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Does the abundance of wickedness and/or suffering in the world show that God probably does not exist?

Introduction

As with other essays, to produce a more effective answer, terms ought to be clarified further; for the purposes of this essay: God shall be taken to mean the God of classical theism/Orthodoxy (GCT), holding the predicates of omnipotence/omniscience and omnibenevolence and as demonstrated by my arguments (such as the argument via perfection and singularity) (Muraviev, 2025b) be also necessary, perfect and singular contingent upon a set of mostly conventional axioms e.g. Leibniz's Law, and conceptual validity of ideas such as perfection.

Wickedness and suffering shall be taken to mean the distaste vector as applied to morality and sense/experience. Wickedness where relevant may be taken to mean something like agent-caused evil (not to assert that evil has substance rather than absence of good). As such, to distinguish these, suffering may include the distaste felt as product of so-called natural evils (not asserting the validity of such a concept), as opposed to purely agentic evils (likewise, not asserting the validity of such a concept).

Further, the word “probably” makes the question more interesting and substantive, as it is no longer limited to discussion of whether evil is logically incompatible with existence of GCT, which is virtually a solved matter, as shall be shown throughout the essay with arguments such as Alvin Plantinga's Transworld depravity and/or versions and improvements upon it having been effective counterarguments to the logical problem of evil (in the sense of strict compatibility rather than probability and also by the nature of compatibility vs probability in this sense, the latter holding a tendency for more content by virtue of contingency and addition).

As such, with no contradiction between the existence of GCT and the alleged existence of evil in a world containing GCT being demonstrated, the question of the probability of the coexistence of the degree of evil (assumption) in this world and GCT is raised and provides further substance to evaluate.

Under epistemic uncertainty (epistemic certainty itself possibly being an entirely elusive concept such as a square circle; uncertainty may be an innate characteristic to any mind, with certainty being perhaps a concept as incoherent as a married bachelor), certain knowledge seems elusive, and philosophical work consists largely in the assessment of the coherence (not to say this is entertained outside of the aforementioned uncertain epistemic lens or is somehow truly objective) and the appeal of systems derived from axioms; if a system is demonstrated incoherent, its convincingness tends to greatly decrease to an extent far greater than simply a lack of appeal, whereas the issue of unappealingness is more so comparative, with such issues being evaluated by a more nebulous appeal sense rather than the more rigidly assessable truth-sense, and may be more easily dismissed by similar qualifications with which they are asserted.

The issue of compatibility falling under the first sort, and the issue of abundance falling under the second sort (as shall be demonstrated), the question may seem to be more evidential (or

probabilistic, the two terms to be used somewhat interchangeably at points in the essay) in the sense of Rowe (1979)¹ and Draper (1989)², and hinges around the term of “abundance”.

Abundance being a comparative, relativistic term involving at least two ends of an issue; something may be abundant *relative to* some other thing. A contention may be that the contra-theist in the sense of this argument when made to state his baseline (“other thing” as above) and his boundary conditions (so as to demarcate properly in order to assert that a boundary into abundance has been crossed, or if to steelman further, even without precise demarcation to identify that the state of evil is simply somewhere on the other side of the boundary into excess), which the contra-theist’s own argument requires of them, if “abundance” is to serve as something more akin to analytic evidence rather than claiming to be meaningful as some form of imprecise exclamation more akin to continental philosophy or poetry, which shall not fall under the scope of this essay in great detail outside of as part of part four of the essay where it is dismissed without great elaboration; the contention being that the contra-theist seems unable to do so in a sufficiently grounded fashion.

It is my contention that the premise of evil existing, and with the assumption of its existence, that in this world it falls over the boundary of what may validly and sensibly be called excess or abundance, seems unestablished; and that, once soberly analysed without overfitting to instances of personal distaste or pain, the matter is in fact supportive of the contrary: the suffering of the actual world is easily conceivable as minimal and, relative to conceivable alternatives, close to zero.

The essay shall argue in several directions. First, Plantinga’s Transworld depravity establishes the compatibility of GCT and evil and, if granted, may possibly (granting the Orthodox relationship between morally wrong free action and suffering) provide a floor in argument beneath which suffering cannot be driven without loss of significant freedom, to greater detriment of the net positivity of the overall SoA (state of affairs). Second, a multiplicity defence: why a perfect being may create at all, and why demanding creation without imperfection (sin/evil in Orthodoxy seemingly being (weak “is/being”) or echoing hamartia a missing of the mark as opposed to substance; “evil is nothing else than absence of goodness, just as darkness also is absence of light” (John of Damascus, 1899)³ may be demanding an ontological impossibility by nature of contradiction. Third, that in the set of worlds we may sensibly conceive, bound below by feasibility and above by the limits of conceivability, the suffering of the actual world is easily conceivable as minimal and, relative to conceivable alternatives, close to zero. Fourth, that the proclamation “too much” is not a sufficiently meaningful proposition in an analytic philosophical sense, asserting the exceedance of a boundary without sufficiently tangible grounds. The essay will then cover other objections and conclude the answer to the question as probably no.

¹ Rowe (1979), p. 335 n. 1. Available at: <https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil201/Rowe.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

² Draper (1989), p. 332. Available at: <https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

³ John of Damascus, An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Book II, ch. 4 (trans. Salmond, NPNF II/9). Available at: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/33042.htm> (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

1. Issues of logical possibility and feasibility

Mackie sets out the triad as:

“In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once must adhere and cannot consistently adhere to all three.” (Mackie, 1955)⁴.

The contradiction here would be contingent upon the premises: that a good being eliminates evil as far as it can, and that omnipotence is unlimited (or at least not limited in the extent to which it may eliminate evil). The second (if taken to extents of taking omnipotence beyond the logically possible, with Mackie subsequently granting the restriction to the logically possible (Mackie, 1955)⁵) seems to be quite simply false: omnipotence concerns the logically possible, which does not include nonsensical phrases/statements which may seem meaningful but are not actually so in an analytic sense e.g., as mentioned in the introduction a square circle, or less seemingly absurdly something like epistemic certainty or the example of the question of whether God could make an object he could not move with the answer being no, as being-movable-by-God is a necessary predicate to all such real objects as a condition of its existence. In this line, it is also conceivable that He could not make a creature freely do anything opposed to what it would freely choose; so to speak a completely forced “free” act would be a contradiction in terms. Regarding the problem of a determined free act, the issue of God's knowledge of the free-action-outcome, does not seem genuinely problematic if the free moral created agents' freedom and decision is presented atemporally (this would modify the term “action”) as shown in Muraviev (2023a), with the following: “We see the object of X not as a temporal entity which gains or loses predicates [at different points in time] but rather as a timeless entity which has all the predicates at once but merely in different positions on its atemporal axis” (Muraviev, 2023a)⁶. Simply, things may be “determined by the self statically via emanation; the self may be considered atemporal” (Muraviev, 2025a)⁷.

From this Plantinga (1974a; 1974b) constructs the free will defence, involving a possibly true proposition whose conjunction with GCT seems to explain (or perhaps seems to go as far as entailing evil) evil. Accordingly within this framework, God may strongly actualise states of affairs excluding the free actions of creatures themselves. Obtainability would then be contingent upon the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom; so to speak: what a creature would freely do in given circumstances. As Lewis might say: evaluated by the nearest relevant worlds

⁴ Mackie (1955), p. 200. Available at: <https://courses.edx.org/c4x/MITx/24.00x/asset/MackieonEvil.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁵ Mackie (1955), p. 203. Available at: <https://courses.edx.org/c4x/MITx/24.00x/asset/MackieonEvil.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁶ Muraviev (2023a), unpublished notes.

⁷ Muraviev (2025a), Free Will, 21 August.

(Lewis, 1973)⁸⁹; a world which God may weakly actualise may be called feasible. TWD may be asserted of an essence if, in any feasible world where it is significantly free, it goes wrong at least once. Formally: “(30) An essence E suffers from transworld depravity if and only if for every world W such that E entails the properties *is significantly free in W* and *always does what is right in W*, there is a state of affairs T and an action A such that

- (1) T is the largest state of affairs God strongly actualizes in W,
- (2) A is morally significant for E's instantiation in W, and

(3) if God had strongly actualized T, E's instantiation would have gone wrong with respect to A.” (Plantinga, 1974a).¹⁰ It is quite possibly true (all the defence requires) that every essence suffers TWD, with it then not being within “the power of omnipotence to create worlds containing moral good but no moral evil”, the relevant world possibly being unobtainable (Plantinga, 1974a, p. 189)¹¹. As stated prior: “God cannot just “create a world with as much value without evil” because this is a reduction of 2. and protests of this reducing his omnipotence are as incoherent as the omnipotence paradox (involving extension of potency to logical absurdities)” (Muraviev, 2024a)¹².

Otte (2009) identifies a defect in Plantinga's original formulation, concerning worlds whose actualised segments entail correct (or accordingly with Plantinga: “right” (not to assert that the two terms are completely interchangeable)) choice: “it is not possible that every essence suffers from transworld depravity” (Otte, 2009)¹³. Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998) had already pressed “transworld sanctity” against the defence, stating on their opening page “his defense fails”¹⁴¹⁵. Plantinga (2009) concedes the point and amends the defence: “For every

⁸ Lewis (1973), p. 1.

⁹ On the Lewisian semantics see further Creary, L. G. and Hill, C. S. (1975) Review of Lewis, Counterfactuals, Philosophy of Science, 42(3), pp. 341–344. Available at: university-access copy.

¹⁰ Plantinga (1974a), ch. IX, definition (30), p. 188. Available at: https://ia801900.us.archive.org/14/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.139529/2015.139529.The-Nature-Of-Necessity_text.pdf (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

¹¹ Plantinga (1974a), p. 189. Available at: https://ia801900.us.archive.org/14/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.139529/2015.139529.The-Nature-Of-Necessity_text.pdf (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

¹² Muraviev (2024a), Agora post, 21 December.

¹³ Otte (2009), p. 166. Available at: <https://people.ucsc.edu/~otte/articles/otte.twd.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

¹⁴ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998), pp. 5–6. Available at: university-access copy (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

¹⁵ Howard-Snyder and O'Leary-Hawthorne (1998), p. 1. Available at: university-access copy (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

perfect world there is an uncooperative essence” (Plantinga, 2009)¹⁶¹⁷¹⁸. The defence used here therefore relies upon the amended formulation. Plantinga resolving with:

“Perhaps all the free will defense shows is that it is likely, in fact, very likely, that G and E are consistent. But to show that much would go well beyond the claim that G and E are epistemically consistent, and if it shows that much, then, contrary to H&O, the free will defense is both ‘convincing’ and at least “fairly compelling”.” (Plantinga, 2009)¹⁹.

As such, the matter of validity of coexistence seems to remain, defended, with no sufficiently strong argument against it, with Rowe granting that no formal contradiction was established and transitioning the issue to probability (Rowe, 1979), with Rowe stating that “[n]o one, I think, has succeeded in establishing such an extravagant claim” (Rowe, 1979)²⁰. With this, the contra-theist position transitions from the field of logic demonstrability to now appeal. Secondly, the now modified and strengthened defence provides a possible floor in the argument; if possibly, for every perfect world, there may be an uncooperative essence, then possibly every feasible world with significantly free creatures may contain a nonzero minimum of moral evil.

Furthermore, Hick (1966) brings up that free moral response may require “epistemic distance”, which Hick describes as “[t]he kind of distance between God and man that would make room for a degree of human autonomy” (Hick, 1966)²¹, an uncompelled ambiguity which (extending Hick, 1966) may require enough seemingly unresolved evil to preserve it. On this line of thought, the value of faith, and as such the quantity of faith, may also be a thing holding value in-itself: faith, ding an sich, holding value to be added to the net positivity of the overall SoA in a similar sense to the addition of TWD beings, in the sense of the same additive calculation presented in §2 (the multiplicity valuation, with the organic contribution of an added member set against its disvalue), even if it brings suffering (Muraviev, 2024b; 2024c).²² As such, even with a somewhat greater quantity of evil than a true free-compatible minimum evil, it may still be in-the-net justified, for the greatest quantity of “positive” value of the world-set, to have a greater quantity of evil than

¹⁶ Plantinga (2009), p. 190. Available at:

https://www.andrewmbailey.com/ap/Depravity_Sanctity_Uncooperative_Essences.pdf (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

¹⁷ The earlier debate over the formulation is surveyed in Kroon, F. W. (1981) ‘Plantinga on God, Freedom, and Evil’, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 12(2), pp. 75–96. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40018250> (university access) (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

¹⁸ And in Esmail, K. H. A. (2002) ‘Plantinga’s Defence of the Free Will Defence in Chapter Nine of *The Nature of Necessity*’, *Sophia*, 41(2), pp. 19–29. Available at: university-access copy.

¹⁹ Plantinga (2009), p. 191. Available at:

https://www.andrewmbailey.com/ap/Depravity_Sanctity_Uncooperative_Essences.pdf (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

²⁰ Rowe (1979), p. 335 n. 1. Available at:

<https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil201/Rowe.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

²¹ Hick (1966), p. 281 in 2010 Palgrave reissue (university-access copy) (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

the minimum by virtue of the additive value of a greater quantity of faith which deeper epistemic distance would elicit, therefore providing another axis for further justification of the coexistence of “evil” in greater quantities than in simply the minimum conceivable to support coexistence of TWD beings and GCT. Hick gives the following:

“For human freedom vis-à-vis God presupposes an initial separateness and a consequent degree of independence on man's part. In creating finite persons to love and be loved by Him God must endow them with a certain relative autonomy over against Himself.” (Hick, 1966).

2. Multiplicity

The contra-theist may then grant that any creation containing free creatures contains evil; then why create? Is not God alone the best SoA? This would seem to misunderstand perfection. Considering Leibniz’s Law (the identity of indiscernibles; “there cannot be two objects that differ only numerically” (Rodriguez-Pereyra, 2025)²³ so to speak the non-existence of two entities sharing all predicates), two “perfect” beings holding every predicate in common would not be two; perfection on the aforementioned axioms is singular (Muraviev, 2025b)²⁴. Anything created is, eo ipso, not-God and imperfect (in, at least, the God-sense); on these axioms, creation (at a sufficiently large and diverse scale) is the introduction of imperfection (Muraviev, 2025b)²⁵. To ask for a sufficiently large and diverse/multiplicitous creation without imperfection could be akin to asking for a created uncreated thing (or the immovable stone) and be a member of the set of nonsensical things, with the refusal of such an argument costing omnipotence nothing (Muraviev, 2024a)²⁶.

“Contingent entities cannot exist without dependence on a necessary entity. Contingent entities rely on external causes, and therefore, there cannot be an existing sum of contingent things without a necessary entity. The necessary entity must be: Partless (composition of parts means potentiality and contingency as the entity is contingent on the set of parts’ arrangement (possibly) and the existence of all parts). If the parts are taken to be necessary beings themselves, then it encounters a problem (see singularity). Perfect: the necessary entity cannot lack any perfections as a lack of perfections means the existence of potentiality, as those lacks could be fulfilled. To be purely actual, all perfections and potentials must be realised and fulfilled (if you say that some perfections are lacking because they are unattainable, this is still a maximally perfect being because, again, those perfections are unattainable, and

²² Muraviev (2024b), working notes: “Belief in anything requires faith, religion (or any convincing system pertaining to infinite or real value) is an optimal distribution of faith.” The value-in-itself and additive development is the present essay’s. Muraviev (2024c), further unpublished 2024 notes.

²³ Rodriguez-Pereyra, G. (2025) ‘The Identity of Indiscernibles’, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-indiscernible/> (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

²⁴ Muraviev (2025b), working notes.

²⁵ Muraviev (2025b), working notes.

²⁶ Muraviev (2024a), Agora post, 21 December.

therefore, it is still true that this being is maximally perfect as the addition of unattainable perfections is logically impossible). Singular: Purely necessary being must be singular, as if there were multiple, there must be distinctions between them (see: Leibniz's Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles). Any distinguishing properties would imply a lack of properties in one that the other possesses, therefore disqualifying these entities from being pure necessity (see: perfection)." (Muraviev, 2025a)²⁷

As such, we may ask an axiological question; is the whole containing God alone better than that containing God with imperfect free creatures? Were a set's value the maximum over its members, creation may add nothing whilst risking much; however, it is easily conceivable that value may sensibly attach to wholes (the whole here being the overall SoA composed of God, the free creatures, their actions and the relations among them, and other emergent properties); importantly, a whole's value needn't equal the sum of its members' values, so the whole (God with free creatures) may exceed the value of any of its individual members, including its best member (God alone) even where the added inferior members bring risk via the propensity or ability to engage in evil.

A set may be individuated by its members, whilst a whole also includes the relations among its parts; value may therefore attach to the arrangement rather than the members separately. Moore states that "the intrinsic value of a whole is neither identical with nor proportional to the sum of the values of its parts"²⁸; Moore's (1903) "principle of organic unities".²⁹ Significantly free beings may introduce a category of good which the solitary perfect being seemingly cannot instantiate: uncompelled creaturely love of the good where evil was available. Plantinga seems to hold that a world containing significantly free creatures is "more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all" (Plantinga, 1974b, p. 30)³⁰.

"A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but He can't cause or determine them to do only what is right. For if He does so, then they aren't significantly free after all; they do not do what is right freely. To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, He must create creatures capable of moral evil; and He can't give these creatures the freedom to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so." (Plantinga, 1974b).³¹

²⁷ Muraviev (2025a), Free Will, 21 August (the demonstration is quoted there from Muraviev's 2024 notes).

²⁸ Moore (1903), §111 (printed p. 184; earlier exposition at §§18–22). Available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/53430/53430-h/53430-h.htm> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

²⁹ Moore (1903), §111 (printed p. 184; earlier exposition at §§18–22). Available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/53430/53430-h/53430-h.htm> (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

³⁰ Plantinga (1974b/1977), p. 30. Available at: university-access copy (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

³¹ Plantinga (1974b/1977), p. 30. Available at: university-access copy (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

If such beings' organic contribution exceeds the disvalue of their depravity across feasible worlds, the set with said creatures exceeds the value of the set with God alone, and a maximally good being may hold reason to create despite foreseen evil, to the net positivity of the overall SoA [the two instances of the word set used here also include the emergent properties of these elements in time/interaction and as such mirror more closely the concept of wholes introduced in this essay rather than a simple set containing those things exclusively without additional effects or properties]; Leibniz's "God has chosen the best of all possible worlds" echoes this notion (Leibniz, 1710/1985)³². Similarly, a defence from multiplicity, from my writing on this subject:

"There exists a degree of "imperfections" or "evil" — from which there is a complaint of excess evil. If this evil were reduced, there would still be a complaint of excess — if evil exists a complaint of it may exist. There is no demarcation to what degree of evil would be acceptable to the complainer. They may always complain about imperfection. If evil or "imperfections" do not exist then there is no multiplicity and there is no creation — only creator as what is perfect is also singular and is God alone." (Muraviev, 2025b)

Following this framework, some evil may be the metaphysical price of having anything other than God or a sufficiently large and positively better set of things including God and things in addition to God; and noting sentence two of the quote, the complaint of "excess" may be formable by the contra-theist at every positive level where no demarcation is supplied (Muraviev, 2025b)³³. As such, the case would seem to hinge upon "abundance".

"Perhaps perfection gives rise to state of affairs which is optimally configured such that the configuration (even though it is optimal) gives rise to certain imperfections not because of flaw in the system but simply because the upper limit of appeal contains within it such a multiplicity that imperfections are innate. Such that the value of a set including God + creation exceeds that of God without creation; and we can see that creation (multiplicity) ought to include imperfection in order to accommodate multiplicity. Let's also ignore the issue of such a set "God without creation"; if God exists and creation exists; due to God's perfection and unchangeability a set containing anything other than God and creation is incomplete and may not be possible." (Muraviev, 2025b)³⁴

3. Conceivability and degrees of suffering

Concerning the issue of the excess of suffering, Rowe (1979) presents:

"Taking human and animal suffering as a clear instance of evil which occurs with great frequency in our world, the argument for atheism based on evil can be stated as follows:

³² Leibniz (1710/1985), §168. Available at:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17147/17147-h/17147-h.htm> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

³³ Muraviev (2025b), working notes.

³⁴ Muraviev (2025b), working notes.

1. There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
 2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
 3. There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.
- [...] The argument is valid; therefore, if we have rational grounds for accepting its premises, to that extent we have rational grounds for accepting atheism.” (Rowe, 1979).³⁵

Draper (1989) ³⁶expands, with the observed distribution of pain and pleasure being claimed to be antecedently more probable given the Hypothesis of Indifference than given theism (“the antecedent probability of O is much greater on the assumption that HI is true than on the assumption that theism is true” (Draper, 1989))³⁷, with:

“The important question, a question that David Hume asked (1980, Part XI, pp. 74-75) but that most contemporary philosophers of religion have ignored, is whether or not any serious hypothesis that is logically inconsistent with theism explains some significant set of facts about evil or about good and evil much better than theism does.” (Draper, 1989).³⁸

Draper defines HI as the hypothesis that “neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of benevolent or malevolent actions performed by nonhuman persons.” (Draper, 1989)³⁹, continuing:

“Now let “O” stand for a statement reporting both the observations one has made of humans and animals experiencing pain or pleasure and the testimony one has

³⁵ Rowe (1979), pp. 335–336. Available at:
<https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil201/Rowe.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

³⁶ Draper (1989), p. 332. Available at:
<https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

³⁷ Draper (1989), p. 333. Available at:
<https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

³⁸ Draper (1989), p. 332. Available at:
<https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

³⁹ Draper (1989), p. 332. Available at:
<https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

encountered concerning the observations others have made of sentient beings experiencing pain or pleasure.” (Draper, 1989).⁴⁰

With the issue of abundance being quantitative in nature, the issue of relativity is easily brought up; to what measure are things abundant/excessive? A claim of abundance would seemingly require a threshold to be tethered to and compared against (or a more fuzzy yet still tangible means of demarcation), and neither the contra-theist nor any other argument presented seem to have effectively supplied either, with Draper holding that an argument ought to be provided for his comparative claim (not to say so for the separate claim of abundance):

“The claim that $P(O/HI)$ is much greater than $P(O/theism)$ is by no means obviously true. The fact that O reports observations and testimony about pleasure as well as pain should make this clear. So an argument for this claim is needed. I will argue that it is the biological role played by both pain and pleasure in goal-directed organic systems that renders this claim true.” (Draper, 1989).⁴¹

Draper compares $P(O/HI)$ with $P(O/theism)$, dividing O as follows: “Let “O1,” “O2,” and “O3” stand for statements respectively reporting the facts O reports about: (1) moral agents experiencing pain or pleasure that we know to be biologically useful, (2) sentient beings that are not moral agents experiencing pain or pleasure that we know to be biologically useful, and (3) sentient beings experiencing pain or pleasure that we do not know to be biologically useful.” (Draper, 1989)⁴². He seems to hold that “a biological explanation of pain and pleasure is just the sort of explanation that one would expect on HI” (Draper, 1989)⁴³. The biological-role argument would then seem to be required to establish Draper’s comparative claim, with the matter returned to in §5; the issue of demarcation from §2, being distinct from that comparison, seems to remain for claims of abundance.

Especially considering Draper’s point of “whether or not any serious hypothesis that is logically inconsistent with theism explains some significant set of facts about evil or about good and evil much better than theism does”⁴⁴, we may see that there is also the matter of the distribution of

⁴⁰ Draper (1989), p. 332. Available at: <https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁴¹ Draper (1989), p. 334. Available at: <https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁴² Draper (1989), p. 335. Available at: <https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁴³ Draper (1989), pp. 332–336; quoted wording on p. 336. Available at: <https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁴⁴ Draper (1989), p. 332. Available at: <https://secularfrontier.infidels.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/draper-pain-and-pleasure-an-evidential-problem-for-theists.pdf> (Accessed: 15 July 2026).

faith between such hypotheses, with the adoption of any of them seeming to constitute such a distribution:

“Belief in anything requires faith, religion (or any convincing system pertaining to infinite or real value) is an optimal distribution of faith.” (Muraviev, 2024b)⁴⁵

“In fact, action without faith cannot:

1. Be deliberate in search of an effect.

a. The idea that a cause leads to an effect is a faith position.

All actions that we are aware of so far are subject to point 1 and therefore are faith-based decisions. Once this is demonstrated, the NEW QUESTION becomes what DEGREE of faith is best to hold.

This is answered in my purple box argument.” (Muraviev, 2026a)⁴⁶

“The hyperstitious argument for God:

Convergence of predicates in the singular GCT draws belief towards it. Assuming

1. epistemic uncertainty for the reader

2. all beliefs for the reader are hyperstitious

3. various beliefs have various value (as such there is a “better” or “worse” selection of beliefs)

4. acceptance of the basic logical system relevant here, and other such more base-axiomatic points

5. GCT; proof predicates

6. belief in GCT is rational and better than otherwise” (Muraviev, 2025d)⁴⁷

“Hyperstition not used in strictly “fictional” sense but in epistemic hierarchy, uncertainty sense.” (Muraviev, 2025e)⁴⁸

“Could you (if you are claiming so) demonstrate why your criteria for something constituting a proof ought to be universal or preferable to criteria which yield greater value (even if quite tautological)?

Given that we don't hold epistemically certain beliefs, why doesn't it make sense to align epistemic criteria towards maximal value, and God and value have a tautological relationship as GCT or similar can simply be defined as a perfection, or root of value or maximal value?” (Muraviev, 2025f)⁴⁹

“You can dismiss value as non-existing, and consequently do away with this argument, but then you have no means of asserting any X being better than any Y, so

⁴⁵ Muraviev (2024b), working notes, 14 March.

⁴⁶ Muraviev (2026a), Ethics U6, 2026 edition (2024 text reproduced in the 2026 edition).

⁴⁷ Muraviev (2025d), unpublished notes, 20 November 2025.

⁴⁸ Muraviev (2025e), unpublished note, 8 June 2025.

⁴⁹ Muraviev (2025f), unpublished notes, 18 June 2025.

you cannot really form an effective “ought” argument about anything.” (Muraviev, 2025f)⁵⁰

“and with everything recursively built on the epistemically uncertain metanarrative, it seems cognitive or epistemic hyperstitions dominate, yet as the plane of certainly observed reality remains elusive, the greatest conceivable reality as constrained by epistemic uncertainty is the reality within which the hyperstition affects itself.” (Muraviev, 2025g)⁵¹

“In layspeak, this argument for objectivity or whatever one wishes to call it, is simply a statement of acknowledging that all systems are covered by epistemic fog, no claims to certainty are valid, no systems are provable; in a game of coherence and axiom selection, the objectivity-God-value-axiom presented a highly appealing role as it was one of the tautological games offering the highest value within a certain set of parameters.” (Muraviev, 2025h)⁵²

“1. The probability of God's existence is not zero.

2. Temporary things' value in proportion to eternal things is null or infinitesimal.

3. A great chance positing the non-existence of value or infinitesimal value will always result in a value less than a small chance positing the existence of infinite value as long as 1 holds true.

4. Therefore, if the existence of God is logically possible, it is worthwhile to act as if He exists.” (Muraviev, 2023b)⁵³

As such we may use for comparison a set of worlds e.g. a set of feasible worlds, feasibility being contingent upon freedom, TWD and epistemic distance; and over this set, a demonstration of excess seems, to not have been demonstrated or sensibly implied.

Without sufficiently grounded means of demarcation, arguments of excess, per §2, may seem to be permitted at any level, which seems to be argumentatively problematic due to the issue of complaint availability at every possible level functionally leading to a lack of demonstrated and warranted basis for complaints of abundance and bringing us back to the virtually solved logical complaint/problem and no identification of even one item of suffering whose removal would demonstrably preserve all other elements of the set containing God, freedom, TWD beings and other positive elements outweighing the negatives brought about by that item or set of items, has been or possibly could be made within the capabilities of either side. As such, it remains easily conceivable, and with no substantial evidence of improbability, that the actual world contains something like the smallest amount of suffering feasible in any set of worlds containing the other aforementioned positive elements.

Inversely, one may easily conceive of worlds containing much more suffering, including feasibly actualisable ones in the near future, for example those involving Roko's basilisk-type scenarios (Yudkowsky's counterarguments against the Basilisk also very easily fall apart, however, for

⁵⁰ Muraviev (2025f), unpublished notes, 18 June 2025 [an earlier related formulation addressing the cost of denying value].

⁵¹ Muraviev (2025g), unpublished notes, 13 October 2025.

⁵² Muraviev (2025h), unpublished note, 30 May 2025.

⁵³ Muraviev (2023b), unpublished notes, 13 December 2023.

reasons of safety and for the purposes of this essay, shall not be addressed here), where humans are made to experience maximum feasible torture or some other similar punishment. One could easily conceive of such a Basilisk tormenting billions of humans such that a single human consciousness experiences more material/physical suffering (to separate from eschatological suffering) than the sum of all prior human material suffering. One could easily imagine billions of humans suffering the maximum feasible quantity permitted under the physical laws of this universe, such that they are tormented until the heat death of the universe or perhaps until the last black hole evaporates by hawking radiation in around 10^{100} or 10^{131} years (to oversimplify) (Adams and Laughlin, 1997)⁵⁴, which seems to be a possible sensible limit to the material duration of human suffering in some physical, atheist frameworks.

One could also conceive of other durations or “endings” or processes to the universe in which individuals are tortured; however, whatever limit one may feasibly conceive of here, is 1. massively distant from the actual quantity of suffering, 2. with that massive distance in mind, it is still immensely more distant from quantities of conceivable suffering in other conceivable but not physically as feasible worlds. One could easily conceive of heptating (conjugation of heptation) the quantity of suffering by googplex, graham’s number or use whatever massive hyperoperation one wished, yet still that quantity of suffering (which exceeds feasible suffering massively) would be relatively close to zero relative to the quantity of suffering conceivable and achievable by a non-benevolent God (using such a term for purposes of the argument rather than asserting the coherence of such a term), with all of this being possible, granting the existence of God (Muraviev, 2026b)⁵⁵. “Nothing, that is distinctly conceivable, implies a contradiction” (Hume, 1779)⁵⁶; with the contra-theist attempting to use conceivability as the generator for arguments such as God preventing suffering and/or evil at no cost to omnipotence hence attacking omnibenevolence, that principle may be used in an even stronger fashion in a directionally inverse manner, as the conception of smaller degrees of suffering whilst maintaining the aforementioned benefits of freedom, epistemic distance and so forth, seems to be a far more challenging matter than the conception of much greater degrees of suffering in either framework (be that a theistic or atheistic one, suspending issues of the coherence of the latter for the sake of argument). It may seem that up until this point, that individual suffering has been bound to periods not much exceeding 100 years for most humans (with notable exceptions of larger lifespans in the Christian framework such as Methuselah (Genesis 5:27. King James Version, no date)⁵⁷, and suspending the issue of other creatures’ suffering such as non-human spiritual beings) and that the degrees of suffering experienced during such periods perhaps with the exception of Christ, does not seem to be tremendous; one may go so far as to remark, after considering this, that the quantity of suffering in the world is remarkably or miraculously low (aligning with the idea of GCT) and could truly, be the minimum (or close to the minimum) possible in a framework holding the other aforementioned positive elements.

⁵⁴ Adams, F. C. and Laughlin, G. (1997), *Reviews of Modern Physics*, 69, pp. 337–372. Available at: <https://arxiv.org/abs/astro-ph/9701131> (Accessed: 13 July 2026).

⁵⁵ Muraviev (2026b), recorded discussion, unpublished transcript.

⁵⁶ Hume (1779), Part IX (D 9.5; text as at davidhume.org, Kemp Smith numbers). Available at: <https://davidhume.org/texts/d/9> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁵⁷ Genesis 5:27, King James Version: “And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.” Available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%205%3A27&version=KJV> (Accessed: 13 July 2026).

To summarise, there seems to be an asymmetry with downward degrees of conceivable suffering being tightly constrained by feasibility and possibility alongside the existence of the aforementioned positive elements, whereas upwards degrees of suffering are conceivably much greater and more “probable” (used very loosely) if not guaranteed if taking a “random” non-divine pick (however, that is not to say that this is how the universe works, nor that this line of thought is much more than reliant on its own framework/is heavily dependent on framework-internal logic and claims, which in themselves may be called insufficiently grounded; after all, “the question is asked: which axioms are justifiable; however, because they are axioms, the justification itself is an exercise in axiomatic selection, which itself would lack justification as the justification would come from the axioms selected yet we would not have selected any axioms with a justified reason as the reason is contingent upon the axioms chosen, and so on and so forth” (Muraviev, 2025c)⁵⁸ but suspending this, within the logically coherent framework holding GCT and the other aforementioned elements, unjustified evil would be contradictory to the established predicates of GCT, and alongside the arguments of the essay, it is therefore not unreasonable to state that the degree of suffering in this world is sufficiently near the minimum to warrant no problem in the sense that one is raised by the contra-theist).

This inverse seems to be sufficiently responsive to ideas of abundance that in combination with the other factors mentioned in this essay, the issue/line of argument is defused insofar as it has been brought up and illustrated here.

4. Complaints of exceedance and demarcation issues

Responding to claims of excess suffering departing from agentic-human-caused suffering, a claim could be made that examples such as Rowe’s fawn (Rowe, 1979) seem to be too much, unbearable or gratuitous.

“Suppose in some distant forest lightning strikes a dead tree, resulting in a forest fire. In the fire a fawn is trapped, horribly burned, and lies in terrible agony for several days before death relieves its suffering. So far as we can see, the fawn’s intense suffering is pointless. For there does not appear to be any greater good such that the prevention of the fawn’s suffering would require either the loss of that good or the occurrence of an evil equally bad or worse. Nor does there seem to be any equally bad or worse evil so connected to the fawn’s suffering that it would have had to occur had the fawn’s suffering been prevented.” (Rowe, 1979).⁵⁹

For such issues, however, as conveniently highlighted by Rowe’s phrasing (“does not appear to be any greater good”; emphasis on “appear”), this seems to be currently incalculable to current humanity as constrained by both compute and data, even with those two factors resolved e.g. start-conditions of universe + sufficient compute to simulate, we also may seem to require the universe to be deterministic rather than probabilistic (there seem to be no sufficiently convincing arguments which attempt to conclusively demonstrate that probability as an issue isn’t simply an epistemic issue, and there exists true randomness) (or exhaustive knowledge of the set of possible outcomes in a probabilistic universe and exhaustive knowledge of the effects of each upon the overall SoA), and as such the claim of the fawn’s suffering or whichever substitute being fruitless in the sense of a greater good seems unsubstantiated and not problematic for the

⁵⁸ Muraviev (2025c), unpublished essay, 7 August.

⁵⁹ Rowe (1979), p. 337. Available at: <https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil201/Rowe.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

probable coexistence of GCT, on the basis of the butterfly effect; the fawn's suffering may be conducive for a greater environment for the fruition of greater net goodness.

Proceeding to analyse whether exceedance of some form of boundary/claims of "too much" suffering seems to actually function as a sufficiently substantive analytic premise, one could grant that precise demarcation may not be required. However, there still seems to be a necessity for a distinct space containing excess.

Applied to suffering, complaints of exceeding the capacity to bear seem incoherent in the analytic sense: whatever has been suffered has, in that sense, been borne, even in the instance of an individual ending their own life (as has been raised as an example frequently in discussion). The apparent extremeness of such a choice seems to prompt conclusions that this somehow appears in a separate category in the sense of suffering capacity exceedance; however, at least in immediately apparent terms, there seems to be no evidence that such choices are much more (in the sense of category distinction and movement to a different capacity space/transcending categories) than an organism electing to make a choice like any other within the constraints of its capacity and agency to undertake and bear, even considering the great distaste it is taken under.

Granting meaning more liberally (in a language games sense; see Wittgenstein⁶⁰) Ayer writes that an ethical term may be "used to express feeling about certain objects, but not to make any assertion about them" (Ayer, 1936)^{61,62}; as such suffering being "too much", seems to be able to function as something similarly expressive as in this sense rather than as an analytic premise.

"Gratuitous" (unnecessary, as applied to suffering) seems to require a claim concerning what the relevant issue may in fact require; Wykstra holding that the inference from apparent gratuitousness is available only where it seems sensible to believe that "if p were not the case, s would likely be different than it is in some way discernible by her" (Wykstra, 1984)⁶³, with the butterfly effect providing one candidate reason why no such difference need be discernible in the fawn case. If no positive quantity which would not be "too much" is identified, the predicate seemingly may be permitted to be applied at every positive level and does not seem to measure the actual quantity. Adams brings up "horrendous evils", which seem *prima facie* "not only to balance off but to engulf the positive value of a participant's life" (Adams, 1989)⁶⁴; her immediate unit of defeat seems to be the participant's life, used here without adopting her post-

⁶⁰ Biletzki and Matar (2021), §3 (The Later Wittgenstein). Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wittgenstein/#LateWitt> (Accessed: 14 July 2026).

⁶¹ Ayer (1936), ch. 6, p. 67. Available at: <https://people.stfx.ca/wsweet/Ayer-emotivism.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁶² Stevenson (1937), p. 23, giving a related account of emotive meaning. Available at: <https://sites.ualberta.ca/~francisp/NewPhil448/StevensonEmotiveEthics1937.pdf> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁶³ Wykstra (1984), p. 85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00136567> (Accessed: 12 July 2026).

⁶⁴ Adams (1989), p. 299; reprinted in Adams and Adams (eds.) (1990), *The Problem of Evil*. Available at: <https://afterall.net/papers/horrendous-evil-and-the-goodness-of-god/> (Accessed: 13 July 2026).

mortem solution (not asserting any eschatology), it supplies no boundary for the world-level quantity. Absent either a relevant boundary or a warranted inference from appearance to gratuitousness, “too much” does not yet seem to function as the required premise.

5. Objections

One may object that worlds containing less suffering are also conceivable; however, the conception of such worlds does not seem to demonstrate feasibility whilst preserving the other aforementioned positive elements, whereas the upward direction seems to only require the conception of a greater quantity, and as such this may defeat a demonstration of abundance without demonstrating minimality.

One may object that conceivability (in some senses of the word) does not necessarily entail possibility; Chalmers calls *prima facie* conceivability “*an imperfect guide to possibility*” (Chalmers, 2002)⁶⁵, with the imperfection being asserted of *prima facie* as opposed to ideal conceivability. As such, the construction may seem to not have been demonstrated to be metaphysically possible; the same qualification, however, may seem to apply to the statement that “God could have prevented this without loss”, with a defence seeming to require only a possibly true proposition whereas the evidential argument may seem to require its relevant claim to be demonstrated. Furthermore, one may note, that this issue concerning criticism of distinction between conceivability and possibility is not a genuine one but rather an issue of the English language; it seems to be a word issue where both underlying ontologically distinct terms A, B (being different) are named in the same way: “conceivability”, whilst meaning different things.

It may also be argued that the construction “proves too much”, with any finite quantity being reducible towards zero against a sufficiently greater conceived quantity; the ratio, however, is not being used to prove minimality, “abundance” being the vehicle of the contra-theist, with the basis of that comparison seemingly being owed by the argument which asserts it. A world containing deathless subjects in torment without exit may seem to count against minimality, whereas the actual world does not seem to be of that sort (excluding eschatology of which a subset of the contra-theist group typically subscribes to); mortality may at least bound duration (though perhaps not necessarily intensity or total disvalue), seemingly demonstrating finitude rather than the minimum.

Concerning natural evil and Draper, stable natural law e.g. fire seems to reliably burn would seem to be a condition of meaningful agency and epistemic distance. Hick grants, even whilst bringing up the question of quantity, that a place of soul-making “must be a world of stable natural law in which sentient creatures sometimes feel pain” (Hick, 1966; Swinburne, 1998).⁶⁶ A defence seems to require only the possible proposition that natural evil may trace to non-human free agency. Plantinga (1974b) writes of the “free actions of nonhuman persons”.⁶⁷ No particular measure therefore seems to follow from Draper here; O3 concerns pain or pleasure not known to be biologically useful, though the same issue seems to remain: the possible routes of non-

⁶⁵ Chalmers (2002), thesis (1), §4. Available at: <https://consc.net/papers/conceivability.html> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

⁶⁶ Hick (1966), p. 309 in 2010 Palgrave reissue (university-access copy).

⁶⁷ Plantinga (1974b/1977), p. 58. Available at: university-access copy (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

human agency and epistemic distance may be sufficient for a defence, whereas the comparative argument would seem to need to show them antecedently improbable.

6. Weak grounds

Another important point being that delineating evil (and by extension objective disvalue of suffering, rather than personal distaste or aggregates of personal distaste, or even perhaps personal distaste itself if things are really reduced down to their mereological simples without any sufficient proof of genuine emergent properties or indivisible conscious, experiential entities), in a system absent GCT, seems possibly unavailable in an objective sense or sufficiently substantive sense in a manner that would significantly meaningfully critique GCT, with the contra-theist seemingly using terms of objective disvalue (not to state that some sets of atheistic beliefs do not claim to hold non-physicalist, and not anti-realist positions, whose evaluation shall not be the purpose of this essay), from the framework they are critiquing; under a purely physicalist viewpoint, arrangements of mereological simples do not seem to carry objective disvalue, and complaints of suffering may reduce to reports of distaste (or aggregates thereof), returning the matter to the appeal-sense already covered. Furthermore, with good (in a strong objective sense) being derivative of God (Muraviev, 2024a)⁶⁸, and evil being contingent on the contrast against good (privation), as such for sufficient objectivity for claims of the existence of evil, or perhaps suffering, in a true-sense, seems to be contingent upon the existence of God, and a purely physicalist anti-realist system does not seem to provide an alternative explanation or grounds with which to use these terms in a manner which is both: objective, and not contingent on a not purely materialistic framework, and as such would either fall apart or be forced to invoke some sense of God-like singular, perfection (with that idea being then a competitor for GCT, and as such perhaps falling into the same issues as the criticism has brought up).

“Considering its perfection, anything in alignment or derivative purely of it would be considered acting in accordance with perfection. This alignment can be defined as a moral function of perfection or simply “moral good.”

You cannot have a similar function to this (highest or high form of moral objectivity) or, in fact, any form of moral objectivity without objective origin. This is a simple tautology.” (Muraviev, 2024d)⁶⁹

“Furthermore, goodness is (in any objective sense) simply a derivative of God, if we accept the existence of contingency and necessity and basic ontological principles as axioms. Therefore, any claim that GCT cannot be good is a logical contradiction if we accept these axioms.” (Muraviev, 2024a)⁷⁰

“There is no proof that good/evil is functionally distinct from appeal/disgust.” (Muraviev, 2025b)⁷¹

This is not to say that these positions are the only positions available to the contra-theist nor that this disqualifies matters of internal criticism.

⁶⁸ Muraviev (2024a), Agora post, 21 December.

⁶⁹ Muraviev (2024d), unpublished notes, 4 December 2024.

⁷⁰ Muraviev (2024a), Agora post, 21 December.

⁷¹ Muraviev (2025b), working notes.

Conclusion

To conclude, the logical incompatibility of GCT and evil does not seem to have been demonstrated nor does the more probabilistic issue seem sufficiently convincing; my multiplicity argument seems to provide a possible and sensible reason for creation containing imperfection, evil and suffering; the suffering of the actual world seems easily conceivable as minimal or proximal to that considering the aforementioned positive elements; the evidence provided regarding the sense of abundance of suffering does not seem sufficiently convincing to establish that the coexistence of GCT and the actual degree of suffering is improbable. As such, the answer to the question is probably no.

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