animal suffering (200–10).

No replies to Almeida's arguments have yet been published. Here, however, are some brief suggestions for how a critic might reply. Notice that each of Almeida's arguments depends upon the claim that alternate possibilities are required for actions to be morally significant. The most obvious way to challenge Almeida's reasoning, then, is to defend an account of morally significant action that does not require the existence of alternate possibilities. (Almeida, it should be noted, offers no defence of this claim.) As for his argument concerning natural evil suffered by human persons, one might reply by denying that there are possible worlds in which significantly free beings prevent every state of affairs that includes the pain and suffering due to natural events. Finally, with respect to animal suffering, it should be noted that Almeida's argument, if successful, only establishes the compossibility of God with the suffering of nonhuman animals who possess significant moral freedom – and many will deny that there are many or any such animals at all. Almeida's argument is silent about the suffering exhibited by animals who lack such freedom altogether (and of course, one might claim that such suffering is widespread, and that it counts against theism).<sup>24</sup>



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Chris Dragos for many detailed discussions of these issues, and for helpful comments on this paper. I am also grateful to Kirk Lougheed for helpful feedback on this paper. I am also grateful to an anonymous referee for additional valuable comments. Finally, I am very grateful for the generous research support provided by the John Templeton Foundation.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The greater good in question might be the prevention or elimination of a worse evil.
- <sup>2</sup> This definition is adapted from Hasker ('Defining Gratuitous Evil' 308). For a discussion of the difference between these two definitions of gratuitous evil, see the prequel to this paper.
- <sup>3</sup> For my more detailed treatment of van Inwagen's view, see Kraay ('Peter van Inwagen on Gratuitous Evil'). For my more detailed treatment of Hasker's view, see Kraay ('Theism, Pro-Theism, Hasker, and Gratuitous Evil'). Hasker responds to the latter in "God and Gratuitous Evil: A Response to Klaas Kraay".
- <sup>4</sup> Hasker also develops his position in several replies to critics, some of which will be discussed below.
- <sup>5</sup> In the prequel to this paper, section 2, I pointed out that John Hick's similar argument requires, but lacks, such a defence.
- <sup>6</sup> Presumably Hasker thinks that premises (b) and (c) only apply to creatures: it's not the case that if *God* knows that he prevents all gratuitous evil, *God's* moral motivations are undermined!
- <sup>7</sup> In his 1992 paper, Hasker explicitly argues for the weaker conclusion that "It is not the case that God is morally required to prevent gratuitous evil" (30). But this conclusion is too weak for his purposes, since it does not, by itself, count against (1). This is because even if God is not morally required to prevent gratuitous evil, he might do so anyway.
- <sup>8</sup> Chrzan ('Necessary Gratuitous Evil') and Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder ('Is Theism Compatible') press this criticism against Hasker.
- <sup>9</sup> Rowe first introduces this reply ('Response to Hasker's 'The Necessity of Gratuitous Evil'), and Hasker quotes it approvingly ('Necessity' 33; 'Can God Permit' 89; and *Triumph* 195.)
- <sup>10</sup> See Hasker ('O'Connor on Gratuitous Natural Evil', 393, note 6). See also Keller (*Problems of Evil* 13).
- <sup>11</sup> While the focus here is on Hasker's claims concerning GNE2, Hasker has also argued that if God prevents all GNE1, then moral motivation is undermined. O'Connor criticizes this view (in 'Hasker on Gratuitous Natural Evil'), and Hasker replies in 'O'Connor on Gratuitous Natural Evil.'
- <sup>12</sup> The charge is leveled by: Keller ('The Problem of Evil and the Attributes of God' 163–6; *Problems of Evil* 14–16); Rowe ('Ruminations' 88); Chrzan ('Necessary Gratuitous Evil' 135); O'Connor ('Hasker on Gratuitous Natural Evil' 391; *God and Inscrutable Evil* 69–70); and Reichenbach (214)
- <sup>13</sup> See van Inwagen ('Magnitude', 167). 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, *The Problem of Evil*, 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 (1), 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 *The Problem of Evil*, 37–55.) Schellenberg (*Wisdom*, 263–7), rejects van Inwagen's claim that these stories are true for all we know.
- <sup>14</sup> See van Inwagen ('Magnitude' 167–8; 'The Argument from Particular Horrendous Evils', 73; and *The Problem of Evil* 106).
- <sup>15</sup> Van Inwagen discusses God's drawing arbitrary lines in his 'The Argument' (73), and *The Problem of Evil* (102).
- <sup>16</sup> Van Inwagen's argument is endorsed by Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder ('Is Theism Compatible'), Zimmerman, and Sullivan.
- <sup>17</sup> Kraay ('Peter van Inwagen on Gratuitous Evil') anticipates this move, and Jordan ('The No Minimum Argument and Satisficing: A Reply to Dragos') explicitly makes it.
- <sup>18</sup> Jordan responds as follows: "While Cullison is correct that the human capacity for feeling pain could have been enlarged, it is hard to see the relevance of this ... Cullison's contention is not relevant to the fact that there is a practical lower limit on the human capability to feel pain, even if that limit could have varied, and so felt pain is not infinitely diminishable" ('Reply to Cullison' 126). Dragos cites Jordan's criticism of Cullison approvingly (427). Kraay ('Peter van Inwagen on Gratuitous Evil') argues that this either misconstrues Cullison or begs the question against him.
- <sup>19</sup> The discussants here have human beings in mind, but, presumably, parallel moves and countermoves could be made with respect to the pain and suffering of non-human animals.
- <sup>20</sup> Schrynemakers (249). I have also added the modifier "definitely" in two places.



- <sup>21</sup> See, for example: "The Place of Chance" 168; "The Problem of Air" 164; "The Argument from Particular Horrendous Evils" 71, 76; *The Problem of Evil* 124, 168, note 4.
- <sup>22</sup> Jordan ('Reply to Dragos') appears to suggest that van Inwagen's argument does not, even tacitly, invoke satisficing.
- <sup>23</sup> See Drange (36–8); Russell; Trakakis; and Fischer and Tognazzini. Van Inwagen anticipated this response ('Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution' 168), but has not directly replied to it.
- <sup>24</sup> An anonymous referee suggests a further response to Almeida's defence of the compossibility of God and GNE2. Contra Almeida, the "requirements of beneficence" may not include preventing every state of affairs that includes pain and suffering due to natural events. Sometimes, individuals experience pain and suffering caused by natural events partly because of their own moral failings (e.g., laziness, negligence, etc.) In at least some such cases, it's plausible to think that beneficence doesn't require people to prevent or mitigate these individuals' pain and suffering: it can be perfectly appropriate to let nature take its course, so to speak, in order that these individuals can (for example) learn a lesson or receive appropriate comeuppance. One way for Almeida to evade this objection is to insist that the sort of pain and suffering that this referee has in mind is not, properly speaking, "due to natural events", since it is also partly due to moral failings.

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**How to cite this article:** Kraay, K. J. (2016), God and gratuitous evil (part II), *Philosophy Compass*, 11, 913–922. doi: 10.1111/phc3.12385

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