GOD AND POSSIBLE WORLDS

Klaas J. Kraay, Aylish Chantler, and Kirk Lougheed
Ryerson University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

This article surveys some contemporary literature in analytic philosophy of religion bearing on the relationship between God and possible worlds. Most of these authors take 'God' to denote an essentially omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good being, who is the creator and sustainer of all that contingently exists. Since the 1960s, philosophers have employed the conceptual apparatus of *worlds* to discuss topics pertaining to God. Very roughly, the *actual* world is the way things are, whereas each *possible* world is a way things might have been. Many philosophers believe that if God exists, he could not have failed to exist. In other words, God exists in all possible worlds; God is a *necessary being*. The first section of this article, ***God and Necessity***, discusses several accounts of what this means, and of the relationship between God and worlds. Worlds are widely assumed to bear axiological properties: some are good, others are bad; some are better, others are worse. Some authors have judged that God could not exist in bad worlds. Whether this counts against theism is discussed under ***God and Bad Worlds (The Modal Problem of Evil)***. If all worlds bear axiological properties, and can be compared, it is natural to wonder whether the hierarchy has an upper bound. The literature concerning this topic is surveyed under ***Is there a Best Possible World?***. It is widely assumed that if God exists, he *chooses* a world to make actual. The next three sections of this article consider this choice: ***God Choice if there is One Best Possible World***, ***God's Choice if there are Multiple Best Possible Worlds***, and ***God's Choice if There are No Best Worlds***. Some authors hold that certain pairs of worlds simply cannot be compared. The literature surrounding God's choice between such pairs is discussed under ***God's Choice and Incomparable Worlds***. Some philosophers have recently argued that if theism is true, the actual world is a multiverse made up of many worthy universes. Their proposals are discussed under ***God and the Multiverse***. Finally, this article surveys some literature that attempts to answer the following question, with respect to the value of worlds: ***What Difference Would – or Does – God's Existence Make?*** Given space constraints, this article does not discuss arguments for God's existence that invoke possible worlds, such as 'ontological' arguments. Nor does it discuss arguments for atheism that appeal to evil, except insofar as theistic multiverse theories constitute responses.

God and Necessity

Many philosophically inclined theists believe not only that God exists, but also that God exists *necessarily*. The latter is often taken to mean that God exists in every possible world, and it is motivated by the idea that a being who could have failed to exist is surpassable. As there are many different view about what sort of being God is, so too there are many different views about what possible worlds are, and, indeed, about how exactly to understand necessary existence. Swinburne 1993 and 1994 distinguish several forms of necessity, as does Leftow 2010. The latter also sets out the historically important motivations for, and contemporary accounts of, divine necessity. In contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, the most influential account of possible worlds is due to Plantinga 1974. On Plantinga's view, possible worlds are a particular species of abstract object: they are maximally compossible states of affairs. There is an important puzzle about the relationship between God and abstract objects, since there seem to be powerful reasons for holding that the latter do not depend upon anything for their existence, but of course many theists want to hold that God is sovereign even over the abstracta. Gould 2014 brings together eight thinkers who carefully consider this different positions on this issue; this is a good entry point to this debate. One very important rival to Plantinga's view is found in Lewis 1986 (cited under ***God and Modal Realism***): on his view, possible worlds

are concrete spatiotemporal objects. A small debate concerns whether this view is compatible with theism, and this is surveyed under the sub-section *God and Modal Realism*. Pruss 2011 critically examines several accounts of possible worlds, and ultimately defends the claim that they are ideas in God's mind. Leftow 2012 grounds modal truths in God's nature, preferences, and causal power. Leslie 2001 defends a unique pantheistic position: Leslie argues that reality just is a cosmos consisting of infinitely many divine minds. Theistic accounts of possible worlds and necessity bear crucially on various arguments for and against God's existence. Most importantly, 'ontological' arguments for theism depend upon claims concerning the possibility and necessity of God's existence. Such arguments are not, however, discussed in this artcle.

Gould, Paul. *Beyond the Control of God? Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects.* **New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.**

Eight co-authors consider various positions on the relationship between God and abstract objects (including, but not limited to, possible worlds so conceived). The co-authors respond to each other's views. A good entry point into the wider debate concerning this issue.

Leftow, Brian. "Divine Necessity." In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology.* **Edited by Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister, 15-30. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010.**

Discusses the historically important motivations for, and contemporary accounts of, absolute metaphysical divine necessity. Distinguishes between Platonic views, on which possible worlds are independent of God, and Leibnizian viewsn on which they depend upon God. Considers and rejects several objections to divine necessity.

Leftow, Brian. *God and Necessity.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.**

Possible worlds are mere (but useful) fictions. God is the ontological foundation of modality. Some modal facts, including the necessary truths of logic and mathematics, are grounded in God's nature. Others are grounded in God's preferences and causal power.

Leslie, John. *Infinite Minds: A Philosophical Cosmology.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.**

Defends a pantheist account of ultimate reality, according to which all that really exists is a cosmos consisting of infinitely many divine minds. The reality we experience consists in the thoughts of these minds. The existence of this collection of minds is due to ethical necessity.

Plantinga, Alvin. *The Nature of Necessity.* **Oxford: Clarendon, 1974**.

Enormously influential account of possible worlds as abstract objects (and, in particular, as maximal states of affairs). Uses this account of possible worlds to defend an ontological argument for God's existence and to criticize several arguments from evil against God's existence.

Pruss, Alexander. *Actuality, Possibility, and Worlds.* **New York: Continuum, 2011.**

Critically surveys several accounts of modality. Defends an "Aristotelian-Leibnizian" model, according to which modal truths are grounded in God's abilities and on which possible worlds are ideas in God's mind.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Coherence of Theism* (Revised Edition) Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.

In Part 3, Swinburne distinguishes six kinds of necessity. Theists should hold that 'God exists' is necessary on three of these, the most important of which holds that this statement does not depend for its truth on anything that is not entailed by it.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Chapter 5 carefully distinguishes several different kinds of necessity: logical, ontological, and metaphysical. Chapters 6 and 7 argue that God is not logically necessary, but is metaphysically necessary.

GOD AND MODAL REALISM

Lewis 1986 advances an important theory of modality according to which possible worlds are concrete spatiotemporal objects. Although extremely influential, his theory has found few adherents. A small debate concerns whether Lewis' view is compatible with theism. Oppy 1993 thinks that it is, given a few alterations. Davis 2008 rejects Oppy's arguments and offers further reason for thinking Lewis' view incompatible with theism. (While not cited below, Davis and Oppy have a further exchange on this topic in 2009, in Volume 11 of *Philosophia Christi* [2009].) Sheehy offers three reasons for thinking that theists cannot endorse Lewis' view. Cameron 2009 replies to the first of these, and Sheehy 2009 responds. Hoffman and Rosenkrantz 2002 claims that Lewis' view is incompatible with theism. Almeida 2011 considers and rejects several arguments for the claim that Lewis' view and theism are incompatible. Oppy 1993, Sheehy 2006, and Almeida 2011 all consider whether theists who are attracted to Lewis' view should reject its consequence that there exist very bad possible worlds. Oppy and Sheehy agree that such worlds cannot exist, given theism, but Almeida takes the contrary view. (The relationship between theism and bad possible worlds is discussed in greater detail under ***God and Bad Worlds (The Modal Problem of Evil)***.)

Almeida, Michael. "Theistic Modal Realism?" *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* 3 (2011): 1-15.

The modal realism of Lewis 1986 is compatible with theism. In particular, the theistic modal realist can maintain that God exists necessarily, and that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.

Cameron, Ross. "God Exists at Every (Modal Realist) World: Response to Sheehy." *Religious Studies* 45 (2009): 95-100.

Responds to the first argument of Sheehy 2006. God can exist from the standpoint of a world – just as sets do – without being spatiotemporal. Moreover, the modal system of Lewis 1986 allows for divine trans-world identity: God can indeed be God in every possible world.

Davis, Richard. "God and Modal Concretism." *Philosophia Christi* **10 (2008): 57-74.**

Contra Oppy 1993, the modal realism of Lewis 1986 is incompatible with traditional theism. God cannot exist within Lewisian possible worlds, nor outside of them, while still being God. Moreover, theism holds that spatiotemporal objects might not have existed, but Lewis' system cannot countenance this possibility.

Hoffman, Joshua and Rosenkrantz, Gary. *The Divine Attributes.* **Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.**

The modal realism of Lewis 1986 is incompatible with theism. God cannot exist outside of possible worlds (either concretely or abstractly) on this model, so God is inside possible worlds. But this means that God has counterparts in every other world, in which case God is not unequalled in greatness.

Lewis, David. *On the Plurality of Worlds.* **Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.**

Enormously important defence of a version of *modal realism,* according to which possible worlds are concrete spatiotemporal objects.

Oppy, Graham. "Modal Theistic Arguments." *Sophia* **32 (1993): 17-24.**

The modal realism of Lewis 1986 can, in principle, accommodate theism. On a theistic Lewisian modal realism, (1) God exists in the actual world, and has counterparts in every other world, and (2) states of affairs incompatible with God's existence cannot be deemed possible.

Sheehy, Paul. "Theism and Modal Realism." *Religious Studies* **42 (2006): 315-328.**

Theism is incompatible with the modal realism of Lewis 1986. (1) God cannot exist within Lewisian possible worlds, or outside of them, while still being God. (2) Lewis's view is incompatible with divine omniscience. (3) Modal realism includes many evil worlds, none of which are possible, given theism.

Sheehy, Paul. "Reply to Cameron." *Religious Studies* **45 (2009): 101-104.**

Urges that there are two costs to the attempt in Cameron 2009 to reconcile theism with the modal realism of Lewis 1986: (1) ontological parsimony is reduced; and (2) Lewis' account of actuality will need to be revised.

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God and Bad Worlds (The Modal Problem of Evil)

The *problem of evil* refers to a family of arguments for atheism that all invoke some claim about evil in the actual world. (Such arguments are not discussed in this article, except insofar as theistic multiverse theories are sometimes invoked in responses to such arguments. On this matter, see ***God and the Multiverse***.) In contrast, the *modal problem of evil* holds that the existence of bad possible worlds counts against the claim that an essentially omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect being exists necessarily. According to Guleserian 1983, our modal intuitions support the claim that there are possible worlds so bad that it would be *impermissible* for a morally perfect being to actualize them. Guleserian claims that we ought to trust our modal intuitions when they tell us that such worlds are genuinely possible, and that we should therefore reject the idea that an essentially morally perfect being exists necessarily. Garcia 1984 agrees with Guleserian that the problem can be avoided by giving up the essential moral perfection of God, but Garcia suggests that an alternative is to deem bad worlds impossible. Morris 1987 argues that traditional theism precludes the possibility of such bad worlds. Morris suggests that we accept that our modal intuitions to the contrary are misleading. Tidman 1993 argues that modal intuitions cannot resolve the debate, and so they do not rationally require either party to give up their original view. Murphy 1995 rejects Morris' view as either *ad hoc* or incoherent, and claims that *all* possible worlds containing moral agents are consistent with God's existence. Almeida 2008 argues that a morally perfect God is not blameworthy for actualizing bad worlds, since these exist necessarily. Kraay 2011 criticizes Garcia, Tidman, and Almeida, and ultimately sides with Morris against Guleserian. Kraay argues that if theism is true, there is only one possible world: a multiverse consisting of all and only those universes that are objectively worthy of being created and sustained. (For more on this, see ***God and the Multiverse***.) Sheehy 2006 construes the problem as a tension between theism and the account of modality offered in Lewis 1986, cited under ***God and Modal Realism***. Sheehy deems it excessively costly for the theist to claim that the conceivability of bad worlds is no guide to their possibility. This discussion is related to the debate concerning ***Modal Collapse***. The latter debate concerns whether, given theism, there are sub-optimal worlds, whereas this discussion concerns whether, given theism, there are bad worlds.

Almeida, Michael. *The Metaphysics of Perfect Beings*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Chapter 8 argues that, given the *Principle of Plenitude*, it is reasonable to think that there are bad possible worlds. Traditional theism holds that God exists necessarily, in which case God must exist in these worlds. God cannot reasonably be faulted for this. Criticizes Morris 1987 as question-begging.

Garcia, Laura L. "A Response to the Modal Problem of Evil." *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984): 378-388.

Holds that essential moral perfection is inconsistent with actualizing bad worlds, but thinks that neither Guleserian 1983 nor traditional Anselmian theists have better justification for their intuitions concerning what is genuinely possible. Anticipating Morris 1987, Garcia holds that theists can deny that there are bad possible worlds.

Guleserian, Theodore. "God and Possible Worlds: The Modal Problem of Evil." *Noûs* 17 (1983): 221-238.

We have good reasons to accept our modal intuitions supporting the claim that bad worlds are possible. But an essentially morally perfect being cannot exist in such worlds. Accordingly, we should reject the claim that God is essentially morally perfect.

Kraay, Klaas. "Theism and Modal Collapse." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 48 (2011): 361-372.

Rejects the view (in Garcia 1984 and Tidman 1993) that both sides in this debate are rationally justified. Rejects the strategy of Almeida 2011, which uses modal intuitions to trump moral intuitions. Endorses the overall view of Morris 1987, and urges that, on theism, there is only one possible world: a multiverse comprised of worthy universes.

Morris, Thomas. "The Necessity of God's Goodness." In *Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, 42-69. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987.

Rejects the view of Guleserian 1983 that logical and semantic intuitions alone can justify holding that bad worlds exist. If Anselmian theism is true, God is a delimiter of possibilities: God's necessary existence and various attributes constrain modal space.

Murphy, Frank J. "The Problem of Evil and a Plausible Defence." *Religious Studies* 31 (1995): 243-250.

Rejects the approach of Morris 1987, saying that it will appear *ad hoc* or incoherent to those who do not share Morris' Anselmian modal intuitions. Argues that *all* possible worlds containing moral agents are consistent with God's existence, and that no possible amount of animal suffering counts against theism.

Sheehy, Paul. "Theism and Modal Realism." *Religious Studies* 42 (2006): 315-328.

One reason for thinking that theism is incompatible with the modal realism of Lewis 1986 (cited under *God and Modal Realism*) is that the latter is committed to the existence of many worlds so evil that God could not permit them to be actual.

Tidman, Paul. "The Epistemology of Evil Possibilities." *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (1993): 181-197.

Argues that Guleserian 1983 fails to show that bad worlds are genuinely possible. Claims that Guleserian's modal intuition that bad worlds exist is as strong as the theist's modal intuition to the contrary, so both are entitled to maintain their view. Theism, however, may have greater overall explanatory power.

Is there a Best Possible World?

Some philosophers have held that there is exactly one best of all possible worlds. Doubtless the most famous of these is Gottfried Leibniz (b. 1646-d.1716). This view has been challenged in three main ways in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion. First, in a series of important publications, George Schlesinger has argued that there is no logical upper bound on the degree of desirability of a state (DDS) for creatures. Instead, Schlesinger thinks, this degree increases *ad infinitum*. Schlesinger holds that, in this respect at least, there is no best possible world. The second strategy is advanced by Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne. Plantinga speculates, modestly, that there might not be a best possible world, on the grounds that for any world containing happy people, there could be another world containing more very happy people. Swinburne argues, more ambitiously, that there is no best possible world, since for any world containing conscious beings who enjoy it, there is a better world featuring more such creatures. The third strategy is due to Bruce Reichenbach, who argues that worlds increase in value insofar as they exhibit (a) *richness and variety*, or (b) *optimific states of affairs* such as pleasure, utility, or happiness. On either (a) or (b), Reichenbach urges, possible worlds increase in value *ad infinitum*. All three strategies have been criticized, and the sub-sections of this section survey the literature concerning each one in turn. Three different sections of this article survey the literature concerning God's choice of a world on different models of the hierarchy of possible worlds: ***God's Choice if There is One Best World***, ***God's Choice if There are Multiple Best Worlds***, and ***God's Choice if There are No Best Worlds***.

SCHLESINGER

In a series of important publications, George Schlesinger defends an original response to the problem of evil (Schlesinger 1964, 1977, 1988). Briefly, this response holds since there is no logical upper bound on the degree of desirability of a state (DDS) for creatures, God cannot sensibly be obliged to maximize the DDS for all creatures. Accordingly, Schlesinger insists, the problem of evil completely vanishes. Many responses to Schlesinger's argument accept his claim concerning the DDS, but deny that it utterly vitiates the problem of evil. These responses are not discussed here. The critics cited here either argue that Schlesinger has failed to show that there is *no* logical upper bound on the DDS, or that it is reasonable to think that there *is* such a bound. The works of critics who defend either or both claims include Khatchadourian 1967, Shea 1970, Grover 1993, and Kraal 2013. This debate bears on whether or not there is a best of all possible worlds, since Schlesinger claims that the best of all possible worlds is a logical impossibility, at least with respect to the DDS. He concedes that there may be a best world in other respects.

Grover, Stephen. "Satisfied Pigs and Dissatisfied Philosophers: Schlesinger on the Problem of Evil." *Philosophical Investigations* 16 (1993): 212-230.

Schlesinger 1988 fails to show that the DDS is capable of infinite increase.

Khatchadourian, Haig. "God, Happiness, and Evil." *Religious Studies* 2 (1967): 109-119.

Schlesinger 1964 fails to show that there is no upper logical limit on how much God could increase creaturely happiness. But even if there is, God could still sensibly be faulted.

Kraal, Anders. "Is Existence of the Best Possible World Logically Impossible?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* **53 (2013): 37-46.**

Schlesinger 1964, 1977 and 1988 fail to show that there is no best possible world, for two reasons: (1) the DDS may well have an upper bound; and (2) Schlesinger illicitly assumes that the best possible world would contain humans.

Schlesinger, George. "The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Suffering." *American Philosophical Quarterly* **3 (1964): 244-247.**

Criticizes several traditional responses to the problem of evil. Suggests that there is no upper logical limit on how much God could increase creaturely happiness, and concludes from this that the problem of evil disappears.

Schlesinger, George. *Religion and Scientific Method*. **Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1977.**

The *degree of desirability of a state* (DDS) is a two-valued function of (a) the kind of being one is, and (b) the degree to which that being's wants are satisfied. God cannot maximally increase the DDS for each creature, so the problem of evil disappears. Responds to many objections.

Schlesinger, George. *New Perspectives on Old-Time Religion.* **Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.**

Contains an updated and expanded version of the argument of Schlesinger 1977.

Shea, Winslow. "God, Evil, and Professor Schlesinger." *Journal of Value Inquiry* **4 (1970): 219-228.**

Criticizes Schlesinger 1964: (1) he fails to show that there is no upper logical limit on how much God could increase creaturely happiness; and (2) Schlesinger's position entails some very unwelcome theological consequences.

PLANTINGA AND SWINBURNE

Plantinga 1974 speculates that there might not be a best possible world on the grounds that for any world containing happy people, there could be another world containing more very happy people. Swinburne 1979 argues that there is no best possible world, since for any world containing conscious beings who enjoy it, there is a better world featuring more such creatures. Grover 1999 and Cohen 2009 both argue that Swinburne's argument falls prey to Derek Parfit's *mere addition paradox*, and, accordingly, to the repugnant conclusion that worlds featuring very many lives barely worth living would surpass worlds featuring fewer but significantly better lives. Langtry 2008 formulates a variant of Plantinga's and Swinburne's argument that Langtry deems immune to this paradox, but Langtry urges that this argument nevertheless commits the fallacy of composition. Kraal 2013 suggests that Plantinga's and Swinburne's arguments are unsuccessful since they fail to take into account uninhabited worlds. Relatedly, Strickland 2005 complains that Plantinga and Swinburne concentrate too narrowly on just one "worldly good". According to Strickland, due consideration of the possible trade-offs between this good and others suggests that it is very much an open question whether there is a best possible world.

Blumenfeld, David. "Is the Best Possible World Possible?" *Philosophical Review* **84 (1975): 163-177.**

Draws together various strands from Leibniz's thought and suggests that they might jointly defeat objections (such as Plantinga's) to his claim that there is a unique best possible world.

Cohen, Daniel. "Creating the Best Possible World: Some Problems from Parfit." *Sophia* **48 (2009): 143-150.**

The argument of Swinburne 1979 argument falls prey to Derek Parfit's *mere addition paradox* since Swinburne's reasoning entails the repugnant conclusion that a world featuring (say) ten trillion people whose lives are barely worth living must surpass a world containing (say) one billion happy people.

Grover, Stephen. "Mere Addition and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Religious Studies* **35 (1999): 173-190.**

The argument of Swinburne 1979 argument falls prey to Derek Parfit's *mere addition paradox* since Swinburne's reasoning entails the repugnant conclusion that that worlds featuring (say) billions upon billions of lives barely worth living must surpass worlds containing fewer lives of higher quality. Considers and rejects several objections.

Kraal, Anders. "Is Existence of the Best Possible World Logically Impossible?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* **53 (2013): 37-46.**

Plantinga 1974 and Swinburne 1979 both depend upon the undefended intuition that the greater the number of happy people, the greater the world. They also both neglect to consider uninhabited worlds.

Langtry, Bruce. *God, The Best, and Evil.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.**

Langtry considers an 'extra people' argument (similar to Plantinga 1974 and Swinburne 1979) for the claim that there is no unsurpassable world. Langtry deems this argument immune to Derek Parfit's *mere addition paradox*, but thinks it may commit the fallacy of composition. Also rejects a variant of this argument.

Plantinga, Alvin. *God, Freedom, and Evil.* **Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1974.**

Speculates that for any possible world w featuring happy people, there is a better world x that contains more "persons enjoying unalloyed bliss" (34) or more "deliriously happy sentient creatures" (61). Thus, there may be no unsurpassable world.

Strickland, Lloyd. "Determining the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Journal of Value Inquiry* **39 (2005): 37-47.**

Arguments such as Plantinga 1974 and Swinburne 1979 too hastily assume that since one 'worldly good' cannot be maximized, there is no best possible world. Many pairs of such goods *can* be maximized, and so it is an open question whether or not there is a best possible world.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Existence of God.* **Oxford: Clarendon, 1979.**

For any possible world w containing conscious beings who enjoy it, there is a better world featuring more such creatures. Thus there is no unsurpassable world.

REICHENBACH

Reichenbach 1979 argues that there is no best of all possible worlds, given these two accounts of what makes worlds good: (a) worlds increase in value insofar as they exhibit *richness and variety*; and (b) worlds increase in value insofar as they contain *optimific states of affairs* such as pleasure, utility, or happiness. On either view, Reichenbach thinks, possible worlds increase in value *ad infinitum*, asymptotically approaching the unlimited perfection of God. Basinger 1980 and 1982 reply that an omniscient being could indeed identify the highest member of the set of possible worlds, and Reichenbach 1980 responds to Basinger 1980, in effect asserting that Basinger begs the central question at issue. Gordon 1985 criticizes the response of Basinger 1982 to Reichenbach. Kraal 2013 criticizes Reichenbach in a way distinct from Basinger: Kraal argues that Reichenbach's argument concerning optimific states of affairs contains two undefended – and implausible – assumptions: (1) that every possible worlds includes such states of affairs; and (2) that these states of affairs can sensibly be added.

Basinger, David. "Must God Create the Best Possible World?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1980): 339-341.

Responds to Reichenbach 1979. Concedes that while there may not seem to be a best possible world from our limited human perspective, this does not entail that there is no such thing. An omniscient God could identify the best.

Basinger, David. "Divine Omniscience and the Best of all Possible Worlds." *Journal of Value Inquiry* 16 (1982): 143-148.

Responds to Reichenbach 1980. Insists that God, in his essential omniscience, would be able to identify the best of all possible worlds.

Gordon, David. "Must God Identify the Best?" *Journal of Value Inquiry* 19 (1985): 81-83.

Responds to Basinger 1982, arguing that Basinger has not shown the incompatibility between God's omniscience and there being no best possible world. Agrees with Reichenbach 1980 that a set of possible worlds has no upper limit in value.

Kraal, Anders. "Is Existence of the Best Possible World Logically Impossible?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2013): 37-46.

The argument of Reichenbach 1979 argument concerning *optimific states of affairs* contains two dubious assumptions: (1) that every possible worlds includes such states of affairs; and (2) that these states of affairs can sensibly be added.

Reichenbach, Bruce R. "Must God Create the Best Possible World?" *International Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1979): 203-212.

Suppose that worlds increase in value insofar as they exhibit *richness and variety*, or *optimific states of affairs* such as pleasure, utility, or happiness. On either view, possible worlds increase

in value *ad infinitum*. More specifically, they asymptotically approach the unlimited perfection of God.

Reichenbach, Bruce. "Basinger on Reichenbach and the Best Possible World." *International Philosophical Quarterly* **20 (1980): 343-345.**

Responds to Basinger 1980. Worlds increase in value *ad infinitum*. Appealing to divine omniscience is insufficient as a reply. After all, even an omniscient being cannot identify the largest whole number.

God's Choice if There is One Best Possible World

Suppose that there is exactly one best possible world. Throughout the history of philosophy, many thinkers have held that God would choose it over all others. The most famous version of this argument is due to Gottfried Leibniz (b.1646-d.1617). The basic idea is that God's choosing a world other than the best would constitute a failure of either goodness or rationality (or both), and neither can be countenanced by theists, who take God to be an unsurpassable being. The most common objection to the notion that God has indeed selected the unique best possible world, is, of course, the problem of evil. Many thinkers have argued in various ways that the actual world cannot reasonably be deemed the best possible, given the evil it contains. Such arguments are not the focus of this section. This section is divided into four sub-sections. The first, ***Adams on God's Choice***, surveys the literature concerning Adams' indirect argument for the claim that God need not choose the best possible world. The second, ***Divine Freedom***, surveys the literature concerning whether God could reasonably deemed free in choosing the best possible world. The third, ***Thanks and Praise***, discusses a few publications that address the question of whether God could reasonably be thought worthy of thanks and praise for choosing the best possible world. The final section, ***Modal Collapse***, surveys the literature concerning whether, on the view that God chooses the best world, it can reasonably be said that there are genuine sub-optimal alternatives. Some philosophers have denied that there is one best world; instead, they have held that held that there are multiple best worlds, or, alternatively, that there is no best world. Discussions of God's choice on these models can be found under ***God's Choice if there are Multiple Best Worlds*** and ***God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds***.

ADAMS ON GOD'S CHOICE

Adams 1972 – a widely discussed paper – criticizes two ways of defending the claim that God would choose the best possible world. The first holds that God would wrong someone or be less than perfectly kind to someone in choosing a sub-optimal world; the second holds that God would manifest a character defect in so doing. Against the former, Adams suggests that sub-optimal worlds could meet criteria sufficient to show that God neither wrongs anyone nor is less than perfectly kind to anyone. Against the latter, Adams argues that God's choice of a sub-optimal world could manifest the virtue of grace. Basinger 1983 criticizes both of Adams' moves, and Hasker 1984 defends Adams' second move against Basinger's criticisms. Levine 1996 objects to Adams' first move, saying that it depends upon unacceptable assumptions concerning personal identity. Grover objects that Adams makes two unwarranted assumptions: that (a) the best possible world would contain the best possible creatures, and that (b) the notion of 'best possible creatures' is coherent. Quinn 1982 argues that the God of Adams' proposal would be a good moral agent, but not an unsurpassable one. Relatedly, chapter 5 of Rowe 2004 claims that, at most, Adams' argument shows that God would do no moral wrong in choosing a sub-optimal world. But, Rowe thinks, this is insufficient for showing that such a being would be unsurpassable. Rowe also deems Adams' appeal to grace to be irrelevant to God's choice of a world. Wielenberg 2004 claims that the God of Adams' proposal would manifest the vice of failing to pursue intrinsically valuable sates of affairs proportionally.

Adams, Robert Merrihew. "Must God Create the Best?" *The Philosophical Review* **81 (1972): 317-332.**

Criticizes two defences of the claim that God would choose the best possible world. The first holds that God would wrong someone, or be less than perfectly kind, in selecting some other world; the second holds that God would manifest a character defect in so doing.

Basinger, David. "In What Sense Must God Be Omnibenevolent?" *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* **14 (1983): 3-15.**

Adams 1972 fails to show that it is false that God would wrong someone by selecting a sub-optimal world. Adams' appeal to *grace* is perverse and fails to defeat the claim that God would manifest a character defect in selecting a sub-optimal world.

Grover, Stephen. "This world, 'Adams Worlds', and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Religious Studies* **39 (2003): 145-163.**

Adams 1972 illicitly assumes that (a) the best possible world would contain the best possible creatures, and that (b) the notion of 'best possible creatures' is coherent. Moreover, the actual world does not meet one of the standards that Adams proposes for a divinely chosen world.

Hasker, William. "Must God do His Best?" *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **16 (1984): 213-223.**

Defends the appeal to grace in Adams 1972 against the criticisms of Basinger 1983.

Levine, Michael. "Must God Create the Best?" *Sophia* **35 (1996): 28-34.**

The argument of Adams 1972 argument depends upon a criterion of personal identity that is both stipulative and counterintuitive. Accordingly, Adams fails to show that God need not wrong anyone by choosing a sub-optimal world.

Quinn, Phillip. "God, Moral Perfection, and Possible Worlds." In *God: The Contemporary Discussion.* **Edited by Frederik Sontag and M. Darrol Bryant, 197-213. New York: The Rose of Sharon Press, 1982.**

A being who chooses a world according to the reasoning defended in Adams 1972 would be a good moral agent. But such a being would be surpassable. A being who fails to select the best world could not be morally perfect, and so could not be God.

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* **New York, Oxford University Press, 2004.**

Chapter 5 argues, contra Adams 1972, that God may well violate a moral obligation in choosing a sub-optimal world. But even if God violates no moral obligation, God could not do this and be morally unsurpassable. God's grace cannot furnish a reason for selecting a sub-optimal world.

Wielenberg, Erik J. "A Morally Unsurpassable God Must Create the Best." *Religious Studies* **40 (2004): 43-62.**

If a being fails to actualize the best world, then that being fails to manifest the virtue of pursuing intrinsically valuable states of affairs proportionately. Objections to this claim suggested by the appeal to grace in Adams 1972 all fail.

If God is an unsurpassable being, and as a result chooses the unique best possible world, can God sensibly be thought to make a free choice? Ross 1962 and Rowe 2004 defend, in different ways, negative answers to this question. Ross thinks that God's choice must be grounded in reasons, and for God's choice to be free, these reasons must themselves be freely chosen. But for this to be possible, the reasons themselves must be chosen based on further reasons, and so an infinite regress looms. Rowe defends a libertarian account of freedom, according to which an agent's choice is free only if it is within that agent's power to have chosen differently. Rowe thinks that since an unsurpassable deity simply could not choose a surpassable world, God's choice of the unique best world could not be free. In contrast, Flint 1983, Fales 1994, Wierenga 2002, and Senor 2008 all defend the claim that God could freely choose the unique best possible world. Fales and Wierenga endorse a compatibilist account of divine freedom, according to which an agent's choice can be considered free even if it was not within that agent's power to do otherwise. Almeida 2012 thinks that compatibilist accounts of divine freedom will not help to explain how God necessarily chooses the best world, since these accounts still require the metaphysical possibility of alternatives. Almeida simply rejects the idea that God necessarily selects the best world, and thus claims to preserve divine freedom. (This discussion is closely connected to a large body of recently published work on the more general question of whether God has the power to sin. If God is omnipotent, some argue, God has the power to sin. And having the power to sin, some say, entails that, possibly, God sins. On the other hand, others argue that divine impeccability precludes the possibility that God sins. Moves and countermoves from this discussion can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the question of whether God can properly be said to freely select the unique best world. The literature on whether God can sin is not, however, surveyed here. That said, one excellent entry point into that literature is Pike 1969.)

Almeida, Michael. *Freedom, God, and Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

The best possible world features libertarian-free moral creatures who always act morally. If God necessarily selects this world, however, creatures cannot possess libertarian freedom since this sort of freedom requires alternate possibilities. Thus it is necessarily false that God necessarily selects this world.

Fales, Evan. "Divine Freedom and the Choice of a World." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 35 (1994): 65-88.

If there is a best possible world, God will choose it. God's choice is unconstrained by *causal* necessity. God would necessarily act only on the best of reasons. God, therefore, could not do otherwise, and this entails that God is *perfectly free*.

Flint, Thomas. "The Problem of Divine Freedom." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983): 255-264.

Either there is no unique best member of a series of possible worlds, or else there is, but God's choice of that world would still be free.

Pike, Nelson. "Omnipotence and God's Ability to Sin." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6 (1969): 208-216.

Argues that God has the power to sin, but that his nature and character assure us that he will not sin.

Ross, J.F. "Did God Create the Only Possible World?" *Review of Metaphysics* **16 (1962): 14-25.**

God's choice of a world must be grounded in reasons. For God's choice to be free, these reasons must be freely chosen. But this choice, in turn, must be based on reasons, and so an infinite regress looms.

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.**

Argues in great detail that if there is a unique best possible world, God is not free to do otherwise than to select it. Rowe endorses incompatibilist, libertarian freedom.

Senor, Thomas. "Defending Divine Freedom." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* **1 (2008): 168-195.**

If there is a unique best world, God would be unable to refrain from choosing it. But this does not entail that God would be unfree. To think otherwise is to assume – implausibly – that divine freedom entails the possibility of divine irrationality.

Wierenga, Edward. "The Freedom of God." *Faith and Philosophy* **19 (2002): 425-435.**

Defends a compatibilist account of God's free choice of the best possible world. God's choice is logically necessary, given his nature, but this fails to show that God is unfree.

THANKS AND PRAISE

The question of whether God is free to choose anything other than the best possible world (discussed under *__Divine Freedom__*) suggests a further question: if God is not free in this matter, can God sensibly be thought worthy of thanks and praise? Rowe 2004 defends a negative answer. Senor 2008 concedes that God's choice would not be *morally* praiseworthy, but he nevertheless defends an affirmative answer to this question, saying that God could properly be *praised for who he is* and properly *thanked for what he has done*. Relatedly, Bergmann and Cover 2006 offer several ways for theists to defend the claim that God can properly be thanked, and Rowe 2010 criticizes one of these. Howard-Snyder 2008 considers and rejects several objections to the claim that God could not be worthy of thanks and praise.

Bergmann, Michael, and Cover, Jan. "Divine Responsibility Without Divine Freedom." *Faith and Philosophy* **23 (2006): 381-408.**

Suggests two ways for theists to defend the claim that God is essentially perfectly good and thankworthy against each of the following claims: (a) God's being essentially perfectly good precludes God's good acts from being free; (b) God isn't thankworthy for an act that he was unable not to perform.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel. "The Puzzle of Prayers of Thanksgiving and Praise." In *New Waves in Philosophy of Religion.* **Edited by Erik Wielenberg and Yujin Nagasawa, 125-149. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.**

Defends the following argument against several objections: if God is essentially unsurpassably good, then he is unable to do something worse instead of what he does, and if so, God is not worthy of thanks and praise for what he does.

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004**.

If there is a best world, God cannot be free to refrain from choosing it. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate to thank or praise God for his choice.

Rowe, William. "Response to: Divine Responsibility without Divine Freedom." *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* **67 (2010): 37-48.**

Responds to one criticism leveled by Bergmann and Cover 2006 against the claim that God is not thankworthy for an act that he was unable to refrain from performing.

Senor, Thomas. "Defending Divine Freedom." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* **1 (2008): 168-195.**

It is appropriate to thank and praise God for doing *x* even if God is not free to refrain from doing *x*. God may not be *morally* praiseworthy in such a case, but God is still properly praised for *who he is*, and properly thanked for *what he has done*.

MODAL COLLAPSE

Suppose that there is a unique best possible world, and that God exists and cannot fail to choose it. Given these views, one might wonder whether there really are alternate possibilities. Let 'modal collapse' refer to the claim that, given theism, there is only one possible world. If so, then nothing could possibly have turned out differently than it does. Ross 1962 claims that Leibniz and Aquinas cannot avoid this consequence. Resnick 1973 holds that this consequence follows from theism, and holds that since it is so implausible, given our modal intuitions, theism should be rejected. Heller 2001 offers a similar argument. Flint 1983 argues that those who reasonably believe that God exists and enjoys libertarian freedom (which requires alternate possibilities) can resist modal collapse. Creel 1986 argues that there are infinitely many unsurpassable worlds, and that God must choose one of these. Once God does so, Creel thinks, the others are no longer genuine possibilities. Strickland 2005 thinks that theists should embrace modal collapse. Almeida 2008 deems modal collapse to be an unwelcome and unbelievable consequence of certain multiverse theories (discussed under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***). Kraay 2011 tentatively suggests that a theistic multiverse view might have the resources to avoid the unpalatable consequences of modal collapse. (This discussion is related to the debate concerning ***God and Bad Worlds (The Modal Problem of Evil)***. The latter debate concerns whether, given theism, there are bad worlds, whereas this discussion concerns whether, given theism, there are sub-optimal worlds.)

Almeida, Michael J. *The Metaphysics of Perfect Beings.* **New York: Routledge, 2008**.

Chapter 8 argues that the multiverse theories of Turner 2003 and Hudson 2006 (cited under *More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals*) suggest that the actual world is the *only* possible world. On this view, however, nothing could be otherwise than it is – and this is fatalistic and unbelievable.

Creel, Richard. *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

There are infinitely many unsurpassable worlds, each of which features free, intelligent creatures who consciously and everlastingly become more and more happy. God will choose such a world. Once he does, it *becomes* the only possible world, and hence – trivially – the best possible world.

Flint, Thomas. "The Problem of Divine Freedom." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983): 255-264.

If there is only one possible world, this would threaten (libertarian) divine freedom. But the Anselmian theist can claim that the possibility that there necessarily exists an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good being itself provides good grounds for ruling out this scenario.

Heller, Mark. "The Worst of All Worlds." *Philosophia* 28 (2001): 255-268.

An essentially perfect God would choose a best world, in which case (a) there are no genuine sub-optimal possible worlds, and (b) best worlds might as well be described as worst worlds. If theism is true, the actual world is among the worst possible. Recommends rejecting theism in response.

Kraay, Klaas. "Theism and Modal Collapse." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (2011): 361-372.

Argues that if theism is true, a multiverse consisting of all and only universes worthy of being created and sustained by God would be the best – and indeed the only – possible world. Speculates that, on this view, certain modal claims could sensibly be grounded in *universes* rather than worlds.

Resnick, Lawrence. "God and the Best Possible World." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1973): 313-317.

A necessarily existing perfect creator will choose the unique best possible world. 'Best possible world' suggests that there are alternatives, but given the foregoing, these alternatives are not genuinely possible. Thus a contradiction has been derived, which shows that there cannot be a necessarily existing perfect creator.

Ross, J.F. "Did God Create the Only Possible World?" *Review of Metaphysics* 16 (1962): 14-25.

Leibniz and Aquinas cannot avoid the conclusion that the actual world is the only possible world.

Strickland, Lloyd. "On the Necessity of the Best (Possible) World." *Ars Disputandi* 5 (2005): 14-27.

Considers this argument: God will necessarily choose the best possible world, in which case it is the *only* possible world. But this is incoherent, since 'best' implies that comparators exist. So God cannot choose the best possible world. Theists should simply assert that God necessarily creates the *only* possible world.

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God's Choice if There Are Multiple Best Worlds

It seems likely that if there is one unsurpassable world, there are many. This is because it is easy to imagine, for any given world, any number of trivially different worlds. Consider, for example, a world *w* that differs from its closest neighbour, *x*, in having one more grain of sand on one beach on one planet (and, of course, whatever is required for this, and whatever follows from this). Plausibly, differences such as these are too small to generate axiological differences between worlds *w* and *x*. If, then, there are multiple unsurpassable worlds – and perhaps infinitely many of them – the question of God's choice of a world presents itself. It is natural to suppose that, in such a scenario, God will select one of the unsurpassable worlds. But which one will God select, and how? And will God's choice count as free? The publications surveyed in this section consider questions such as these. This section is divided into two sub-sections: ***Can God's Choice from Among Unsurpassable Alternatives be Free?*** and ***Random Selection***. The most common objection to the notion that God has indeed selected an unsurpassable world, is, of course, the problem of evil. Many thinkers have argued in various ways that the actual world cannot reasonably be deemed one of the best possible, given the evil it contains. Such arguments are not the focus of this section. The publications in this section assume that God will select an unsurpassable world, but it is worth noting that this has been denied. Adams 1972 argues that God could justifiably select a sub-optimal world. The literature surrounding his argument is discussed under ***Adams on God's Choice***. If, however, Adams is wrong, and it is certain that God will refrain from selecting a sub-optimal world, one might wonder (a) whether God could properly be considered free in so doing; (b) whether God would be worthy of thanks and praise; and (c) whether, on this view, sub-optimal worlds are genuinely possible. The literature surrounding these questions is also discussed under the sub-sections ***Divine Freedom***, ***Thanks and Praise***, and ***Modal Collapse***, respectively. The arguments concerning these topics can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the scenario at issue in this section, namely, there being multiple best worlds.

CAN GOD'S CHOICE FROM AMONG UNSURPASSABLE ALTERNATIVES BE FREE?

If there are multiple unsurpassable worlds, could God's choice of one of them really be free? Flint 1983, Swinburne 1994, Hoffman and Rosenkrantz 2002, Rowe 2004, and Senor 2008 all argue, in various ways, that the seemingly arbitrary choice from such worlds would constitute a legitimate expression of robust divine freedom. In contrast, Fales 1994 contends that a perfect moral agent cannot make an arbitrary choice. Wierenga 2002 explicitly criticizes Flint 1983 and Swinburne 1994, suggesting that their view leads to the unpalatable conclusion that God is free only when it does not matter what he does.

Fales, Evan. "Divine Freedom and the Choice of a World." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **35 (1994): 65–88.**

If there are multiple unsurpassable worlds, God – unlike Burdian's ass – will manage to choose one. But God's choice would then be arbitrary, and this is inconsistent with God's being a perfect moral agent.

Flint, Thomas. "The Problem of Divine Freedom." *American Philosophical Quarterly* **20 (1983): 255–264.**

Argues that God's freedom is not threatened if there are multiple unsurpassable worlds. God's benevolence will lead him to select one of the unsurpassable worlds, but God could freely choose among them.

Hoffman, Joshua and Rosenkrantz, Gary. *The Divine Attributes.* **Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.**

Argues that if there are multiple unsurpassable worlds, God will select one of them. Since each represents an alternate possibility, God has the power to select a world other than the one he does, and so enjoys significant freedom of action.

Rowe, William. *Can God be Free?* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.**

If there are multiple unsurpassable worlds, God can freely choose between them, but his choice must be based on considerations other than the degree of goodness that the selected world possesses.

Senor, Thomas. "Defending Divine Freedom." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* **1 (2008): 168-195.**

If there are multiple unsurpassable worlds with only trivial differences between them, then God's freedom is merely superficial. But there may be non-trivial value differences between unsurpassable worlds, in which case God has robust freedom to choose between them.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Christian God.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.**

Since God's perfections constrain his choices in certain ways, he will always choose what is best, if such an option is available. Contends that situations involving equally good choices give God a venue to express his freedom by 'acts of will'.

Wierenga, Edward. "The Freedom of God." *Faith and Philosophy* **19 (2002): 425– 436.**

Disagrees with Swinburne 1994 and Flint 1983, which argue that God could freely choose any member of a set of unsurpassable worlds. In Wierenga's view, this amounts to saying that God is free only when it does not matter what he does – and this, he thinks, is not significant freedom.

RANDOM SELECTION

If there are multiple unsurpassable worlds, one might think that God could choose one of them at random. Blumenfeld 1975 notes that Leibniz's endorsement of the principle of sufficient reason entails that he could not countenance this model of God's choice. Rescher 1969 suggests that divine random selection is unmotivated, since God, in his omniscience, would foreknow the

results of any randomizing device or procedure. Quinn 1982 briefly speculates that God could legitimately select a world at random from a set of unsurpassable alternatives. Contra Rescher 1969, Strickland 2006 denies that God would foreknow the results of randomizing devices or procedures, and develops a model of random divine selection on which God pools the results of multiple randomizers. Kraay 2008 criticizes this model in several ways, ultimately arguing that it is very implausible to think that God could be deemed rational for choosing a world at random.

Blumenfeld, David. "Is the Best World Possible?" *Journal of Philosophy* 84 (1975): 163–177.

Critically evaluates Leibniz's argument from the principle of sufficient reason to the conclusion that God cannot rationally select one of the best worlds. Leibniz could not countenance random selection, since this would violate the principle of sufficient reason.

Kraay, Klaas. "Can God Choose a World at Random?" In *New Waves in Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Erik Wielenberg and Yujin Nagasawa, 22-25. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.

Strickland 2006 offers no compelling argument for the claim that there are multiple, but finitely many, unsurpassable randomizers. Strickland's argument that God would pool the results of these randomizers fails. God can rationally select a world at random only if there is just one randomizer available for use.

Quinn, Phillip. "God, Moral Perfection, and Possible Worlds." In *God: The Contemporary Discussion*. Edited by Frederik Sontag and M. Darrol Bryant, 197-213. New York: Rose of Sharon Press, 1982.

An unsurpassable being cannot select a surpassable world for actualization. Quinn briefly speculates that if there are multiple best worlds, God might either select *randomly* or appeal to non-moral considerations to select a world.

Rescher, Nicholas. "Choice without Preference: A Study of the History and of the Logic of the Problem of 'Burdian's Ass'." In *Essays in Philosophical Analysis,* 111-157. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969.

Random selection is the best way for ordinary agents to choose between options concerning which they are indifferent. God, however, cannot employ random selection, since he would infallibly foreknow the outcome of any randomizing device or process.

Strickland, Lloyd. "God's Problem of Multiple Choice." *Religious Studies* 42 (2006): 141–157.

Contra Rescher 1969, God will not foreknow the outcome of truly random devices or procedures. God would have multiple, but finitely many, unsurpassable devices or procedures available to him, and would pool the results to rationally select one from multiple unsurpassable worlds.

God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds

Suppose that there are no unsurpassable worlds, but instead an infinite hierarchy of increasingly better worlds. Let's call this view "NBW" (no best worlds). Several authors have argued, in various ways, that NBW is logically inconsistent with theism. The basic idea is that while theism maintains that God is essentially unsurpassable, no world-chooser can be essentially unsurpassable on NBW. This section surveys the literature concerning such *a priori* arguments for atheism on NBW. These arguments typically involve one or both of the following premises, either implicitly or explicitly:

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.

Arguments of this sort can be evaded in two ways. First, someone might reject NBW altogether, and, instead, hold that there is one or more best world. (If so, then there are different issues concerning God's choice, and these are discussed under ***God's Choice if there is One Best World*** and ***God's Choice if there are Multiple Best Worlds***.) Second, someone might claim that theists need not hold that God is essentially unsurpassable. In contrast, one direct strategy for defeating these arguments is to hold that the proposition "God exists" is better-supported than one or more of the premises leading to the negation of this claim. These three strategies will not be the focus of this section. Most responses to these arguments either attempt to undermine the support for premise P1 or premise P2, or else they attempt to show that these premises are false. This section is divided into five sub-sections: ***A priori** **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***, ***Criticisms of (P1) that Invoke Random Selection***, ***Criticisms of (P1) that Do Not Invoke Random Selection***, ***Criticisms of (P2)***, **and *Criticisms not Clearly Directed at Either P1 or P2***. (If there are no best worlds, critics of theism could also argue, *a posteriori*, that the actual world is not good enough to be reasonably thought chosen by God. Such arguments are not discussed in this section.)

A PRIORI ARGUMENTS FOR ATHEISM ON NBW

Several authors have offered *a priori* arguments for atheism on NBW. Early and relatively brief examples can be found in Perkins 1983 and Grover 1988. Grover 2004 defends the latter against a few critics. (The critics are discussed under ***Criticisms of Grover***.) Rowe 1993 is a much-discussed argument for atheism on NBW. Chapter 6 of Rowe 2004 develops this argument in greater detail, and has also been widely discussed. This chapter also contains Rowe's replies to various critics, including: Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 and Wierenga 2002 (both cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***), Thomas Morris 1993, Menssen and Sullivan 1995, and Hasker 2004 (all cited under ***Criticisms of (P2)***), Langtry 1996 (cited under ***Criticisms of (P1) that Do Not Invoke Random Selection***), and Wainwright 1996 (cited under ***Wainwright's Criticisms of Rowe***). Grover and Rowe explicitly support the general claim that no world-chooser can be morally unsurpassable on NBW, and Perkins does so implicitly. (Rowe and Perkins recommend atheism; Grover recommends that theists maintain that there is one best possible world.) Wielenberg 2004

advances the specific claim that no being can be unsurpassably *virtuous* on NBW. In contrast to these authors' focus on the *moral* attributes of God, Sobel 2004 claims that no being can be *rationally* unsurpassable on NBW. Forrest 2012 discusses (but ultimately rejects) two arguments that also focus on rational surpassability: both claim that on NBW, a world-chooser would have to act *arbitrarily*, and that this counts against theism.

Grover, Stephen. "Why Only the Best is Good Enough." *Analysis* 48 (1988): 224.

On NBW, no matter which world God chooses to actualize, it is possible that a 'weak god' – a non-omnipotent being – chooses a better world. This, however, is incompatible with God's perfect goodness. Consequently, NBW is incompatible with theism.

Grover, Stephen. "Rival Creator Arguments and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Sophia* 43 (2004): 101-114.

Distinguishes the argument of Grover 1988 from others, including Rowe 1993. Defends it against objections by Kraemer 1990, Petrik 1991, and Esmail 2000, all of which are cited under ***Criticisms of Grover***. Claims that the argument is invulnerable to the objection advanced in Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***).

Forrest, Peter. "On the Argument from Divine Arbitrariness." *Sophia* 51 (2012): 341-349.

Sets out two arguments for atheism that, unlike those of Grover, Rowe, and Wielenberg, do not focus on moral surpassability. Forrest's arguments hold that on NBW, God must – but cannot – act *arbitrarily* in choosing a world. Forrest responds by defending the possibility of a unique non-arbitrary world-selecting action on NBW.

Perkins, R.K. "An Atheistic Argument from the Improvability of the Universe." *Noûs* 17 (1983): 239-250.

On NBW, no matter which world God selects, God actualizes a world significantly less good than some other one he might have selected. But this is incoherent; hence, on NBW, atheism is true.

Rowe, William. "The Problem of Divine Perfection and Freedom." In *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honour of Norman Kretzmann*. Edited by Eleonore Stump, 223-233. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Argues that, given NBW, God should not be deemed *morally blameworthy* for choosing a surpassable world to actualize. But also argues that, given NBW, no world-chooser can be *morally unsurpassable*.

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Chapter 6 contains a very important, careful presentation of the argument for atheism on NBW. Rowe's argument turns on the claim that on NBW, no being can be *morally unsurpassable*.

Sobel, Jordan Howard. *Logic and Theism: Arguments for and Against Beliefs in God*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Argues (pp.468-479) that NBW is inconsistent with the existence of a *perfectly rational* world-chooser. This contrasts with the arguments of Grover, Rowe, and Wielenberg, all of which target *moral* unsurpassability.

Wielenberg, Erik. "A Morally Unsurpassable God Must Create the Best." *Religious Studies* 40 (2004): 43-62.

Argues that if NBW is true, theism is false, on the grounds that NBW is incompatible with the existence of an unsurpassably virtuous agent.

CRITICISMS OF (P1) THAT INVOKE RANDOM SELECTION

As noted under the introduction to ***God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds***, several criticisms of these *a priori* arguments for atheism attempt to resist the claim that (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. The most prominent of these is due to Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994, and it claims that on NBW, God could justifiably choose a world *at random*. The literature concerning the argument of the Howard-Snyders is principally surveyed under the sub-sub-heading ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***, and some additional literature concerning criticisms of (P1) that invoke random selection is surveyed under the sub-sub-heading ***Other Discussions of Random Selection***.

The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe

A much-discussed paper, Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder 1994 argues that an unsurpassable being, "Jove", can partition the set of all possible worlds into those that are acceptable and those that are not. "Jove", the authors urge, can then justifiably select from the former subset at random. Rowe 1994 disagrees, by claiming that a rival being, "Thor", can surpass "Jove" by non-randomly selecting a world that surpasses the one "Jove" selects. Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1996 rejects Rowe's claim, on the grounds that Rowe has not shown it coherent to suppose that a being could employ a higher standard of acceptability than does "Jove". Rowe 2002 and 2004 insist that "Thor" employs a higher standard after all. Kraay 2005b suggests that there may be no unsurpassable threshold partitioning the acceptable from the unacceptable worlds on NBW, and also argues that "Jove's" random selection procedure is surpassable. Wierenga 2002 suggests that "Thor" should not be thought to surpass "Jove", since – on Wierenga's version of the story – both creators choose a world than which there are infinitely many superior *and* inferior worlds, all of which are nevertheless acceptable. Kraay 2006 criticizes Rowe 2002, and also claims, as does Rowe 2004, that even if Wierenga's 2002 telling of the story is coherent, it fails to show that "Jove" and "Thor" are morally and rationally indistinguishable.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel and Howard-Snyder, Frances. "How an Unsurpassable Being can Create a Surpassable World." *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1994): 260-268.

Criticizes Rowe 1993 (cited under *A Priori* Arguments for Atheism on NBW*) by arguing that, given NBW, an essentially unsurpassable being ("Jove") can justifiably select a world for actualization *at random* from a set of worlds, all of which surpass an objective axiological threshold.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel and Howard-Snyder, Frances. "The *Real* Problem of No Best World." *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 422-425.

Criticizes Rowe 1993 (cited under *A priori Arguments for Atheism on NBW*) by contending that the story Rowe tells about "Thor" is, for all anybody reasonably believes, incoherent. Accordingly, the Thor story is not a genuine counterexample to the claim, defended in Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994, that Jove is an unsurpassable being.

Kraay, Klaas. "William L. Rowe's *A priori* Argument for Atheism." *Faith and Philosophy* 22 (2005b): 211-234.

Criticizes Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 by arguing that "Jove" could be surpassed in two ways: a rival creator could (a) have a higher axiological threshold than Jove has, or (b) use a better decision procedure than Jove does.

Kraay, Klaas. "God and the Hypothesis of No Prime Worlds." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 59 (2006): 49-68.

Argues that the response of Rowe 2002 to Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1996 is too weak, and suggests a stronger formulation. Also criticizes Wierenga 2002, using an argument similar to one found in Rowe 2004: "Thor" has a higher standard of world-selection than "Jove" even if both reject infinitely many acceptable worlds.

Rowe, William. "The Problem of No Best World." *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (1994): 269-271.

Criticizes Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 by arguing that a being, "Jove", who chooses a world at random from a set of threshold-surpassing worlds, *could* be surpassed by a rival being, "Thor", who is unwilling to settle for the world that "Jove" chooses.

Rowe, William. "Can God be Free?" *Faith and Philosophy* 19 (2002): 405-424.

Defends the argument of Rowe 1994 against the criticisms of Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1996. Argues that "Thor" surpasses "Jove" by having a higher standard for what makes a world acceptable for actualization.

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Defends the argument of Rowe 1994 against the criticisms of Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1996. Criticizes Wierenga 2002 by arguing, as does Kraay 2006, that "Thor" has a higher standard of world-selection than "Jove" even if both reject infinitely many acceptable worlds.

Wierenga, Edward. "The Freedom of God." *Faith and Philosophy* 19 (2002): 425–436.

Defends Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 against the criticisms of Rowe 2002 by arguing that "Thor" does not have a higher standard of world-selection than "Jove" does: both choose a world than which there are infinitely many superior, *and* infinitely many inferior, acceptable worlds.

Other Discussion of Random Selection

The papers in this sub-sub-section all concern attempts to resist premise (P1) by devising models on which God can select a world at random on NBW. Unlike the texts discussed under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exhange with Rowe***, however, these papers do not principally focus on Rowe's claim that an omnipotent being, "Thor", could surpass a being, "Jove", who chooses at random from the set of all acceptable worlds. Grover 2003 argues that a *non-*omnipotent being, "Freya", would surpass "Jove" if she were to select the best world she is capable of actualizing, and if that world were superior to the one "Jove" chooses. Steinberg 2005, Steinberg 2007, and Gwiazda 2008 all argue, in various ways, that Jove is surpassable, contra what Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 asserts (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exhange with Rowe***). Steinberg 2008 raises worries for the Howard-Snyders' claim that "Jove" could use a randomizing device to choose a world. Gwiazda 2010 replies, saying that Steinberg 2008 has failed to shift the burden of proof back to the Howard-Snyders.

Grover, Stephen. "This World, 'Adams Worlds', and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Religious Studies* **39 (2003): 145-163.**

Criticizes the defence of the claim in Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***) that "Jove" could justifiably select a world for actualization at random. Offers several reasons for doubting the coherence of their story, and then argues that Jove could be surpassed by a near-omnipotent being, "Freya", who, unlike Jove, *does her best*.

Gwiazda, Jeremy. "Remarks on Jove and Thor." *Faith and Philosophy* **25 (2008): 79-86.**

Begins by defending the claim in Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***) that "Jove" surpasses "Thor", on the grounds that there is only an infinitesimal probability that the former will choose a world no better than the latter. Then argues that "Jove" is nevertheless surpassable, contra what Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder assert.

Gwiazda, Jeremy. "God's Random Selection: Reply to Steinberg." *Sophia* **49 (2010): 141-143.**

Criticizes Steinberg 2008 by arguing that he fails to establish that the Howard-Snyders bear the burden of showing that random selection from an infinite set is possible. Steinberg's argument only addresses possible sources of randomness in the *actual* world, but perhaps there is a *possible* world in which God selects randomly.

Steinberg, Jesse R. "Why an Unsurpassable Being Cannot Create a Surpassable World." *Religious Studies* **41 (2005): 323-333.**

Criticizes Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***) by arguing that, given NBW, there is *no best selection procedure* for a world-chooser to adopt.

Steinberg, Jesse R. "Leibniz, Creation, and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **62 (2007): 123-133.**

Criticizes Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders'**
Exchange with Rowe*) by arguing that, on NBW, God's world-selection procedure could
always be surpassed by (1) another omnipotent being, (2) a non-omnipotent being, and (3) by
God himself.

**Steinberg, Jesse R. "God and The Possibility of Random Creation." *Sophia* 47
(2008): 193-199.**

Criticizes Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders'**
Exchange with Rowe*) by criticizing several models of random selection from an infinite set.
Accordingly, Steinberg thinks, the Howard-Snyders bear the burden of showing that this is
possible. Grover 2004 (cited under ****A priori* Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) also
raises worries for the Howard-Snyder's account of randomization.

CRITICISMS OF (P1) THAT DO NOT INVOKE RANDOM SELECTION

As noted in the introduction to ***God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds***, several
criticisms of these *a priori* arguments for atheism attempt to resist the claim that (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. The most prominent objection to this claim suggests that God could justifiably
select a world at random on NBW. This objection is due to Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder
1994 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe***), and it is discussed,
along with related literature, under ***Criticisms of (P1) that Invoke Random Selection***.
This sub-section, however, is devoted to criticisms of (P1) that do not invoke random selection.
The texts cited here criticize (P1) in various ways. Kretzmann 1991 predates much of the
literature concerning this argument for atheism, but nevertheless proposes an original way to
reject (P1): Kretzmann defends the claim that God's action would be unsurpassable if he were to
choose a world that, while surpassable, nevertheless is unsurpassed in its *ability to represent
God* to any possible created percipient. (This argument is criticized by Menssen and Sullivan
1995, cited under ***Criticisms of P2***.) Langtry 1996 simply rejects (P1) as implausible, given
theism and NBW, and Kraay 2005b deems this to be question-begging. Langtry 2008 offers a
defence of divine *satisficing* meant to count against (P1). Roughly, one *optimizes* by making a
best choice, and one *satisfices* when one makes a choice that is not optimal, but good enough.
Kraay 2013 deems Langtry's defence of divine satisficing to be insufficiently motivated. Leftow
2005 and Wierenga 2007 both argue, in different ways, that considerations about the actions of
libertarian-free creatures count against (P1). Kraay 2007 responds to Leftow 2005 by arguing
that it is illicit, in this context, to treat the actions of such creatures as part of God's world-
actualizing activity.

**Kraay, Klaas. "William L. Rowe's *A priori* Argument for Atheism." *Faith and
Philosophy* 22 (2005b): 211-234.**

Claims that Langtry 1996 begs the question against Rowe's *a priori* argument for atheism on
NBW.

Kraay, Klaas. "Divine Unsurpassability." *Philosophia* 35 (2007): 293-300.

Criticizes Leftow 2005 by arguing that the actions of libertarian-free creatures are not properly included in God's world-actualizing action.

Kraay, Klaas. "Can God Satisfice?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (2013): 399-410.

Argues that the defence of divine satisficing in Langtry 2008 is insufficiently motivated, since (a) satisficing in human contexts is very controversial; and (b) even if the rational and moral *permissibility* of divine satisficing is established, this is not enough to show that an essentially unsurpassable being can satisfice.

Kretzmann, Norman. "A Particular Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create This World?" In *Being and Goodness: The Concept of God in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*. Edited by Scott J. MacDonald, 229-249. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991.

On NBW, it is impossible for God to choose the best world. His inability to do so counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against God's perfect goodness. Given NBW, God will choose a world that is unsurpassed in its *ability to represent God* to any possible created percipient.

Langtry, Bruce. "God and The Best." *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1996): 311-328.

Criticizes Rowe 1993 (cited under **A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***). Langtry says that given theism and NBW, there are worlds V and W such that V is better than W but that God's action in actualizing V would not be surpassable. Kraay 2005b deems this question-begging.

Langtry, Bruce. *God, the Best, and Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Criticizes Rowe 2004 (cited under **A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) and Kraay 2005b by defending the moral and rational permissibility of *satisficing* in human cases, and then applying this to God.

Leftow, Brian. "No Best World: Creaturely Freedom." *Religious Studies* 41 (2005): 269-285.

Criticizes Rowe 2004 (cited under **A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) by arguing that since the morally relevant actions of libertarian-free creatures are outside of God's control, God is subject to *moral luck* and hence cannot be deemed surpassable for choosing a surpassable world. The argument is similar to that of Wierenga 2007.

Wierenga, Edward. "Perfect Goodness and Divine Freedom." *Philosophical Books* 48 (2007): 207-216.

Criticizes Rowe 2004 (cited under **A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) by arguing that the counterfactuals of world-actualization are partly outside of God's control, in which case the surpassability of an actualized world does not entail the surpassability of God's actualizing action. Similar to Leftow 2005.

CRITICISMS OF (P2)

As noted in the introduction to *God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds*, several criticisms of these *a priori* arguments for atheism attempt to resist the claim that (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. Morris 1993 rejects two theses that might be thought to support (P2) on the grounds that they are inapplicable to the divine case. Rowe 2004 thinks that Morris fails to engage the issue at stake, and Kraay 2005b claims that Morris 1993 begs the central question against Rowe. Menssen and Sullivan 1995 argues that the following claim is false: if one action is better than another action, then God cannot choose the latter over the former. If they are right, of course, (P2) fails. Rowe 2004 deems this argument question-begging. Hasker 2004 defends the claim that "If, necessarily, I fail to do the best I can, then failing to do better than I actually did is not a moral fault." One key premise Hasker deploys to support this claim is: "If, necessarily, I fail to do better than I actually did, then failing to do better than I actually did is not a moral fault" (205). Rowe 2004 replies to Hasker 2004, and Hasker responds in the Appendix to Hasker 2004. Hasker 2005 presses this case again, and Rowe 2005b replies. Kraay 2005a criticizes the response of Rowe's 2004 to Hasker 2004, but offers a different criticism instead. In Kraay's view, God could be 'faulted' for failing to perform a better logically possible action than the one he did perform.

Hasker, William. *Providence, Evil, and The Openness of God*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Chapter 11 and the appendix respond to Rowe 1993 and Rowe 2004 (cited under *A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***), and to Rowe 1994 and Rowe 2002 (cited under the *The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe*).

Hasker, William. "*Can God Be Free*?: Rowe's Dilemma for Theology." *Religious Studies* 41 (2005): 453-462.

Using an argument similar to that of Hasker 2004, defends the claim that "If, necessarily, one does not do the best one can, then it is not a defect if one fails to do better than one did" (458).

Kraay, Klaas. "Theistic Replies to the *A priori* Argument for Atheism." *Philo* 8 (2005a): 22-36.

Criticizes Rowe's 2004 response to Hasker 2004, but offers a different one: contra Hasker, God can be faulted on NBW for failing to perform a better logically possible action than the one he did perform.

Kraay, Klaas. "William L. Rowe's *A priori* Argument for Atheism." *Faith and Philosophy* 22 (2005b): 211-234.

Claims that Morris 1993 begs the question against Rowe 1993 (cited under *A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) by assuming that God is possible on NBW.

Menssen, Sandra, and Sullivan, Thomas. "Must God Create?" *Faith and Philosophy* 13 (1995): 321-341.

Argues that the following claim is false: if one action is better than another action, then God cannot choose the latter over the former. Also criticizes the argument of Kretzmann 1991 (cited under ***Criticisms of (P1) that Do Not Invoke Random Selection***).

Morris, Thomas. "Perfection and Creation." In *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*. Edited by Eleonore Stump, 234-247. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Morris considers two theses which might be thought to support (P2). The first holds that the goodness of an agent's actions partly *produces* the agent's goodness; the second holds that the goodness of an agent's actions *expresses* the agent's goodness. Morris deems both plausible for humans, but not for God.

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Argues that Morris 1993 fails to engage the central issue in the argument for atheism on NBW. Claims that Menssen and Sullivan 1995 begs the question against this argument. Also offers two criticisms of Hasker 2004.

Rowe, William. "Response to Hasker." *Religious Studies* 41 (2005b): 463-466.

Responds to Hasker 2005 by saying that Hasker's argument entails the following (highly implausible) claim: that there would be no defect whatsoever in God if God were to choose a world far, far worse than some other he could select.

CRITICISMS NOT CLEARLY DIRECTED AT EITHER P1 OR P2

As noted in the introduction to the section ***God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds***, most critics of *a priori* arguments for atheism on NBW attack either premise (P1) or premise (P2). The literature surrounding these criticisms is discussed in three sub-sections of this article: ***Criticisms of (P1) that Invoke Random Selection***, ***Criticisms of (P1) that Do Not Invoke Random Selection***, and ***Criticisms of (P2)***. This sub-section, on the other hand, surveys the literature concerning criticisms of *a priori* arguments for atheism that are not clearly directed at either premise. There are four sub-sub-sections, as follows: ***Criticisms of Grover***, ***Almeida's Criticisms of Rowe***, ***Wainwright's Criticisms of Rowe***, and ***Other Criticisms of Rowe***.

Criticisms of Grover

Grover 1988 (cited under ****A priori* Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) argues that on NBW, no matter which world God chooses to actualize, it is possible that a 'weak god' – a non-omnipotent being – chooses a better world. Since this result is incompatible with God's perfect goodness, Grover argues, NBW is incompatible with theism. Grover, accordingly, recommends that theists embrace the Leibnizian view that there is one unique best of all possible worlds. This one-paragraph paper has generated three direct replies, to which Grover 2004 responds in turn. Kraemer 1990 argues that, for all we know, no possible weak God could create a world better than the one that God creates. Petrik 1991 thinks that God must choose some world or other on NBW, since the alternative would be to create nothing, and that would be worse. He also thinks that Grover's argument, properly understood, reduces to the problem of evil. Esmail 2000

thinks that on NBW, every world above some threshold is permissible for God to actualize. Taking this seriously, Esmail suggests, should force Grover to concede that God's selection of *any* world above that threshold cannot impugn God's unsurpassability. Grover 2004 responds to Kraemer by claiming that there is no good reason to suppose that no possible being could actualize a world better than the actual one. Grover 2004 responds to Petrik 1991 by saying that Petrik's assumptions entail both that God should create *and* that God should not create on NBW, in which case one of the assumptions – namely that God exists – should be rejected. The author of Grover 2004 also insists, contra Petrik 1991, that his argument is distinct from the problem of evil. Finally, Grover 2004 thinks that Esmail 2000 either simply begs the question by assuming that God can exist on NBW or else fails to take seriously the model of increasingly better worlds stipulated by NBW.

Esmail, K.H.A. "Grover and the Creation of a World by God." *Sophia* **39 (2000): 227-230.**

The argument of Grover 1988 (cited under *A Priori **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) stipulates that every world above some threshold is permissible for God – a morally perfect being – to choose. If so, however, no being can possibly surpass God in moral perfection by choosing a better world.

Grover, Stephen. "Rival Creator Arguments and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *Sophia* **43 (2004): 101-114.**

Defends the argument of Grover 1988 (cited under *A Priori **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) against objections due to Kraemer 1990, Petrik 1991, and Esmail 2000.

Kraemer, E.R. "Is the Best Really Necessary?" *Analysis* **50 (1990): 42-43.**

Briefly sketches a way that theists might reply to the argument of Grover 1988 (cited under *A priori **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***): by defending the claim that there is no possible being who could create a world better than the actual world.

Petrik, James. "What's A God to Do?" *Sophia* **30 (1991): 31-33.**

Replies to Grover 1988 (cited under *A Priori **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***) by arguing that since it is better to create a good world than to refrain from so doing, when both are within one's power, God must create on NBW. Also argues that Grover's argument reduces to the problem of evil.

Almeida's Criticisms of Rowe

Michael Almeida offers two distinct criticisms of Rowe's *a priori* argument for atheism on NBW. The first, advanced in Almeida 2005 and 2006a, holds that Rowe's argument begs the question. The second, advanced in Almeida 2006b, argues that the principles of rationality to which Rowe is committed fail in the context of NBW. Accordingly, Almeida thinks, no rational being can legitimately be bound by these principles on NBW. (Almeida 2006a also briefly responds to Morris 1993 and Hasker 2004, both of whom are cited under ***Criticisms of P2***. Contra these authors, Almeida urges that Rowe's argument does not illegitimately demand that God do the impossible.) Almeida's two criticisms of Rowe are developed in greater detail in Almeida 2008. Rowe 2005a briefly responds to the former criticism, and Rowe 2006 responds to the latter.

Almeida, Michael. "On Infinitely Improving Worlds." *Philo* **8 (2005): 38-46.**

A briefer version of the argument presented in Almeida 2006a.

Almeida, Michael. "Rowe's Argument from Improvability." *Philosophical Papers* **35 (2006a): 1-25.**

Claims that the argument in Rowe 2002 (cited under ***The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe** *) is unsound, and that it assumes – rather than establishes – that the concept of a maximally great being is incoherent on NBW.

Almeida, Michael. "The Unreal Problem of No Best World." *Philo* **9 (2006b): 103-112.**

Distinguishes several candidate principles governing whether a choice is rationally permissible, and then argues that these principles all fail in the context of NBW. Accordingly, no rational agent is governed by these principles in such a context.

Almeida, Michael. *The Metaphysics of Perfect Beings.* **New York: Routledge, 2008**.

Chapter 1 is a revised and extended version of the argument found in Almeida 2006a. Chapter 2 is a revised and extended version of the argument found in Almeida 2006b. Chapter 2 also criticizes the argument for atheism on NBW of Sobel 2004 (cited under *****A priori** Arguments for Atheism on NBW***).

Rowe, William. "Replies to My Critics." *Philo* **8 (2005a): 47-54.**

Rowe identifies two minor infelicities in the argument of Almeida 2005, and urges that it entails an implausible claim: that God could not reasonably be deemed surpassable for actualizing a world featuring only one creature – a cricket that has a moment's enjoyment and then immediately perishes.

Rowe, William. "Response to Almeida." *Philosophical Papers* **35 (2006): 27-28.**

Argues, contra Almeida 2006a, that a being would be surpassable for choosing a minimally good world in lieu of one a billion times better.

Wainwright's Criticisms of Rowe

Wainwright 1988 says that on NBW, there is nothing God can do to avoid the complaint that he could have chosen a better world. Accordingly, Wainwright thinks, this complaint is illegitimate. Rowe 2004 concedes that there is no way for God to avoid this charge, but says that this is not an illegitimate complaint; instead, he thinks, it constitutes *rational reason* for rejecting theism on NBW. Wainwright 1996 and 2005 jointly suggest three ways for the theist to respond to Rowe's argument: (a) by appeal to *divine grace*; (b) by saying that God would be unsurpassable on NBW if he were to select an *overwhelmingly* good world; and (c) by conceding that God is surpassable, while denying that any being other than God could surpass God. Rowe 2004 and Rowe 2005 both respond to argument (a).

Rowe, William. *Can God Be Free?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Against Wainwright 1988, Rowe says that Wainwright's argument for atheism is not a *complaint* against God. Instead, it provides *reasons* for thinking that theism is impossible on NBW. Rowe also rejects the appeal to grace proffered in Wainwright 1996.

Rowe, William. "Replies to My Critics." *Philo* 8 (2005a): 47-54.

Briefly replies to the argument concerning grace found in Wainwright 2005.

Wainwright, William. *Philosophy of Religion*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 1988.

No matter what God does on NBW, God could have created a better world. But it would be illegitimate to construe this as a genuine *complaint* against God, since it is unavoidable, and a complaint that is always in place is never in place.

Wainwright, William. "Jonathan Edwards, William Rowe, and the Necessity of Creation." In *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality: Philosophy of Religion Today*. Edited by Jeffrey Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder, 119-133. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.

Offers two responses to Rowe 1993 (cited under **A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW***). The first suggests that theists could concede that God is surpassable while insisting that no other agent can surpass God. The second suggests that a *gracious* God who loves *gratuitously* could exist on NBW.

Wainwright, William. "Rowe on God's Freedom and God's Grace." *Philo* 8 (2005): 12-22.

Contra Rowe 2004, God's goodness would not be impugned on NBW if he were to create an *overwhelmingly* good world. Moreover, God can exhibit gracious love in preferring such a world, even though it is surpassable. Defends the argument of Hasker 2004 (cited under ****Criticisms of P2***).

Other Criticisms of Rowe

This sub-sub-section surveys criticisms of Rowe's *a priori* argument for atheism on NBW that involve strategies not covered elsewhere under ****God's Choice if There are No Best Worlds***. Jordan 2009 thinks that theists can justifiably reject NBW, in which case Rowe's argument has no purchase. Penner 2006 argues that Rowe bears, but has not failed to discharge, the burden of showing that on NBW, a *fault-indicating defect* can plausibly be attributed to God. Relatedly, Senor 2008 argues that God cannot be faulted for failing to choose an unsurpassable world on NBW, since it is logically impossible for God to choose such a world. In a similar vein, Kierland and Swenson 2013 urges that Rowe's argument illegitimately makes self-contradictory demands of God: on NBW, God is required both to actualize an acceptable world and also to fail to actualize every possible world. (This paper also criticizes the response of Almeida 2008 (cited under ****Almeida's Criticisms of Rowe***) to Hasker 2004 (cited under ****Criticisms of (P2)***), and endorses Rowe's 2004 criticism of Hasker 2004, (both of which are cited under ****Criticisms of P2***).) Finally, Russell 2005 urges that on NBW, God could

arbitrarily or randomly select a finite number *N*, and then select a world at random from the worlds ranked at or above level *N*. (This argument differs from the one first advanced in Howard-Snyder and Howard-Snyder 1994, cited under *The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe*, in that Russell's partition point *N* is selected randomly or arbitrarily.) Rowe 2005a deems Russell's response to be question-begging.

Jordan, Jeffrey. "Review of William L. Rowe on Philosophy of Religion: Selected Writings, edited by Nick Trakakis." *Sophia* **48 (2009): 495-496.**

Argues, contra Rowe 2004 (cited under *Criticisms of (P2)*), that the theist should reject NBW, on the grounds that *any* world that includes God is unsurpassably great.

Kierland, Brian and Swenson, Philip. "Ability-Based Objections to No-Best-World Arguments." *Philosophical Studies* **164 (2013): 669-683.**

Criticizes arguments such as Rowe 2004, Sobel 2004, and Wielenberg 2004 (all cited under *A priori* **Arguments for Atheism on NBW**), by arguing that they implicitly assert something self-contradictory: that, on NBW, a being who necessarily actualizes a world also has the power to refrain from actualizing all worlds.

Penner, Myron A. "Divine Creation and Perfect Goodness in a 'No Best World' Scenario." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **59 (2006): 25-47.**

Argues that for the argument of Rowe 2002 (cited under *The Howard-Snyders' Exchange with Rowe*) to succeed, Rowe must identify a Fault-Indicating-Defect (FID) in God's choice of a world on NBW. Rejects several candidate FIDs, and urges that a genuine FID must be both avoidable and not avoided by God.

Rowe, William. "Replies to My Critics." *Philo* **8 (2005a): 47-54.**

Briefly argues that Russell 2005 begs the central question at issue.

Russell, Bruce. "God in Relation to Possible Worlds Scenarios: Comments on Rowe's *Can God Be Free?***"** *Philo* **8 (2005): 5-11.**

Argues, contra Rowe 2004 (cited under *Criticisms of (P2)*),, that on NBW God could ordinally rank the set of all on-balance-good worlds, and then *randomly* or *arbitrarily* select a large number *N*, and then select at random a world at *N* or above.

Senor, Thomas. "Defending Divine Freedom." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* **1 (2008): 168-195.**

If doing X is logically impossible even for a person with a nature as morally perfect as is logically possible, then that person's failure to do X doesn't preclude her from being perfectly good. On NBW, it is logically impossible for God to produce an unsurpassable creation.

God's Choice And Incomparable Worlds

Most discussions of God's choice of a world assume that all possible worlds are properly evaluated with respect to a unique set of properties or characteristics. On this view, all worlds are *commensurable.* But there may be worlds *w* and *x* such that *w* is not better than *x*, nor is *x* better than *w*, nor or they are equal in value. Such worlds are *incomparable.* This section surveys recent literature about how God would choose between incomparable worlds. Mann 1991 argues that because we sometimes face incomparable choices, it's reasonable to suppose that there are incomparable worlds and, hence, no best of *all* possible worlds. Grover 1998 counters that even if agents sometimes choose between incomparable options, it does not follow that the relevant worlds are incomparable. Indeed, Grover thinks, our agonizing over seemingly incomparable choices suggests that we really believe that they are comparable. Fales 1994 also criticizes Mann 1991. Senor 2008 thinks it is very plausible to suppose that there are incomparable worlds, and claims that if God can choose between any two or more such worlds, God's choice can be deemed significantly free. (Senor does not, however, explain how God would go about making such a choice.) In a wide-ranging discussion of God's choice of a world, Langtry 2008 defines a *hierarchy* to be a sub-set of possible worlds, all members of which are comparable to each other. There are multiple hierarchies, however, and worlds drawn from different hierarchies are incomparable. Some hierarchies contain one or more unsurpassable worlds, and others contain no unsurpassable worlds. If possible, God will select a hierarchy that contains a world better than all its other hierarchy-mates. If all hierarchies lack such a world, God will *satisfice* by choosing a world that is good enough. Kraay 2011 claims that Langtry cannot provide an adequate account of how God chooses a *hierarchy*, and argues, more generally, that God cannot rationally choose between incomparable alternatives. Penner 2014 criticizes Kraay 2011 by suggesting two ways for theists to resist the claim that there are genuine failures of comparability between worlds. Penner also argues that if God cannot avoid having to choose between incomparable worlds, this does not impugn God's rationality. Luck 2014 argues that theists can appeal to incomparable worlds to resist an argument for atheism: the argument from slight pains.

Fales, Evan. "Divine Freedom and the Choice of a World." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **35 (1994): 65–88.**

The argument of Mann 1991 argument for the claim that there are incomparable worlds depends excessively on fallible human judgments. Moreover, one of Mann's central putative examples of incomparability is implausible.

Grover, Stephen. "Incommensurability and the Best of All Possible Worlds." *The Monist* **81 (1998): 648-668.**

Criticizes Mann 1991. Even if there are incomparable choices, it does not follow that the pertinent worlds are *overall* incomparable. Moreover, even if worlds *w* and *x* are *directly* incomparable, they may be *indirectly* comparable by means of some third world *y*. *Value pluralism* cannot easily be reconciled with theism.

Klaas, Kraay J. "Incommensurability, Incomparability, and God's Choice of a World." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **69 (2011): 91-102.**

Endorses the position that there are failures of comparability between worlds. Criticizes Langtry 2008 by arguing that Langtry cannot provide an adequate account of how God chooses a

hierarchy. Argues, more generally, that God cannot rationally choose between incomparable alternatives.

Langtry, Bruce. *God, the Best, and Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

A *hierarchy* is a set of comparable worlds. Worlds drawn from different hierarchies are incomparable. If possible, God will select a hierarchy that contains a world better than all other hierarchy-mates. If all hierarchies lack such a top-valued world, God will *satisfice* by choosing a world that is good enough.

Luck, Morgan. "Incommensurability, Slight Pains, and God." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 75 (2014): 79-85.

One might suppose that for any pair of worlds x and y such that x contains less pain than y, and y is not better than x in any other respect, x is better than y. But this claim can be resisted by appeal to incomparability.

Mann, William E. "'The Best of All Possible Worlds." In *Being and Goodness: The Concept of God in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*. Edited by Scott J. MacDonald, 250-277. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Agents sometimes face choices between incompatible alternatives, and these alternatives are sometimes incomparable. Thus, some worlds are incomparable with others. Accordingly, there is no best of *all* possible worlds, for such a world must be comparable to *all* others.

Penner, Myron A. "Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Rational World-Choice." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 75 (2014): 13-25.

Levels three criticisms against Kraay 2011. Suggests two ways for theists to resist Kraay's claim that there are genuine failures of comparability between worlds. Then argues that if God cannot avoid choosing a world that is incomparable to some other world, this does not count against God's rationality.

Senor, Thomas. "Defending Divine Freedom." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* 1 (2008): 168-195.

Value pluralism holds that there are multiple fundamental, irreducible, intrinsic values, and it is a plausible thesis. This view strongly suggests that there are incomparable worlds, and if God can choose between such worlds, then God's choice is significantly free.

God and the Multiverse

In the scientific community, the respectability of multiverse theories has been steadily on the rise in recent decades. Such theories are often deemed hostile to theism since they are thought to undermine "fine-tuning" arguments for the existence of God. (The basic idea here is that a multiverse can account for the biophilic parameters of our universe without appeal to an intelligent designer, thus undermining the probative force of these arguments for theism.) Recently, however, philosophers have begun to argue, for various reasons, that a multiverse is likely, given theism. Typically, these philosophers claim that if God exists, it is likely that God would create many universes that surpass some axiological threshold. They differ on the question of where this threshold is, and just how many universe (and what kinds) God would create. Several philosophers claim that some sort of theistic multiverse would be the best of all possible worlds. If there is such a thing, then the problem of no best world (discussed under *God's Choice if there are No Best Worlds*) is evaded. Several philosophers also claim, in various ways and for various reasons, that a theistic multiverse model can be harnessed in response to atheistic arguments from evil. This section is divided into three subsections: ***Early and Relatively Brief Discussion of The Theistic Multiverse**; ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals**; and ***Criticisms of Theistic Multiverse Proposals***. It is worth mentioning a preliminary terminological point. Most authors use 'universe' to refer to a spatiotemporally interrelated, causally closed entity, and 'world' to refer to a possible world. Using this terminology, then, to say that there might be multiple universes is just to say that at least one possible world contains more than one universe. Some authors, however, use 'universe' and 'world' in exactly the opposite way, and others use different terminology altogether. For consistency, the dominant nomenclature will be followed throughout the annotations below.

EARLY AND RELATIVELY BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE THEISTIC MULTIVERSE

Philosophical multiverse proposals have a long pedigree in the history of philosophy, but surveying these is beyond the scope of this article. (A good starting point, however, is Munitz 1951.) In contemporary analytic philosophy of religion, the discussion of theistic multiverses begins with McHarry 1978 and Forrest 1981, both of which briefly invoke this idea in response to the problem of evil. Perkins 1980 replies to the former, and Coughlan 1987 responds. Quite independently, Parfit 1991 and Parfit 1992 both speculate that theists might invoke a multiverse theory against arguments from evil, and Stewart 1993 urges that a multiverse is what one should expect from a creative deity who has more purposes and values than can be expressed in just one universe.

Coughlan, Michael J. "Must God Create Only the Best Possible World?" *Sophia* 26 (1987): 15-19.

If infinitely good states of affairs *cannot* be bettered, God has no reason to create anything, let alone the best creation, since God would already be infinitely good prior to creation. If infinitely good states of affairs *can* be bettered, God will create optimal universes and sub-optimal-but-worthy ones.

Forrest, Peter. "The Problem of Evil: Two Neglected Defences." *Sophia* 20 (1981): 49-54.

Against an argument from evil to atheism, Forrest argues that it is possible that God creates all good universes.

McHarry, John D. "A Theodicy." *Analysis* **38 (1978): 132-134.**

In response to the argument for atheism that holds that the actual world is not, but should be (given theism) the best possible, McHarry argues that it is reasonable to suppose that God has created a multiverse consisting of all and only those universes better than nothing.

Munitz, Milton K. "One Universe or Many?" *Journal of the History of Ideas* **12 (1951): 231-255.**

A broad survey of the history of multiverse theories, along with their motivations and applications.

Parfit, D. "Why Does the Universe Exist?" *Harvard Review of Philosophy* **(Spring 1991): 4-5.**

In response to the complaint that things might have been better than they are, theists can posit that God creates every good universe.

Parfit, D. "The Puzzle of Reality: Why Does the Universe Exist?" *Times Literary Supplement* **(July 3, 1992): 3-5.**

Against the problem of evil, theists might speculate that God creates every worthy universe. For a universe to be worthy, good must outweigh evil, and perhaps other principles of justice must be satisfied. But it might reasonably be complained that our universe is *not* worthy, given these criteria.

Perkins, R.K. "McHarry's Theodicy: A Reply." *Analysis* **40 (1980): 168-171.**

McHarry's theodicy fails for two reasons. First, it cannot address the complaint that *our universe* is unworthy of inclusion in a divinely furnished multiverse. Second, it is reasonable to suppose that there is no best multiverse.

Stewart, Melville. *The Greater-Good Defence: An Essay on the Rationality of Faith.* **New York: St. Martin's, 1993.**

A multiverse consisting of many good universes might make possible a fuller expression of divine values and purposes than could be expressed in a single universe. A multiverse consisting of every kind of universe would be the best possible world.

MORE DEVELOPED THEISTIC MULTIVERSE PROPOSALS

Forrest 1996 speculates that the theistic multiverse might help defeat certain arguments from evil. On Forrest's proposal, for all we know, God has created universes of all the on-balance-good types, no matter how trivial the differences between them. For a universe to be on-balance good, all who suffer evil in it must be (a) be amply recompensed; and (b) rational in consenting to their suffering, were all the relevant facts provided. Turner 2003 argues that the theistic multiverse, consisting of all universes with a favourable balance of good over evil, is the best

possible world. Turner deems this to constitute a partial solution to the problem of evil. On his view, it is illegitimate to complain that the actual world could have been better by simply appealing to the improvability of our universe. Hudson 2006 harnesses his ontology of a 'plenitudinous hyperspace' in service of an aesthetic response to the problem of evil. On Hudson's view, evils in our local region of reality may be required to make the whole of created reality beautiful, and this may justify God's permission of evil. O'Connor 2008 thinks that if theism is true, God can defensibly select *any* 'super-universe' consisting of infinitely many universes that surpass some objective value threshold. In his view, this preserves divine choice with respect to creation and mitigates the problem of evil, for reasons similar to those of Turner. Kraay 2010 urges that a multiverse consisting of all and only those universes objectively worth creating and sustaining by God is the unique best of all possible worlds. Kraay notes that this view neatly evades arguments for atheism that turn on their being no such thing, but he argues that it offers no significant resources for blocking arguments from evil. Kraay 2012 makes the latter case in more detail, and also critically discusses various objections to theistic multiverse theories. Contra Kraay, Megill 2011 argues that the theistic multiverse can block all actual and all possible arguments from evil. Most recently, Gellman 2012 offers a speculative account of evil according to which different universes in the multiverse are divinely-arranged locations for individuals to develop and to attain God's goals for them. On Gellman's proposal, individuals pass through various universes until they reach these goals.

Forrest, Peter. *God Without the Supernatural*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Chapter 8 argues that for all we know, God has created universes of all the on-balance-good types, no matter how trivial the differences between them. God could have prevented seemingly pointless evils in our universe only by not creating it, but this would make the actual world worse overall.

Gellman, Jerome. "A Theistic, Universe-Based, Theodicy of Human Suffering and Immoral Behaviour." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4 (2012): 107-122.

Offers a speculative account of evil according to which persons must pass through various universes, as individually dictated by God, until reaching God's goals for them. On this model, God is justified in permitting chancy events in this universe.

Hudson, Hud. *The Metaphysics of Hyperspace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Chapters 1-6 offer philosophical reasons favouring a *plenitudinous hyperspace*. Chapter 7 argues that theists who are already attracted to this view stand to benefit, since it suggests an *aesthetic* solution to the problem of evil: the beauty of hyperspace justifies the evil it contains.

Kraay, Klaas J. "Theism, Possible Worlds, and the Multiverse." *Philosophical Studies* 147 (2010): 355-368.

We should expect an unsurpassable being to create and sustain all and only those universes that surpass some objective threshold of worthiness. The resulting world is the best possible, thus evading the problem of no best world. This view, however, is neutral with respect to the problem of evil.

Kraay, Klaas J. "The Theistic Multiverse: Problems and Prospects." In *Scientific Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion.* Edited by Yujin Nagasawa, 143-162. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave McMillan, 2012.

Sets out some requirements for a successful theistic multiverse theory. Critically discusses several objections to such theories as well as some prospects they are thought to have for the philosophical case for theism. Argues that theistic multiverse theories cannot solve the problem of evil.

Megill, Jason. "Evil and the Many Universes Response." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 70 (2011): 127-138.

If any argument from evil is sound, then God is probably not justified in creating our universe. But if God created a multiverse, we cannot know that God is probably unjustified in creating our universe. The possibility of a multiverse thus defeats all arguments from evil.

O'Connor, Timothy. *The Necessary Shape of Contingency: Theism and Ultimate Explanation.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.

Chapter 5 argues that there is no upper bound on universes that exceed some objective value threshold. God can choose any *superuniverse* that contains infinitely many threshold-surpassing universes. This preserves divine freedom and mitigates the problem of evil.

Turner, Donald Albert Jr. "The Many-Universe Solution to the Problem of Evil." In *The Existence of God*, 1-17. Edited by Richard Gale and Alexander Pruss. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2003.

God ought to create every universe with a favourable balance of good over evil. Defends this view against several objections and then argues that this constitutes a partial solution to the problem of evil.

CRITICISMS OF THEISTIC MULTIVERSE PROPOSALS

Draper 2004 has some sympathy for the idea of a theistic multiverse: Draper argues that many good universes would add to the excellence of reality and provide greater opportunity for the expression of various divine virtues. That said, Draper thinks that this model cannot blunt the force of arguments from evil. Criticisms of the multiverse proposals due to Turner 2003, Hudson 2006, and O'Connor 2008 (all cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***)can be found in Almeida 2008 and 2010. Almeida thinks that Hudson and Turner are committed to the view that the actual world is the only possible world, a consequence he deems implausibly fatalistic. Almeida thinks that O'Connor's model admits too many universes (including the one we inhabit) that are unworthy of being created and sustained by God. Rea 2008 and Monton 2010 also both criticize Hudson 2006 in various ways. In addition, Monton 2010 criticizes the multiverse models proffered by McHarry 1978 (cited under ***Early and Relatively Brief Discussion of the Theistic Multiverse***), Turner 2003, O'Connor 2008, and Kraay 2010 (all cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***). Monton argues that these models cannot solve the problem of no best world, or the problem of evil. Craig 2010 also criticizes O'Connor 2008. Ijjas et. al. 2013 criticizes the account of Kraay 2010 account of the threshold that separates unworthy and worthy universes, but the authors suggest that those attracted to the notion of a theistic multiverse could fruitfully invoke Open

Theism, a view that denies God's exhaustive foreknowledge. Walker 2009 argues that multiverse models cannot defeat the 'anthropic argument' – an argument for atheism that claims that a perfect being should not create human beings.

Almeida, Michael J. "Theistic Modal Realism, Multiverses, and Hyperspace". In *The Metaphysics of Perfect Beings*. **New York: Routledge, 2008**.

The multiverse theories due to Turner 2003 and Hudson 2006 (both cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***) implausibly suggest that the actual world is the *only* possible world. This implies that every instance of apparent gratuitous evil is necessary and cannot be prevented by God because it ultimately contributes to created reality's being the best.

Almeida, Michael J. "O'Connor's Permissive Multiverse." *Philosophia Christi* **12 (2010): 297-307.**

The proposal in Turner 2003 (cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***) leads to wildly implausible fatalism. It is also implausible to think that a perfect creator would choose many of the universes that O'Connor 2008 (cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***) deems acceptable: they are just not good enough. Surely, on O'Connor's view, God would not create a universe as bad as ours.

Craig, William Lane. "Timothy O'Connor on Contingency." *Philosophia Christi* **12 (2010): 181-188.**

O'Connor 2008 (cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***) cannot offer a satisfactory account of the threshold above which universes are worthy of inclusion in the super-universe, and at or below which they are unworthy. O'Connor's God necessarily creates from infinitely past, contrary to the traditional doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*.

Draper, Paul. "Cosmic Fine-Tuning and Terrestrial Suffering: Parallel Problems for Theism and Naturalism." *American Philosophical Quarterly* **41 (2004): 311-321.**

The multiverse hypothesis fails to undermine the fine-tuning argument for theism that focusses on moral agency. It might be reasonable to expect a multiverse, given theism, but this hypothesis fails to undermine arguments for atheism that appeal to evil.

Ijjas, Anna, Grössl, Johannes, and Jaskolla, Ludwig. "Theistic Multiverse and Slippery Slopes: A Response to Klaas Kraay." *Theology and Science* **11 (2013): 62-76.**

The theistic multiverse proposal of Kraay 2010 (cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***) cannot make sense of the axiological threshold separating universes worthy of inclusion from those that are not. Theistic multiverse models can fruitfully employ Open Theism, a view according to which God lacks exhaustive foreknowledge and takes risks in creation.

Monton, Bradley. "Against Multiverse Theodicies." *Philo* **13 (2010): 113-135.**

Identifies two drawbacks of the *theistic hyperspace* defended in Hudson 2006 and then criticizes multiverse models due to McHarry 1978 (cited under ***Early and Relatively Brief Discussion of the Theistic Multiverse***), and Forrest 1996, Turner 2003, O'Connor 2008, and Kraay 2010 (all cited under ***More Developed Theistic Multiverse Proposals***). These models cannot solve the problem of no best world, since God could always duplicate good universes *ad infinitum*. Nor can they solve the problem of evil.

Rea, Michael. "Hyperspace and the No Best World Problem: A Reply to Hud Hudson." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 76 (2008): 444-451.

Hudson's hyperspace fails to include *all* the subregions worth creating by God, in which case it cannot be the best of all possible worlds and, accordingly, cannot solve the problem of no best world.

Walker, Mark. "The Anthropic Argument Against the Existence of God." *Sophia* 48 (2009): 351-378.

Argues that multiverse models cannot defeat the 'anthropic' argument – an argument for atheism that claims that a perfect being should not create human beings.

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What Difference Would – or Does – God's Existence Make?

While contemporary analytic philosophy of religion has seen many lively debates about whether God exists, relatively less discussion has taken place about what difference God's existence would make to the value of the world as a whole or to the lives of people in it. This question is orthogonal to the question of whether God exists. Nor is it about the putative advantages or disadvantages of some individual or society having religious beliefs or engaging in religious practices. It is, instead, a question about the axiological consequences of theism. Two papers by Guy Kahane provoked this discussion. Kahane 2012 defends the coherence of making value judgments about the possible world(s) in which certain philosophical positions (like theism) are true, and the coherence of comparing the value of these with the value of the world(s) in which they are false. Kahane 2011 applies this general framework to theism. Kahane argues that the world would be far worse in certain respects (though probably not overall) if theism were true and then argues that there are people whose lives, through no fault of their own, would be far worse overall if God were to exist. According to Kahane, such people can rationally hope that atheism is true. Mawson 2012 points out that many theists and non-theists agree that theism is either necessarily true or necessarily false. In either case, Mawson thinks, it is difficult to know how to understand the comparative evaluation of theism and atheism, since there are either no worlds in which theism is true or none in which atheism is true. Mawson urges that the metaphysically possible worlds are a proper subset of the logically possible, and that theism should be understood as either metaphysically necessary or metaphysically impossible. This will leave some metaphysically impossible, but logically possible, worlds available to ground the relevant comparative judgments. Kraay and Dragos 2013 grants that there is some way to render the relevant comparisons coherent and, after setting out a wide array of positions concerning the axiological effects of God's existence, criticizes the two central arguments of Kahane 2011. Luck and Ellerby 2012 defends the rational permissibility of someone's hoping that there is no God while also believing that things would be worse in this case.

Kahane, Guy. "Should We Want God to Exist?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **82 (2011): 674-696.**

God's existence would make the world far worse in certain respects, though probably not overall. Also, there are people whose lives, through no fault of their own, would be far worse overall if God were to exist. Such people can rationally hope that atheism is true.

Kahane, Guy. "The Value Question in Metaphysics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **85 (2012): 27-55.**

A general discussion of evaluating rival philosophical positions that can be expressed as competing possibilities. Defends the coherence of engaging in this pursuit, and argues that our evaluative judgments offer one measure of the importance of the relevant philosophical questions.

Kraay, Klaas and Dragos, Chris. "On Preferring God's Non-Existence." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* **43 (2013): 157-178.**

Sets out a wide array of positions concerning the axiological effects of God's existence, and then criticizes the two main arguments of Kahane 2011.

Luck, Morgan, and Ellerby, Nathan. "Should we Want God Not to Exist?" *Philo* **15 (2012): 193-199.**

Defends the rational permissibility of someone's hoping that there is no God while also believing that things would be worse in this case. To be rational, such a person must not be certain that things would be worse on atheism, and must hope that things would be better on theism.

Mawson, Timothy. "On Determining How Important it is Whether or Not there is a God." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* **4 (2012): 95-105.**

To sensibly ask what difference God's existence would make, we should say that theism is either metaphysically necessary or metaphysically impossible. Then we can use logically possible but metaphysically impossible worlds to ground our judgments about the axiological effects of theism. But these judgments will be enormously controversial.