

Self-Defense for Theists

Blake Hereth
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

ABSTRACT: According to Theistic Defensive Incompatibilism (TDI), common theistic commitments limit the scope or explanation of permissible self-defense. In this essay, I offer six original arguments for TDI. The first four arguments are grounded in *narrow proportionality*: the requirement that the defensive harm inflicted on unjust threateners not exceed the harm they threaten. Hellism, Annihilationism, and Danteanism each imply that narrow proportionality is rarely satisfied, whereas Universalism implies that killing never harms. The final two arguments grounded in *wide proportionality*, or the requirement that defensive harm not excessively harm nonliable third parties. Omnisubjectivity and Divine Love imply that wide proportionality is rarely satisfied.

1. Introduction

Theism complicates self-defense. By ‘theism’, I mean the thesis that an omnipotent, omniscient, and unsurpassably good God exists and created any afterlife and is causally responsible for who occupies different sections of the afterlife if one exists. There has been some critical reflection on theism and self-defense (Kellenberger 1987; Weaver 2001), but I contribute new problems to the literature.¹ In particular, I explore common theistic commitments about the afterlife and the divine nature, proposing that they raise non-trivial challenges to theists committed to traditional, commonsense views of self-defense. According to the status quo view, which I call *Theistic Defensive Compatibilism*, common theistic commitments post at most trivial restrictions on either the scope or the explanation of permissible defensive harming or killing. According to the view I defend, *Theistic Defensive Incompatibilism*, common theistic commitments do pose at least one of those restrictions. We can define these views as follows:

Theistic Defensive Compatibilism: Common theistic commitments pose at most trivial restrictions on either the scope or explanation of permissible defensive harming or defensive killing.

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¹ For an historical overview of early Christian teachings on self-defense and war, see Bainton (1946) and Marino (1976). For Islam, see Ahmad (2010) and Shah (2013). For Judaism, see Zuckier (2012-2013) and Finkelstein (1986).

Theistic Defensive Incompatibilism. Common theistic commitments pose non-trivial restrictions on either the scope or explanation of permissible defensive harming or defensive killing.

Hereafter, I refer to these respectively as ‘TDC’ and ‘TDI’. The paper will proceed as follows. In sections 2 and 3, I identify six popular theistic commitments and trace their (implausible) implications for self-defense. It is critical that the theistic commitments be relatively common, since it is a trivial observation that *some* theistic views might make trouble for commonsense self-defense. Section 2 uses Hellism, Annihilationism, Universalism, and Danteanism to craft four arguments grounded in narrow proportionality, all four of which undermine TDC with respect to permissible defensive *killing*.² Section 3 uses Omnisubjectivity and Divine Love as arguments grounded in wide proportionality, the former of which counterexamples TDC with respect to defensive (nonlethal) harming and the latter of which counterexamples TDC with respect to both. Taken together, these six arguments make a powerful case for TDI and against TDC. Moreover, similar concerns can be raised about certain forms of retributive harming like capital punishment, assisted suicide, and other forms of harming. Thus, defensive killing is not uniquely problematic, but rather a focused tool to make a broader moral point.

The importance of this project is fourfold. First, it reveals that popular theistic views and commonsense views of self-defense are inconsistent. For theists desiring to maintain both, they should tailor their theisms with self-defense in mind and tailor their defensive views with theism in mind. Second, if views relatively indispensable to theism entail radical theses about self-defense, that may be a problem for *theism*. James Rachels, for example, believed Christian theism entailed pacifism (Rachels 2002). If true, this would be regarded by many as near-decisive reason to reject Christian theism. Third, the inconsistency might prompt reconsideration of orthodox views of self-defense rather than theism. Fourth, if the problem centers on commitments controversial among theists, then further reflection on theism and self-defense may inform in-house debates among theists. Indeed, several of the arguments in this paper provide ammunition against both traditional views of Hell as well as Hell’s happier rival, Universalism.

2. Four Arguments from Narrow Proportionality

I’ll first explain ‘moral liability’ and ‘narrow proportionality’. Let’s start with an example, one that follows our primary case of Cain and Abel:

Periphery: Cain approaches Abel to kill him, but this time Abel sees Cain coming and can stop him. Stabbing Cain in the leg with the knife Abel is holding, which will mildly wound Cain, is both necessary and sufficient to avert Abel’s murder. Abel does it.

Stabbing someone in the leg with a knife is presumptively morally impermissible because you thereby violate their right to physical security. Thus, it’s presumptively impermissible for Abel to stab Cain in the leg. But it’s *permissible* in this case because Cain unjustly threatens

² Worries about Hell being narrowly disproportionate have been made before, but all of the relevant arguments have criticized Hell as disproportionately punitive rather than having any implications for self-defense. For a sampling of proportionality worries, see Adams (1975), Lewis (2007), and Kershnar (2005).

Abel's life and stabbing Cain in the leg is necessary to avert his lethal threat. By unjustly threatening Abel's life, Cain *forfeits* his right not to be defensively harmed by Abel. When someone forfeits their right to physical security because they're morally responsible for an unjust threat to another, we say they're *morally liable* to defensive harm. Someone is morally liable to be defensively harmed just in case you wouldn't wrong them by defensively harming them. Narrow proportionality concerns *only* the harm done to liable parties and thus has a narrow focus. It is contrasted with wide proportionality whose focus is broader and concerns harms done to nonliable parties.

In *Periphery*, Abel doesn't inflict lethal harm on Cain. In fact, Abel imposes far *less* apparent harm on Cain than Cain threatens to Abel. If circumstances were reversed—if Cain had threatened only to stab Abel in the leg, and Abel had killed him to avoid being stabbed—we'd think Abel's response was objectively excessive or disproportionate relative to the harm Cain threatened.³ This is narrow proportionality, which we can express as follows:

Narrow Proportionality: It's impermissible for Defender to kill Unjust Threat if (1) the harm to Unjust Threat would far exceed the harm Unjust Threat poses to Defender and (2) there's no other justification for harming Unjust Threat.

Understood this way, narrow proportionality restricts how much harm you're permitted to inflict on unjust threateners. If you harm them far more than they would harm you, you've inflicted harm on them to which they aren't liable. An unjust threatener's individual liability is determined by how much harm they're morally responsible for threatening: If they threaten lethal harm, then they're liable to necessary defensive harms up to and including lethal harm;⁴ if they threaten non-lethal harm, then they're liable to less than lethal harm; and so on. While there are unclear cases, narrow proportionality is well-understood in paradigmatic cases. For example, killing someone who would otherwise cut off your hand is not clearly disproportionate, but killing someone who would otherwise merely pinch you clearly is. The second condition, (2), is part of my definition of narrow proportionality only for practical purposes. If there's no liability justification for defensively harming Unjust Threat, it doesn't strictly follow that there's no justification *full stop* for doing so.⁵

³ I assume an *objective* (or *fact-relative*) interpretation of moral obligation, permission, violation, and infringement throughout the paper unless otherwise indicated (e.g., in the Argument from Danteism in section 2.4). On this view, you can be morally obligated to *x* even if you can't reasonably *x*, in which case you would be morally excused for failing to *x*. I lack the space to defend this account. However, I would point out that proportionality requirements are typically understood in this objective (or fact-relative) sense and that a strictly subjective (or belief-relative) account of proportionality requirements would be overly permissive (i.e., provided you sincerely believe your defensive harm is proportionate, then it is).

⁴ My understanding of narrow proportionality is consistent with both internalist and externalist accounts of moral liability. Internalists claim narrow proportionality is necessary for moral liability, whereas externalists claim it's needed for *pro tanto* permissibility but not moral liability. For more on the distinction, see Frowe (2014), chapter 4.

⁵ I leave open the possibility that there can be (non-liability-based) justifications for killing nonliable parties. This is the predominant view in the literature (Frowe 2018; Bazargan-Forward 2014).

2.1. The Argument from Hellism

Many Abrahamic theists believe in a doctrine of Hell.⁶ According to this doctrine generally, Hell is a place the occupation of which is extremely welfare-negative. On some views, Hell is *maximally* welfare-negative for its occupants. On other views, it's very bad, but not maximally so.⁷ But on all views, Hell is worse than all other occupied places, including earthly life.⁸ For the sake of simplicity, I shall assume Hell is one of exactly two afterlife locales, the other of which is Heaven.⁹ According to the doctrine of Hell, those who end up in Hell *deserve* to be there. On the traditional Catholic view, those in Hell are there because they are in a state of mortal sin. On some Protestant views, they are there because they declined to accept God's gracious offer of salvation, because they were predestined to be there, or because they have made "a decisive choice for evil" (Walls 2020, 374). On most Muslim views, the *Qur'an* is unambiguous: "whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally" (Surah An-Nisa' 4:93), with even the murder of a non-Muslim being sufficient to destine one for Hell (Shah 1999, 160).¹⁰

I assume that even if the commission of a mortal sin isn't *why* people end up in Hell, those who commit mortal sins (or their moral equivalents) are not bound for Heaven. This commitment is therefore compatible with some Protestant views on which mortal sins, if they exist at all, don't feature into the explanation for why anyone ends up in Hell. For example, Protestants holding to 'once saved, always saved' or 'perseverance of the saints' doctrines can claim that attempted murder *reveals*, not *seals*, the damned state of one's soul.

I further assume that *attempted murder* is a mortal sin, at least when done *culpably*. We can distinguish culpability from mere responsibility for unjustified threats. These represent polar ends of a spectrum of moral liability to harm. The former requires that the agent be aware that their threat is impermissible. Hence, it entails *blameworthiness* as well as *maximal moral liability*. The latter requires that the agent be (nonculpably) unaware that their threat is impermissible. Hence, it entails *blamelessness* as well as *mitigated moral liability*. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* condemns "exposing someone to mortal danger without grave reason" (Article 5, 2269; cf.

⁶ For classic defenses of the doctrine, see Walls (1992) and Kvanvig (1993). For a more recent defense, see Lamont (2011). For an historical overview of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian doctrines of Hell, see Bernstein (2017).

⁷ An anonymous reviewer objects that God's moral nature entails that Hell, if it exists, wouldn't be harmful to its occupants. This is plainly incompatible with the dominant view of Hell defended by Walls, Kvanvig, and others, and is presupposed by nearly all critics of Hell. However, a neighboring objection is more serious: that God's moral nature entails that the horrors of Hell are not *wrongfully imposed*. Thus, although God's punishments are harmful, they are also morally permissible. I am happy to grant this assumption. However, it makes no difference for narrow proportionality. Even if God's afterlife punishments are morally permissible, it doesn't follow that the premortem killing of such persons is morally permissible. That is, even if the horrors of Hell are narrowly proportionate *relative to God's punitive aims*, they may still be narrowly *dis*proportionate *relative to our defensive aims*. Of course, one possible view is that so long as defensive harms are narrowly proportionate relative to *some* aim, they are narrowly proportionate relative to defensive aims (or, perhaps, any aims whatsoever). But that entails that if I can avert a slap from Threat only by killing Threat, and Threat is bound for Hell, then killing threat is proportionate in the narrow sense, which is false. Moreover, even if it were true, it is miles away from orthodox views of defensive permissions that it would establish the central thesis of this paper: TDI. Thus, I think the objection fails.

⁸ Cf. Sider (2002), at 58.

⁹ This simplifies but also complicates several of the arguments I make in section 2.4. However, I show there that the arguments succeed even if one assumes a non-binary view of the afterlife (e.g., one that includes Purgatory or Limbo).

¹⁰ Cf. Powers (2007).

2290), and culpable attempted murder without question exposes someone to mortal danger without grave reason. Indeed, for Catholics, *any* sin qualifies as mortal if it satisfies three conditions: (a) The action has a grave subject matter, (b) was committed with full knowledge or awareness and (c) deliberate and complete consent. Culpable attempted murder satisfies each of these and therefore qualifies as a mortal sin. Finally, there are strong philosophical grounds to believe attempted murder is rightly categorized among the worst of crimes: it differs from actual murder only in outcome but not intent (i.e., only the *actus reus*, but not the *mens rea*, differs), which is a matter of moral luck and reflects not a whit on the condition of one's soul (Saemi and Davison 2020; Hartman 2014; Zagzebski 1994). While this view has historically been called by many names, including "traditionalism," I shall call it *Hellism* and define it as follows:

Hellism: Those who commit mortal sins (1) occupy Hell upon their deaths (2) which is exceedingly welfare-negative for them and (3) exceedingly worse than either their earthly lives were and their life in Heaven would have been.

The second commitment is a non-comparative claim whereas the third is a comparative claim. Not only is Hell bad for those who are in it, but it is far worse than for those on Earth or in Heaven. As I define it, Hellism makes no assumption about whether occupants of Hell are there eternally (Kvanvig 1993, 25; Augustine of Hippo 1998, book 21, ch. 9) or temporarily, or whether their suffering is embodied (Cowan 2008; Potts 1998) or merely psychological (Lewis 2015; Holdier 2018).¹¹

Suppose Unjust Threat culpably intends to kill Defender, Defender will die unless Defender kills Unjust Threat, and there are no justifications for killing Unjust Threat beyond the unjust threat to Defender. Given that Unjust Threat is culpable, Unjust Threat is a mortal sinner, and therefore bound for Hell under Hellism (1). We don't yet know anything about Defender, but we know Hellism entails a binary view of the afterlife, so we know Defender will go either to Hell or to Heaven. Thus, there are two possibilities: (a) both Unjust Threat and Defender go to Hell or (b) Unjust Threat goes to Hell but Defender goes to Heaven. The other two possibilities—that (c) both end up in Heaven or (d) Unjust Threat goes to Heaven while Defender goes to Hell—are excluded by the assumption that Unjust Threat is a mortal sinner.

If (a) is true, then Defender killing Unjust Threat satisfies narrow proportionality. It doesn't violate narrow proportionality (1) since their deaths would be *equally bad* for them, and it doesn't violate narrow proportionality (2) by stipulation. So far, so good for Hellism. But (b) *doesn't* satisfy narrow proportionality (1) because it *is* true that Unjust Threat's death would be far worse for Unjust Threat than Defender's death would be for Defender. Why? Because Defender would go to Heaven, which is (under Hellism (3)) far better than any life in Hell.¹² Thus, if true, Hellism entails that in cases where you kill to avert an unjust, lethal harm, narrow proportionality is satisfied *only if* you are both bound for Hell. It is unclear how many of us are mortal sinners, but Hellism is incompatible with TDC unless most of us are—indeed, unless

¹¹ For a fictional account of Hell in which Hell is experienced psychologically as the absence of God but is in all other welfare respects indistinct from pre-mortem existence, see Chiang (2016).

¹² If mortal sinners don't remain in Hell eternally, then killing them may be less disproportionate. Six months in Hell is bad for you, but less bad than six-hundred years there. However, the argument holds even if mortal sinners are in Hell even relatively briefly, since their existence there is exceedingly bad for them, and far worse than even a few moments in Heaven or Earth would be for the successful defender.

all of us are in cases where defensive killing is intuitively permissible—which is unlikely. Indeed, if Defender kills Unjust Threat *despite* knowing it's narrowly disproportionate, then Defender is *herself* guilty of a mortal sin. Disproportionate killing, at least in the absence of other justifications, is unjustified killing: the very definition of murder, a mortal sin. Thus, Hellism supports TDI.¹³

Two objections can be quickly dispatched. The first is that even if Defender is *now* guilty of a mortal sin, that may change and, if it does, then Unjust Threat will not have been guilty of threatening Defender with Hell. For example, Defender may later repent of their mortal sin. However, what matters is not if Defender's destiny *may* change but if it *does* change. I have assumed, for the sake of argument, that Defender is bound for Hell. If that changes and Defender is bound for Heaven, then narrow proportionality would not be satisfied. Moreover, even if it was true that Defender may *later* repent of their mortal sin, Defender needs to *survive* to do that, which requires killing Unjust Threat.¹⁴ The second objection is that there are cases of *nonculpable* killing, like cases where Unjust Threat mistakes Defender for an active, imminently dangerous assassin. Killing under these conditions, while perhaps unjust, is clearly nonculpable and is therefore incompatible with the commission of a mortal sin. This shows that Hellism can reclaim some intuitive ground. However, it's not enough. The above problem

¹³ Theologian John Piper, citing slain missionary Jim Elliot's refusal to engage in self-defense against unbelievers, endorses this implication. He writes,

Here's the connection. The missionaries had guns when they were speared to death. One of them shot the gun into the air, it appears, as he was killed, rather than shooting the natives. They had agreed to do this. The reason was simple and staggeringly Christlike: The natives are not ready for heaven. We are. I suspect the same could be said for almost anyone who breaks into my house. There are other reasons why I have never owned a firearm and do not have one in my house. But that reason moves me deeply. (Piper 2008)

While I differ strongly with Piper and Elliot about the soteriological prospects of indigenous Ecuadorians (to say nothing of the colonialism and racism implicit in Elliot's 'missionary' work), it's telling that this line of thinking had previously occurred to theists—including in high-stakes scenarios.

¹⁴ One might object that because a bad afterlife (whether Hell or otherwise) is *independently* just, the fact that we send unjust threateners to Hell as a defensive side effect is permissible. To see why we should reject this view, consider the following case:

Escapee: Murderer, who is on Death Row and scheduled to be executed tomorrow, is the beneficiary of a last-minute jailbreak. She attempts to flee and hide, choosing your home (which she assumes is empty) as a safe haven. Murderer threatens you only with a punch, which you can prevent only by stabbing Murderer in the heart, killing her.

Let's assume that Murderer's execution on Death Row is morally just (i.e., that Murderer is liable to be executed). Thus, although getting Murderer killed may otherwise be narrowly disproportionate, it isn't in this case because killing her is justified. Similarly, although killing someone bound for Hell would be narrowly disproportionate *if considered in isolation*, we need not consider it in isolation. Their fate, if independently just, counts not a whit against killing them in self-defense. Killing them is narrowly disproportionate in the *local* sense (i.e., defensively) but proportionate in the *global* sense (i.e., non-defensively), and it is only the local sense that matters for narrow proportionality. However, if we accept the view that defensive killing need not be proportionate in the local sense provided it's proportionate in the global sense, we may kill *anyone* provided they are justly headed for a bad afterlife. Killing the unjust aggressor who threatens merely to smack your arm is narrowly (globally) proportionate, provided they are guilty of some other mortal sin that destines them to a just and bad afterlife. If the badness of their deaths is all that counts against killing them, as it does in cases where other rights (e.g., liberty rights) are waived or forfeited, then the global justice of the badness of their death need not deter us. That's a difficult conclusion to swallow. Thus, although Murderer's death may be *punitively* proportionate, it isn't *defensively* proportionate.

of accounting for the permissibility of killing culpable threats remains. But another problem arises: Assuming nonculpable threats are not guilty of *other* mortal sins, they are bound for Heaven, which satisfies narrow proportionality (assuming Defender isn't bound for Hell) but implies that it's *easier* to justify killing nonculpable threats than culpable ones. That is plainly incompatible with TDC.¹⁵

A third objection to the Argument from Hellism runs as follows: Not all harms causally downstream from defensive acts count against narrow proportionality, such as *indirect and temporally extended* harms. Thus, the harms of Hell, which are indirect and extend far into the future, don't count against narrow proportionality. Fortunately, the success of my arguments from (narrow) proportionality doesn't depend on the assumption that *all* harms/benefits downstream from defensive acts are relevant to narrow proportionality. At most, it entails that *reasonably foreseeable, otherwise avoidable* downstream harms/benefits are relevant. And that much seems plausible and well-aligned with the dominant view of narrow proportionality. For example, in *Killing in War*, Jeff McMahan claims that "there is also a proportionality restriction on harms that are foreseeably but *unintentionally* inflicted on those who are potentially liable" (McMahan 2009, 21).¹⁶

However, I shall now offer two further reasons to reject the objection's overly restrictive view of narrow proportionality. First, imagine a case in which you will unjustly slap my face unless I slap you back, but slapping you would cause you to lose your balance and fall into heavy traffic, killing you. Intuitively, slapping you seems disproportionate given that it results in harms that exceed the harm to which you're liable (i.e., death instead of a mere slap). That explains why I ought not slap you under those circumstances. (We could even add that the drivers below are malicious and looking for pedestrians to lethally ram.) Thus, such downstream harms—ones that are reasonably expected and otherwise avoidable—are harms that can (and often do) count in narrow proportionality calculations. The second argument is this: Even if it's the case that not *all* of Hell's harms count against narrow proportionality, the harms of Hell that would have been avoided had you not killed defensively certainly count. For example, suppose Cain would kill Abel unless Abel first killed Cain, that Cain is bound for Hell and Abel for Heaven, and that both are in their early 20s and would live well into their 80s. In that case, if Abel kills Cain now, he thereby deprives Cain of 60 years avoiding Hell, which (given the torturous horrors of Hell) is an immense harm to Cain. This way of thinking about narrow proportionality is decisively standard in the literature: If, for example, I deprive you of 60 years of good life, that is a serious harm to you; and if I merely transport you into a torture chamber for your remaining 60 years, that's even worse!¹⁷

Another concern is that afterlife harms and benefits are not *foreseeable*. If they aren't, then holding persons responsible for afterlife harms or benefits is morally akin to holding them responsible for freak accidents. Even setting responsibility aside, we might say that harms or benefits not reasonably foreseeable at the time of acting shouldn't affect the permissibility or impermissibility of one's action. Let's distinguish between a *principled afterlife uncertainty* view, according to which premortem humans never know someone's afterlife destination, from a

¹⁵ Another objection: A God of justice wouldn't construct the afterlife such that it undermines defensive killing in cases where defensive killing is intuitively permissible. Perhaps, but then Hellism is false. Or perhaps some variant of divine command theory is true and God permits killing even when narrow proportionality isn't satisfied. But then narrow proportionality is false, and with it TDC.

¹⁶ McMahan does not claim that afterlife harms are foreseeable. But this isn't surprising as he rejects the existence of an afterlife altogether.

¹⁷ Had Cain *succeeded* in killing Abel, he would thereby deprive Abel of 60 good earthly years for 60 better heavenly years. This further buttresses the case for TDI. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.

contingent afterlife uncertainty view, according to which we sometimes but rarely know it. The former is false under many views, as many assume profoundly evil persons like Adolph Hitler are in Hell whereas profoundly good persons like Mother Theresa are in Heaven. Thus, for theists who think they can *ever* make a reasonable prediction about some person's eternal destiny, they should reject all principled afterlife uncertainty views. The second, contingent afterlife uncertainty view might be true but underscores another worry: namely, that if Hellism is true, we rarely know how bad lethal threats to us really are, how bad lethal defensive harms would be, and thus whether killing anyone satisfies narrow proportionality. Minimally, those embracing Hellism should view defensive killing under their assumptions as *extremely risky*, the moral equivalent of firing a weapon that randomly inflicts either eternal torture or momentary immobility.

Finally, suppose I am mistaken about narrow proportionality. It remains true that the downstream harms are nevertheless harms to which the person threatening me would not have otherwise been exposed, and we generally think that exposing others to harms to which they aren't liable requires justification.¹⁸ Since exposing them can't be justified in liability terms (since they aren't liable to that degree of harm, at least not from us), the harms to which my threatener is exposed outstrips the harm posed to me. Thus, if such exposure is to be justified, it must be on some other grounds, and consequently the standard, liability-based picture of self-defense still entails that such defensive harming is impermissible; it cannot justify it, which is the very problem I claim exists. Thus, TDC would remain undermined.

2.2. The Argument from Annihilationism

Theists preferring some afterlife punishment, but rejecting Hellism, might embrace the somewhat more lenient position that the unredeemed are simply *annihilated*.¹⁹ Most assume that being annihilated is less welfare-negative than Hell, though some assume it's worse.²⁰ For our purposes, we can assume the more conservative thesis that being annihilated is presumptively as bad for you as it would be in an atheistic universe. Typically, we think people's deaths are welfare-negative for them insofar as they deprive them of welfare-positive lives. Call this view *Annihilationism* and let it be represented as follows:

Annihilationism: Those who commit mortal sins (1) are annihilated upon their deaths (2) which is presumptively exceedingly welfare-negative for them and (3) exceedingly worse than their possible life in Heaven would have been.

As before, I make zero assumptions about *why* anyone is annihilated upon their deaths and instead assume, like with Hellism, that those who commit unrepented mortal sins (or their moral equivalents) are not bound for Heaven. That should both keep Catholics and Protestants reasonably happy.

The second argument runs identically to the Argument from Hellism: Narrow proportionality is satisfied *only if* both Defender and Unjust Threat will be annihilated, which

¹⁸ Himma (2016, 2010) argues that the truth of Hellism would undermine the permissibility of procreation, since those we bring into existence are thereby exposed to the risk of Hell. We can view my argument and Himma's as twin problems for Hellism: the impermissibility of creating or destroying human life.

¹⁹ For Annihilationism within Islam, see Abrahamov (2002) and Smith & Haddad (1981, 94). For Annihilationism within Judaism, see Raphael (2019: ch. 3) and Goldschmidt & Segal (2017).

²⁰ For example, see Spiegel (2015).

won't satisfy all or even most of the intuitive cases.²¹ We need not assume that death is necessarily harmful, only that *premature* death of a certain kind is harmful. In this respect, the threat of death under Annihilationism poses no greater threat than in an atheistic or naturalistic universe or a theistic universe with no afterlife. Perhaps there are more actual cases in which annihilation makes people *better-off* than being Hell-bound, but cases will remain where that isn't true, and Annihilationism delivers the wrong judgment about those cases. For example, consider the following case:

Fratricide: Cain hates Abel because he (mistakenly) believes Abel is always unfairly favored by God. To make matters worse, Cain recently overheard God telling Abel that Abel is bound for Heaven upon bodily death. Cain plots his revenge for months, delighting in the prospect of killing Abel brutally, intending to savor Abel's every cry. At the planned time, Cain carries out his premeditated plan with exactness and mercilessness.

Cain is culpable and plainly guilty of a mortal sin. Annihilationism implies that Cain will be annihilated upon his death, but it *also* implies that Abel would violate narrow proportionality by killing Cain. Thus, Abel shouldn't kill Cain. Thus, Annihilationism is incompatible with TDC and supports TDI.

2.3. The Argument from Universalism

One view dating back to early Christianity is Universalism. Like Hellism and Annihilationism, Universalism comes in many flavors.²² Universalists disagree amongst themselves about the *scope* of universal salvation (*who* is saved),²³ the *immediacy* of universal salvation (*when* people are saved), the *duration* of universal salvation (*how long* people are saved),²⁴ and the *participatory aspects* of universal salvation (whether salvation is *free* or *determined*).²⁵ Thomas Talbott (2020, 381), for example, defines Universalism as the thesis that all persons are *eventually* saved, and thus that none are lost forever (cf. Perry 2012, ch. 6; Perry 2016, 113-117). As Talbott points out, this is compatible with the view that truly evil persons spend some time in Hell before being ushered into Heaven forever:

²¹ Despite the similarities, Hellism and Annihilationism are *different* views, and theists who accept the latter reject the former. While the arguments are identical, it's worth spelling out that the same argument can be leveled against both views. This is made more important in light of the fact that Annihilationism is taken to be 'softer', less radical than Hellism because it does not entail *everlasting* harm (whether punitive or not), yet it *doesn't* entail a substantively less radical rejection of TDC.

²² For an overview of universalisms, see Reitan & Kronen (2013), chapter 3.

²³ Origen of Alexandria (1976: 656), for example, is often believed to have held that Lucifer and all demons would ultimately be reconciled to God. Crummett (2019) argues all sentient nonhuman animals will be brought to Heaven. Other universalists either don't endorse these conclusions or explicitly reject them. For a skeptical view about Origen's beliefs, see Edwards (2010).

²⁴ See Matheson (2014). For a reply, see Buckareff & Plug (2015).

²⁵ Reitan & Kronen (2013, ch. 8) defend a universalist view wherein humans are libertarian-free but universal salvation remains guaranteed. Cf. Reitan (2007). Others like Adams (1993) and Aikan & Aleksander (2014) argue that our diminished epistemic capacities render freely choosing eternal destinies impossible or unfair. Baker (2003, 472) defends a compatibilist, Augustinian view with universalism, claiming that "salvation is totally under the control of God."

Whereas I regard the teaching of hell, if it exists at all, as a forcibly imposed but temporary punishment, [Jerry] Walls regards it as a freely embraced eternal destiny. (Talbot 2020, 388)

For my purposes, I shall assume that Universalism is restricted to humans, that universal salvation occurs imminently upon each human's biological death, that each human occupies Heaven forever once they arrive, and that Heaven is exceedingly welfare-positive for its occupants. Additionally, I assume that if Universalism is true, then there aren't mortal sins—or, at least, that mortal sins aren't a bar on entering Heaven instantly upon one's biological death.²⁶ I therefore offer the following definition of the view:

Universalism: Those who biologically die (1) instantly occupy Heaven (2) which is exceedingly welfare-positive for them and (3) exceedingly better for them than any premortem existence.

The final assumption is incompatible with the view that Heaven might be unpleasant, perhaps even radically unpleasant, when compared with our earthly lives (Pelser 2017). This view may be true but is scarcely endorsed, so I shall ignore it when discussing widely-held theistic views. The short of it is that Universalism is the best possible afterlife outcome that is maximally inclusive.

Unlike under Hellism and Annihilationism, biological death will be *good* for everyone: whether better than pre-mortem existence or supremely good. Either way, people are never *harm*ed by their deaths, since death brings about a state of affairs that boosts one's welfare. If anything, people are *benefitted* by dying (Cyr 2016).

That much might make Universalism seem more appealing than Hellism and Annihilationism, since it avoids implying that narrow proportionality is satisfied only in cases where both Unjust Threat and Defender are off to Hell or permanent non-existence. Under Universalism, narrow proportionality is satisfied because they are both bound for Heaven. However, because the scope of Universalism is so broad, it implies that narrow proportionality is *always* satisfied, and thus that no killing is narrowly disproportionate. That alone is inconsistent with TDI. Surely some killings are narrowly disproportionate. If I can avert your slap only by shooting you in the face, doing so seems obviously disproportionate, but it wouldn't be if Universalism were true since I *benefit you infinitely* by killing you.

Though it's tempting to draw the conclusion that Universalism sanctions all defensive killing, that doesn't follow. Universalists can appeal to the distinction between *welfare* interests (and corresponding rights) and *liberty* interests (and corresponding rights). Even if it is in Abel's interest to die, it may still be impermissible for Cain to kill him if Abel has significant liberty interests. If, for example, Abel has a right to decide *when* or *how* he dies, then Cain should refrain from making that decision for him even if it is in Abel's best interest to die now. Such cases are common fodder in medical ethics for guarding against medical paternalism: Medical professionals are not permitted to do what is best for us without our consent, and we may refuse treatment even if that is against our best welfare interests (Groll 2014). But while Universalism can thereby plausibly avoid sanctioning all defensive killing, it does so at the cost of TDC, as Universalism implies that it is not in *anyone's* welfare interests to avoid being killed.

²⁶ This may appear inconsistent with my claim that those guilty of mortal sin are not bound for Heaven. However, that assumption is conditional on the truth of Hellism in which the afterlife is binary, with both Heaven and Hell. The truth of Universalism disrupts this metaphysical landscape, as well as the moral landscape built atop it.

Indeed, much of the literature on defensive killing assumes that being killed is generally bad for our welfare. Then again, some theists maintain the superiority of *heavenly freedom* to earthly freedom (Sennett 1999; Timpe & Pawl 2009; Brown 2015), which might suggest that even our liberty interests favor a swift entrance to Heaven.²⁷

One further problem with Universalism is the specter of paternalism. For our purposes, let's think of paternalism as the view that *welfare interests trump liberty interests*, or that *welfare rights trump liberty rights* (Hanna 2018; Conly 2013). There are any number of philosophers who defend this view either generally or contextually, and while many reject it, it's not clear all universalists do. Some variants of Universalism are decidedly paternalistic: for example, ones in which God doesn't allow us to choose damnation because God will do what is best for us, retaining "veto power...when it comes to our eternal fate" (Reitan and Kronen 2013, 148; cf. Adams 1993, 313-314). This view entails an extremely permissive view about killing and therefore entails TDI. Assuming that conclusion is less palatable than either Universalism or paternalism considered independently, universalists have strong reason to reject paternalism and paternalists have strong reason to reject Universalism.

2.4. The Argument from Danteanism

Still another possible view of the afterlife is Dante Alighieri's (2008) view, whose view of Hell closely tracks the traditional Islamic depiction of *Jahannam* in the *Qur'an* (4:145; 15:43-44) and the traditional Jewish depiction of *Sheol* (Gaster 1893, 579-580). On Dante's view, Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory are the only three possible afterlife destinations, but there are *levels* of both locales that are differentiated in welfare terms. Heaven and Hell each have nine levels whereas Purgatory has only seven. For Dante, Purgatory was hellish indeed, since it's bad for one's welfare. I shall therefore conceive of Purgatory as the first of many welfare-negative steps leading to the bottom of Hell.²⁸ Furthermore, I shall assume that there's considerable variation in the goodness and badness of these levels. Thus, while Danteanism as I define it is compatible with, for example, the First Circle and the Second Circle of Hell being roughly equally bad, it's *incompatible* with the First Circle and the Seventh Circle being roughly equally bad. Let's define this view as follows:

Danteanism: All human persons will survive bodily death and either (1) enter Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory where (2) existence in Heaven is welfare-positive and existence in Hell and

²⁷ Or maybe not. Other theists reject 'derivative' freedom (Matheson 2018) or compatibilist freedom (Cowan 2011; cf. Pawl & Timpe 2013). My preferred solution is to sidestep the heavenly freedom debate by drawing a distinction between *autonomous efficacy* and *autonomous satisfaction*. The former concerns the extent to which one's freedom is hampered by duress, weakness of will, or misinformation. The latter concerns the extent to which one's autonomous preferences are satisfied. Even assuming Heaven maximizes the efficacy of one's freedom, it doesn't follow that it maximizes the satisfaction of one's freely formed preferences. An example will help: If I will myself to visit Alaska but end up in Heaven before seeing Alaska, my autonomy will be more efficacious in Heaven than on Earth, but my liberty interest of visiting Alaska will be frustrated. And that's both important and not the result of less autonomous efficacy. In short, we have autonomy interests with essentially premortem content, and thus Heaven can't satisfy those interests even if it can better satisfy others.

²⁸ For a view of Purgatory that isn't as welfare-negative, see Walls (2012). If Purgatory is a welfare-neutral place, in the sense that existing there is neither good nor bad for you, this further complicates the picture somewhat. I consider this possibility in footnote 34.

Purgatory are welfare-negative, but (3) the goodness of Heaven and the badness of Hell and Purgatory admit of wildly differing degrees and are sensitive to one's moral deserts.²⁹

This is Dante's vision of Heaven (2008, 45-197) and Hell (2008, 349-500) described in *The Divine Comedy*. As with Hellism and Universalism, I shall assume a maximally agnostic position about the precise criteria for residency on the various levels, except to say that on any plausible Dantean view, all the levels of Hell are occupied and the fully culpable commission of murder is likely to place one *further down* the welfare-negative ladder than further up.³⁰ That is, if anyone is at the bottom of Hell, fully culpable murderers are good candidates.³¹ I also assume an agnostic position about the goodness-making features of Heaven and the badness-making features of Hell and Purgatory. Dante, of course, didn't fear specificity on these matters, but I want a maximally inclusive Dantean view where the details are sparse.

Some problems with Hellism and Annihilationism carry over to Danteanism. First, the narrow proportionality requirement will be met only in cases where the afterlife welfares of attacker and defender are roughly equally bad. Thus, if the attacker is bound for Hell's Seventh Circle and defender is bound for Hell's Third Circle, killing attacker would narrowly disproportionate. Second, since culpable attackers are mortal sinners and therefore likely to occupy a worse level of Hell—say, the Eighth or Ninth Circles—it will be more difficult to justify killing them than killing merely responsible attackers who, owing to their lack of culpability, are (other things being equal) not bound for the lower levels.³² These considerations alone show that Danteanism is incompatible with TDC.

²⁹ There are possible Dantean models in which one's placement on the afterlife ladder *isn't* sensitive to one's moral deserts. For example, one might reject the possibility of moral desert, or claim that all sinners are equally deserving of some level(s), or that other properties (e.g., the presence or absence of divine grace or the atoning work of Christ) determine placement. These views are incompatible with how I've defined Danteanism, but not with how I'll use it. If you agree that fully culpable murderers are likely to get a bad spot in Hell, my argument still works.

³⁰ A Dantean view on which there *are* various levels to occupy but none but two are occupied (say, the best level of Heaven and the worst level of Hell) are not distinctively Dantean, so I ignore them here.

³¹ Dante speculated that murderers would occupy the Seventh Circle of Hell, faring better than flatterers (who occupy the Eighth Circle) but worse than gluttons (who occupy the Third Circle). Apparently this made sense to Dante, but I confess that I can't make ethical heads or tails of it.

³² So far, we have discussed mortal sin as a sufficient condition for damnation. Regardless of the good one does, if one has mortal sin, one is bound for Hell. What we haven't discussed is whether there are sufficient conditions for salvation grounded in moral character, moral desert, and the like. That is, whether it's true that regardless of how one sins, one is bound for Heaven. Under the former assumption, the afterlife's 'moral gravity', as it were, draws us down but not up. Certain sins condemn us and make us irredeemable, no matter the good actions we perform. Anselm certainly held this view: We ought always to discharge our moral duties, and our future discharging of those duties can't erase our past failures of duty, thereby leaving us with a moral debt we can't repay. We might question this view of moral gravity, however. Perhaps a God of love and mercy would weight our virtues more heavily than our vices, our humane and loving actions more heavily than our inhumane and cruel actions. Perhaps just as evildoing entails forfeiture of the good, so righteousness (or righteousness of a certain kind) entails that the right of others to pursue justice against us is forfeited. Perhaps in our pursuit of the Right and the Good, we acquire new rights or reacquire old ones—perhaps even ones we previously forfeited in our moral failings. Anselm's analysis of our moral predicament leaves unconsidered the possibility of supererogatory actions—morally good actions that go beyond our moral duties and are (presumably) to our moral credit. If there are such actions (and there's considerable reason to believe there are), our moral situation may improve and begin to erase our moral debt. By doing more than we owe, we are owed in turn, especially when doing more than we owe costs us. For now, I shall leave further speculation about the moral gravity of the afterlife aside, as it takes us far beyond the bare Dantean picture. I note it only because it further complicates an already complicated picture, and thus merits some consideration, whether here or elsewhere.

I shall now offer one further reason to believe than Danteanism, if true, entails (or makes probable) TDI.³³ To do this, I must first introduce a further distinction about narrow proportionality. Throughout this essay, I have discussed narrow proportionality in the *objective* or *fact-relative* sense. This “is used to evaluate outcomes—particular pairings of harm and good that come into the world together” (Tomlin 2019, 259).³⁴ However, Danteanism introduces unique practical uncertainties that problematize action guidance that owe their existence to two facts: the plethora of possible afterlife destinations and uncertainty regarding where we and our attacker will land in that afterlife.³⁵ I shall therefore investigate what Danteanism implies about *subjective* or *belief-relative* narrow proportionality, which concerns “whether an act is proportionate given the evidence available to the agent, or the beliefs of the agent” (Tomlin 2019, 259). To begin, let’s consider four kinds of uncertainty:

- U₁: Defender is more uncertain about her own fate than Unjust Threat’s.
- U₂: Defender is more uncertain about Unjust Threat’s fate than her own.
- U₃: Defender is equally uncertain about her own fate and Unjust Threat’s fate.
- U₄: Defender is equally certain about her own fate and Unjust Threat’s fate.

Let’s first consider three variations of U₁:

- U_{1a}: Uncertain about herself, Defender thinks Unjust Threat will be *very* badly-off.
- U_{1b}: Uncertain about herself, Defender thinks Unjust Threat will be *moderately* badly-off
- U_{1c}: Uncertain about herself, Defender thinks Unjust Threat will be *not at all* badly-off.

Dante depicts each descending level of Hell as far worse than the level preceding it. So, the Fifth Circle is far worse than the Fourth Circle. Accepting Dante’s depiction would make the case for TDI *easier* as it would exponentially increase Defender’s uncertainty about Unjust Threat’s fate as well as her own. Thus, I propose to stack the deck against TDI by *collapsing* the badness of Hell’s levels into three groups. Let’s assume someone is *very* badly-off just in case they land in the Fifth Circle of Hell or worse, *moderately* badly-off just in case they land on one of the other four circles of Hell’s, and *not at all* badly off just in case they avoid Hell altogether.³⁶ Let’s also assume that Defender’s uncertainty about her own fate is such that she views each

³³ Variants of this argument plausibly apply to Hellism and Annihilationism, as both views posit the existence of stark afterlife outcomes and therefore introduce similar problems under uncertainty. However, the problem arguably doesn’t apply to Universalism, which posits exactly one good afterlife for all.

³⁴ Cf. Hurka (2005).

³⁵ Tomlin (2019, 255) argues that “few, if any, defensive agents...will ever face a violent situation in which they possess perfect knowledge of” how much harm will accrue to either party in self-defense or what the outcome of self-defending will be. It’s tempting to think that Danteanism merely *unmasks* (and doesn’t *create*) this problem. However, Danteanism *worsens* an existing problem by exploding the number of postmortem harms and goods each person may experience. The mere addition of those harms and goods is itself a complicating factor, thereby worsening the epistemic situation for Danteans. But it is also worsened by the fact that the reasonable beliefs we could form about satisfying or violating narrow proportionality *sans* an afterlife—for example, that killing someone merely to prevent them slapping you is disproportionate, or that killing a culpable threatener who would have died within ten minutes when he will otherwise kill you is proportionate—are undermined by the introduction of a Dantean afterlife.

³⁶ These assumptions are merely provisional and illustrative and aren’t designed to weight things against satisfying narrow proportionality. For ease of exposition, I consider only afterlife benefits and harms, and therefore exclude pre-mortem benefits and harms. Because inclusion of the latter benefits and harms merely complicates the Dantean picture, excluding it from consideration isn’t uncharitable to Danteanism.

afterlife destination as *equiprobable*.³⁷ So, she believes there's a 1/18 probability of her landing on Heaven's First Circle, Hell's Fourth Circle, and so on. If U_{1a} is true, then Defender should believe that the likelihood of them being harmed at least as much as Unjust Threat (i.e., of being *very* badly-off) is only 5/18. Thus, Defender should believe that killing Unjust Threat would be narrowly disproportionate.³⁸ We can represent this as follows:

$$U_{1a}: 18 \text{ (all levels)} - 5 \text{ (proportionate levels)} = 13 \text{ (disproportionate levels)}$$

To achieve narrow proportionality, we need the number of expected proportionate outcomes to *exceed* the number of expected disproportionate outcomes. Under U_{1a} , it's the other around. Thus, under U_{1a} , Defender should expect to violate narrow proportionality by killing Unjust Threat. What about U_{1b} and U_{1c} ?

$$U_{1b}: 18 \text{ (all levels)} - 9 \text{ (proportionate levels)} = 9 \text{ (disproportionate levels)}$$

$$U_{1c}: 18 \text{ (all levels)} - 9 \text{ (proportionate levels)} = 9 \text{ (disproportionate levels)}$$

These numbers are the same because, under U_{1b} , Defender believes Unjust Threat will land on one the four moderately bad circles of Hell while remaining uncertain about where she will land. Thus, if Defender would land on *any* of Hell's levels, she would be either equally badly-off or worse-off than Unjust Threat. But if she landed on *any* of Heaven's levels, she would harm Unjust Threat more than they harm her. Something similar holds under U_{1c} , where

³⁷ If Purgatory exists as well and is welfare-neutral, we must add it to the already long list of possible afterlife destinations. Killing someone under conditions of uncertainty will worsen the narrow proportionality problem, since it will be even less clear whether and how bad their death will be for them. Killing someone you reasonably believe will end up in Purgatory means it's likely their death will be neither good nor bad for them, and thus reintroduces the problem with Universalism. Finally, if Purgatory is ultimately welfare-*positive* for its occupants and only temporarily welfare-negative, perhaps by purifying them for the bliss of Heaven, then the defensive killing of the Purgatory-bound *may* be narrowly proportionate. However, as with Universalism, it may be *too easy* to satisfy narrow proportionality, since the ultimate benefits of Heaven are extremely (perhaps infinitely) good. Further, in cases where a Purgatory-bound person would later improve their moral standing such that they 'qualified' for Heaven and 'skipped' a stay in Purgatory, killing them prior to their moral improvement entails that the harms they experience in Purgatory were otherwise avoidable. Thus, killing them could still violate narrow proportionality. Thus, it appears the addition of Purgatory hurts rather than helps TDC under both welfare-neutral and welfare-positive assumptions.

³⁸ I assume that Defender is fully informed about the possible outcome combinations. In such a case, the subjective likelihood of satisfying narrow proportionality is small and therefore impermissible, other things being equal. As an example, suppose someone is about to slap you when an extraterrestrial pauses time and hands you a wheel-shaped device. To defend yourself against the slap, you simply spin the wheel until the needle lands on a random defensive measure. However, the harmfulness of the defensive measures varies considerably: as harmless as transporting the would-be slapper fifty feet from you to a distracting sneeze to painful dismemberment. You know some of those outcomes are narrowly proportionate whereas others aren't, and you also know that the result is inevitably random once you spin the wheel. (Suppose you also know that half of the outcomes are proportionate and half aren't; or, alternatively that you really have no clue what the ratio is.) Having understood the instructions, the extraterrestrial gives you a moment to spin the wheel before un-pausing time. Under this kind epistemic uncertainty, it seems impermissible for you to expose a minimally liable party to an indeterminate but non-trivial probability of severe, disproportionate harm. This is disanalogous from a more standard case in which, for example, you fire a bullet at someone who will inflict moderate but non-lethal harm on you, knowing there's a chance the bullet could miss their leg or arm and instead hit their chest. There, the probability is determinate and low. Killing someone whose eternal destiny is uncertain is morally analogous to spinning the wheel on the extraterrestrial's self-defense device, or (more commonly) closing one's eyes and firing a gun at an assailant who threatens only moderate harm. For moral agents fully informed of these uncertainties, they ought not to kill.

Defender would be worse-off than Unjust Threat if she landed on *any* of Hell's levels but wouldn't be badly-off at all if she landed on any of Heaven's levels. So, under either U_{1b} or U_{1c} , the number of expected proportionate outcomes doesn't exceed the number of expected disproportionate outcomes. So, Defender should think it's just as likely as not that she will violate narrow proportionality under these conditions.

Moving on to U_2 , where the uncertainties are reversed: Defender is more uncertain about Unjust Threat's fate than her own. As before, we can consider three variations of U_2 :

U_{2a} : Uncertain about Unjust Threat, Defender thinks she will be *very* badly-off.

U_{2b} : Uncertain about Unjust Threat, Defender thinks she will be *moderately* badly-off.

U_{2c} : Uncertain about Unjust Threat, Defender thinks she will be *not at all* badly-off.

Using the same representation as before, we get the following expected outcomes:

U_{2a} : 18 (all levels) – 18 (proportionate levels) = 0 (disproportionate levels)

U_{2b} : 18 (all levels) – 13 (proportionate levels) = 5 (disproportionate levels)

U_{2c} : 18 (all levels) – 9 (proportionate levels) = 9 (disproportionate levels)

Under U_{2a} , Defender should believe that killing Unjust Threat is *certain* to be proportionate since Defender believes her fate to be *very* bad, and Unjust Threat can't be harmed worse than she expects herself to be. If, on the other hand, Unjust Threat is bound for the upper four levels of Hell or any of the levels of Heaven, they will be harmed less than Defender. Either way, killing Unjust Threat is proportionate. U_{2b} is the inverse of U_{1a} with Defender in the hot seat: She will be *moderately* harmed, so killing Unjust Threat is proportionate provided Unjust Threat wouldn't land in the lowest five circles of Hell, which they have only a 5/18 chance of doing. Thus, under U_{2b} , Defender should believe that killing Unjust Threat is most likely narrowly proportionate. Finally, under U_{2c} , Defender is *not at all* badly-off, and thus her killing Unjust Threat would be proportionate only if Unjust Threat landed in Heaven, which is a coin toss (9/18 or 1/2 odds). Thus, Defender should believe that killing Unjust Threat under U_{2c} is as likely as not to be narrowly disproportionate.

Running the numbers for U_3 is somewhat more complicated. However, we can still represent the possible expected outcomes from Defender's point of view:

U_{3a} : Defender thinks she and Unjust Threat may be *very* badly-off.

U_{3b} : Defender thinks she and Unjust Threat may be *moderately* badly-off.

U_{3c} : Defender thinks she and Unjust Threat may be *not at all* badly-off.

U_{3d} : Defender thinks she may be *very* badly-off and Defender may be *moderately* badly-off.

U_{3e} : Defender thinks she may be *very* badly-off and Defender may be *not at all* badly-off.

U_{3f} : Defender thinks she may be *moderately* badly-off and Defender may be *very* badly-off.

U_{3g} : Defender thinks she may be *moderately* badly-off and Defender may be *not at all* badly-off.

U_{3h} : Defender thinks she may be *not at all* badly-off and Defender may be *very* badly-off.

U_{3i} : Defender thinks she may be *not at all* badly-off and Defender may be *moderately* badly-off.

From Defender's point of view, each of these options is equiprobable. Which ones are proportionate and which are disproportionate? Recall that Defender is deliberating whether to kill Unjust Threat and must determine which is the more likely expected outcome: a

proportionate outcome or a *disproportionate* outcome? Under U3, there are six proportionate outcomes (i.e., U_{3a}, U_{3b}, U_{3c}, U_{3d}, U_{3e}, U_{3g}) and three disproportionate outcomes (i.e., U_{3f}, U_{3h}, U_{3i}). Given that there are *twice* as many proportionate as disproportionate outcomes, Defender should expect a proportionate outcome under the mutual uncertainty of U3.³⁹

Finally, there is U4. As with U3, there are nine possible expected outcomes, six of which are proportionate (i.e., the certainty variants of U_{3a}, U_{3b}, U_{3c}, U_{3d}, U_{3e}, and U_{3g}) and three of which are disproportionate (i.e., the certainty variants of U_{3f}, U_{3h}, and U_{3i}). However, *unlike* U3, the likelihood of each outcome isn't subjectively equiprobable because Defender *has a certain belief* about the afterlife destinations for both herself and Unjust Threat. It's here that the same problems with Hellism and Annihilationism reappear: Defender would violate belief-relative narrow proportionality if she believes Unjust Threat would be *very* badly-off unless she believes that *she too* would be *very* badly-off, which is incompatible with TDC. To see how all of this supports TDI, let's briefly return to the initial four kinds of uncertainty:

- U₁: Defender is more uncertain about her own fate than Unjust Threat's.
- U₂: Defender is more uncertain about Unjust Threat's fate than her own.
- U₃: Defender is equally uncertain about her own fate and Unjust Threat's fate.
- U₄: Defender is equally certain about her own fate and Unjust Threat's fate.

If a majority of U1-U4 make satisfying narrow proportionality more likely than not *and* avoid any other commitments incompatible with TDC, then Danteanism *qua* action-guiding view is compatible with TDC. We have seen that some of U4's implications are incompatible with TDC, so that's one strike for Danteanism. Under U2 and U3, there are more proportionate than disproportionate outcomes, and there is nothing obviously wrong with defensive killing under partial uncertainty.⁴⁰ Indeed, such uncertainty arises frequently. However, *none* of the outcomes under U1 have a greater number of proportionate outcomes than disproportionate outcomes: two are tied, and one is strongly disproportionate. Thus, under U1, Defender should believe it's more likely than not she will violate narrow proportionality. More conservatively, she should believe it's *not likely* she will satisfy narrow proportionality. That's strike two. Thus, Danteanism fails a critical action-guidance test that makes it incompatible with TDC. It fails to satisfy narrow proportionality under both fact-relative and belief-relative standards. Thus, Danteanism better supports TDI.

3. Two Arguments from Wide Proportionality

As before with narrow proportionality, let's start with a Cain and Abel case:

Matricide: Cain attacks Abel, but this time Abel sees him coming. Abel can prevent his death only by throwing a spear at Cain, which will kill Cain but will also pass through Cain and kill their mother, Eve, who is merely a bystander.

³⁹ This implies that defensive killing is *never likely* to be narrowly disproportionate. That conclusion is arguably *itself* incompatible with TDC, according to which we know (or reasonably believe) that defensive killing is sometimes disproportionate.

⁴⁰ Here I provisionally assume that U3 is in the clear on two counts: (1) it doesn't itself make violating narrow proportionality more likely than not and (2) it doesn't imply anything else that's incompatible with TDC. However, it arguably fails on the latter count, given what I argue in footnote 38.

It's impermissible for Abel to prevent his own death in *Matricide*. The reason why is because Abel's defensive measures would kill not only Cain, but Eve, and Eve isn't liable to be killed. While killing Eve *might* be justified if Abel would thereby, for example, save both himself and (equally nonliable) Adam, that isn't the case in *Matricide*: Abel saves only himself, and at the cost of another nonliable person's life (Eve's). Here's the standard principle of wide proportionality, drawn from Jeff McMahan (2018, 420):

Wide Proportionality: It's impermissible for Defender to kill Unjust Threat if (1) the proportion of harms to nonliable parties far exceeds the benefits to nonliable parties and (2) there's no other justification for harming Unjust Threat.

I have indexed this to *killing*, but the same principle holds for other kinds of serious harm. For example, if Abel could prevent Cain from breaking his arm only by breaking Cain's arm and Eve's arm, then Abel wouldn't be permitted to prevent Cain from breaking his arm. Wide proportionality is concerned with harms to *nonliable* parties: that is, individuals who haven't forfeited their right against harm (McMahan 2009, 21-32).⁴¹

3.1. The Argument from Omnismaturity

The penultimate theistic commitment I wish to discuss is *omnismaturity*.⁴² According to Linda Zagzebski, omnismaturity is "the property of consciously grasping with perfect accuracy and completeness the first-person perspective of every conscious being" (2008, 232). Zagzebski argues that divine omniscience entails this property:

I take it for granted that if we could really 'get' what it is like to feel what another feels, see what she sees, and know what she knows from her own viewpoint, we could have a deeper and better kind of knowledge of her than if we merely know that she sees grey, feels frustrated, and knows she made a mess in the market.... In any case, it is an epistemic state, and it is epistemically better to have it than not to have it. If an omniscient being has perfect epistemic states, an omniscient being should have it. (Zagzebski 2008, 232)

Despite the relatively fresh arrival of this view on the philosophical market, omnismaturity is already being utilized in other theological contexts.⁴³ There are also reasons for embracing omnismaturity as being *morally* better to have than to lack, and thus for thinking that divine moral perfection and omnibenevolence entail omnismaturity.⁴⁴ For example, a God who possesses a full and qualitatively rich understanding of creaturely sorrows and joys is morally better than a God who doesn't.⁴⁵ On Zagzebski's view, omnismaturity is

⁴¹ Cf. McMahan (2018).

⁴² For an early motivation for divine omnismaturity, see Mander (2000).

⁴³ See, for example, Green (2017).

⁴⁴ Zagzebski thinks that because omnismaturity entails "a much deeper grasp of what is good" (2008: 245) for others, this assists divine providence. Presumably, it's also helpful for providentially pursuing the flourishing of others, which is a moral perfection. This is further reason for supposing that divine moral perfection entails omnismaturity.

⁴⁵ One might think it's impersonally morally better if God *doesn't* suffer, since that would merely increase the number of sufferers in the world. And if it's impersonally better, then God is impassible. This argument, if it succeeds, entails that *if we could help it*, we ought to refrain from empathizing with others since doing so is

a matter not only of empathy, but what she calls *total empathy*, or “the state of representing all of another person’s conscious states, including their beliefs, sensations, moods, desires, and choices, as well as their emotions” (Zagzebski 2008, 241). God has total empathy for all conscious beings and has it *perfectly*, to boot. Thus, any theistic view wanting to maintain divine moral or epistemic perfections has reason to embrace omnisubjectivity. Tracing the implications, Zagzebski writes:

If perfect empathy includes a complete and accurate representation of another person’s emotions, perfect total empathy includes a complete and accurate representation of all of another person’s conscious states. If A has *perfect total empathy* with B, then whenever B is in a conscious state C, A is conscious that B is in C and takes that fact to be a reason to acquire C herself. A acquires a state that is an accurate copy of C both in quality and in strength, and A is aware that her conscious state is a copy of C. (Zagzebski 2008, 241)

I propose that an omniscient being must have perfect total empathy with you and with all conscious beings. This is the property I call omnisubjectivity. An omnisubjective being would know what it is like to be you, as well as what it is like to be your dog, the bats in the cave, the birds, the fish, the reptiles, and each human being yet to be born. An omnisubjective being would know everything that you know or understand from living your life. (Zagzebski 2008, 242)

Possible mental states for conscious beings include *sensory states*, like pain and pleasure, and *emotional states*, like fear and joy. These mental states are, moreover, common among conscious beings. They are also sometimes important features of our lives. Thus, if God has the property of omnisubjectivity, then God has pain, pleasure, fear, and joy.⁴⁶ God has them whenever we have them, in the same qualitative way we have them, and at the same strength we have them. Otherwise, God would lack a *complete*, first-person picture of every conscious being. Here, I assume the dominant view: *qualia internalism*, “the thesis that qualia are intrinsic to their subjects” and only intrinsic duplicates have the same qualia (Byrne & Tye 2006, 241).⁴⁷ Each conscious being has qualia, and therefore a complete, first-person representation of them requires God to be a (partial) intrinsic conscious duplicate. If the qualia are *intrinsic* duplicates, however, then God possesses the relevant mental states in the *precise* way a particular conscious subject does. Moreover, God’s mind is an intrinsic duplicate not only of one conscious subject, but of all of them, despite having non-duplicated beliefs, desires, and other mental states of God’s own.⁴⁸

impersonally better than if we empathized. Indeed, it seems obvious that failing to empathize is, in many cases, a great evil. Cf. Hartshorne (1948, 43-44).

⁴⁶ The question of whether God has emotions is, of course, controversial among theists. For an overview of the literature, see Scrutton (2013) and Mullins (2020). For a recent sampling of the debate among theologians, see Gundry & Sprinkle (2019). For a defense of divine passibility, see Scrutton (2009). Cf. Taliaferro (1989). For a classic defense of divine impassibility, see Creel (1986).

⁴⁷ For a defense of qualia internalism, see Pautz (2006). For a critique of qualia internalism, see Byrne & Tye (2006). Notably, some have argued that qualia internalism is inconsistent with a physicalist view of the human person. However, none of my arguments require physicalism, and others arguably require either that God is physical (otherwise, God couldn’t be an intrinsic conscious duplicate of any fully physical, conscious being) or that physicalism is false (a view I accept but prefer my arguments not depend on).

⁴⁸ Should we accept a modal variant of omnisubjectivity on which God necessarily possesses all possible mental states? Doing so would cause trouble for this argument in the following way: If God *necessarily* possesses all possible mental states, then causing defensive pain doesn’t contribute to God’s pain and thus doesn’t violate wide

Zagzebski anticipates the objection that because human mental states include morally wrongful intentional states, such as bloodlust or perverse pleasure or jealousy, then God's possession of omniscience might appear to undermine divine moral perfection. Her solution is to argue that "no conscious state is intrinsically evil in the absence of its directness towards a certain intentional object" (2008, 243). This is why, she argues, we can "judge not p while empathizing with a person who judges p" such that "a copy of a judgment is not a judgment and a copy of a choice is not a choice" (2008, 243).⁴⁹ For those unpersuaded by Zagzebski's solution, we could instead concede the problem but insist that God is not *quite* omniscient but comes as close as moral perfection allows, as R.T. Mullins (2020, 64-69) and Keith Ward (2017, 174-175) argue. Whichever route we take, it seems critical to avoid impugning divine moral perfection. The following account should suffice:

Omniscience: God possesses mental state duplicates (1) of all the mental states of all conscious beings with identical qualitative richness (3) provided it doesn't detract from God's moral perfection.

Of course, the *rejection* of omniscience or some of its entailments appears to be the historically privileged view, in particular because of the rejection of divine passibility. Anselm of Canterbury (1965, ch. 8), Bernard of Clairvaux (1983, ch. 3), Thomas Aquinas (Leftow 2012), and Baruch Spinoza (1994, Part V, Prop. 17) all rejected it. Indeed, divine impassibility also has its contemporary defenders (e.g., Helm 1990). But as Paul Gavrilyuk observes, impassibility as a majority view is no longer the case and the consensus now runs in the opposite direction:

With a few significant exceptions, modern theologians advocate the claim that God suffers. Scholarly opinion shows a remarkable consensus on this issue, despite the variety of qualifications, the difference in approaches and topics addressed. Theologians representing various trends, such as theology of the cross, kenotic, biblical, liberation, feminist, process, openness, philosophical, and historical theologies have voiced their opinions in defense of divine passibility. (Gavrilyuk 2006, 1)

If nothing else, this tells us something about what contemporary theists believe. And they believe divine passibility by large margins.

Omniscience plausibly entails that God has mental duplicates of the mental states *being in pain* and *being afraid of death* for every being that possesses those mental states.⁵⁰ Generally, killing others—even in permissible self-defense—causes those mental states in those we kill.

proportionality. Call this view *Modal Omniscience*. In my view, we have powerful reason to reject Modal Omniscience: It requires the existence of *modal qualia*, that is, qualia possessed by merely possible (i.e., nonactual) persons. But there's nothing that it's like to be a merely possible person, and thus merely possible persons (like other non-concrete things) lack qualia. Given that omniscience essentially involves divine 'copies' of the mental states of other conscious persons, the fact that merely possible persons lack mental states entails that God cannot 'copy' those (nonexistent) states.

⁴⁹ If emotions involve judgments, then there are some emotions God simply can't have. For example, God can't fear death if doing so involves a tacit judgment that God will (or can) die, which is metaphysically impossible. However, this presents no obvious barrier to God possessing other emotions like intense sadness or being in pain. Moreover, if Zagzebski is right that omniscience *requires* omniscience, this offers classical theists a reason to reject the view that emotions involve judgments.

⁵⁰ For another defense of the possibility of infinite divine pain, see Rogers & Conroy (2015).

Thus, when we kill others, God generally experiences pain and fear of death. Necessarily, if theism is true, God is never liable to any harm. Perhaps this is because God never acts impermissibly,⁵¹ or perhaps it's because harming God is not a means to achieving defensive aims.⁵² Rejecting the assumption that God is never liable to any harm would be a radical departure from most theistic views.

Assume, as most theists do, that humans can die but God can't. In cases where Unjust Threat will *kill* Defender unless Defender first kills Unjust Threat, the harms to God if either is killed will therefore exclude dying. Thus, God will be harmed less in those cases than Defender or Unjust Threat would be.⁵³ If Defender kills Unjust Threat, that may cause genuine pain and terror for both God and Unjust Threat, but at least Defender will survive. Thus, Defender killing Unjust Threat wrongs God but does not violate wide proportionality. However, imagine a different case wherein Defender is threatened only with intense, but non-lethal suffering and can prevent it only by causing intense, non-lethal suffering in Unjust Threat. Under those conditions, the prospective harms are *identical* across the three parties: Defender, Unjust Threat, and God would suffer intensely. Thus, if Defender caused Unjust Threat and God to suffer intensely, Defender would *not* avert more harm to other nonliable parties, for God and Defender would merely swap places, and *that* would violate wide proportionality.⁵⁴ But then the prevention of nonlethal suffering *necessarily* violates wide proportionality, at least in cases where the choice of averting harm is between only two nonliable parties.⁵⁵ Yet such cases are foundational to commonsense views of permissible self-defense, and therefore foundational to TDC. Thus, if Omnisubjectivity is true, TDC is false.

There is one final problematic import of Omnisubjectivity for defensive permissions. In the above analysis, I assumed (for argument's sake) that because God can experience pain but can't die, it is better from the standpoint of justice for God to suffer (but not die) as a side

⁵¹ This assumes a controversial thesis about moral liability—namely, that *justification defeats liability*. If theists are right that God is justified in permitting all the world's evils, then God will not be liable for any of them. For a defense of the view that justification defeats liability, see McMahan (2014). For a defense of the view that justification doesn't defeat liability, see Hosein (2014).

⁵² This may appear to endorse an *internalist* view of moral liability according to which instrumentality (or sufficiency or successfulness) is a necessary condition for moral liability. Some philosophers like Helen Frowe reject internalism generally, and others—like Daniel Statman (2008)—reject it specifically because of the instrumentality condition. However, we need not accept internalism to make this move. On certain externalist views like Frowe's (2014, 109-115), instrumentality is a necessary condition for moral liability to defensive harm because, without instrumentality, the harm fails to be *defensive*. So, minimally, we can say that God is not liable to defensive harm, which is all the argument needs.

⁵³ While killing God is assumed to be impossible, the assumption that God's invulnerability to death entails a *weaker* violation of wide proportionality assumes that death for humans would be bad for them. That is, it assumes Universalism is false.

⁵⁴ The scope of wide proportionality is universally understood to include intended harms and merely foreseen harms, including very indirect harms. For more on these harms, see McMahan (2018), Bazargan-Forward (2017), and Rodin (2017).

⁵⁵ One discussant raised the following objection: Grueling exercise harms God without benefitting God. So, grueling exercise violates wide proportionality. So, grueling exercise is impermissible. But that's absurd. Call this the *Trivial Harm Objection*. Which premise should we reject? I say we reject the first and fourth premises. Exercise *benefits* human mental health by releasing adrenaline, endorphins, and preventing pain and fear states associated with muscular atrophy, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. So, God shares in these benefits and harm preventions. The fourth premise asks us to believe it's absurd to claim that grueling exercise is impermissible. However, that isn't obvious. If you're psychically connected to another person and they feel everything you feel, then (intuitively) there *are* some things you ought not do without your psychic partner's consent, such as self-surgery or brutal exercise. So, you ought not inflict unnecessary pain on yourself, as it would harm (presumably non-consenting) God.

effect than for a Hell-bound human to suffer *and* die, and that wide proportionality therefore permits harming God every time. And perhaps it is reasonable to expect God to suffer (but not die) for the sake of saving another nonliable party who will both suffer and die. But *how many times* is it reasonable for God to endure this? Even if we could reasonably expect a nonliable person to take a painful gunshot wound as a side effect of saving another bystander's life, it seems unreasonable to expect them to take *dozens, thousands, or even millions* of bullets even it would spare the lives of multiple nonliable persons. We could dig in our heels and insist on parity in the single case and in the multiples case. But that would show us our judgment is mistaken in the *single* case, not the multiples case. Thus, it's unreasonable to expect any nonliable person to endure however much harm is necessary to avert greater harm to other nonliable parties. Moreover, this remains true even if we accept God's infinitude, understood either as eternal existence or infinite cognitive complexity. Eternal existence is morally irrelevant since harms to human persons can violate wide proportionality even if human persons live forever. As for the infinite complexity of God's mind, one might worry that such complexity would 'swamp' the conscious intensity of, say, a painful stab wound. However, that's just a rejection of Omnisubjectivity, which requires that God's mental duplicates be of identical qualitative richness. The painful stab wound that absorbs the human victim's full attention, therefore, must do the same for God.

3.2. The Argument from Divine Love

The final assumption is simple enough to state, but requires some explication:

Divine Love: God (1) has maximal parental-like love for all human beings, (2) is emotionally harmed when they are harmed (irrespective of the reason), and (3) is especially emotionally harmed when God's children harm or attempt to harm each other.

That God maximally loves all human beings is something I shall take for granted (Adams 1999, 31; Stump 2010, 100-107; Swinburne 2010, 28-38; Davis 2018; Hick 1966; Abrahamov 2011; Song 2008). That God's love for us is properly characterized as *parental-like* is meant to say that God is our creator, caretaker, and moral guide, and that these roles generate an emotional complex for God that is psychologically similar to that of a (normative) human parent (Stump 2010, 187-190).⁵⁶ At a minimum, most theists accept that God loves all humans even if the love is not parental in nature.

The nature of love is partly *preservative*. Loving someone, at a minimum, entails valuing their welfare and possessing a presumptive commitment to preserve it. When those we love are harmed, *we* are (barring special circumstances) emotionally harmed. That's why God is presented as being emotionally harmed by the murder of Abel and why, in some religious traditions, God is said not to rejoice at the deaths of even the wicked (*Ezek.* 18:23; 33:11). If your children are killed and you love them, you will experience emotional harm. Thus, (2) is on very solid footing.

The final condition, (3), is also supremely plausible. Imagine being Adam or Eve and hearing that your son Cain murdered his brother Abel. Your love for Abel will cause you to

⁵⁶ Whatever one's position on the Parent Analogy in the skeptical theism literature, the Divine Love thesis is far more conservative. For starters, it doesn't assume that God's role as a loving parent is incompatible with apparently unjustified evils. For more on the skeptical theism discussion, see Wielenberg (2015). Cf. Jordan (2017, 2012) and Talbott (2013).

grieve his death, but your grief will be compounded by the fact that it was *Abel's own brother* who killed him. It is one thing to lose a child and quite another to lose them to fratricide. There are at least three reasons to believe this. First, we generally hope for harmony between those we love. This is more than a desire for everyone to be well; it's a desire for the *relationships* to be well. When Cain kills Abel, it's more than Abel that suffers: It's also the relationship between Cain and Abel. The love between two brothers was harmed when one jealously, mercilessly, and mortally *betrayed* the other.⁵⁷ Second, our special obligations to our children entail a special obligation of emotive investment in their welfare. We should care when any child is harmed, but even more so when *our* child is harmed. This is associated with our obligation to prioritize our own children's welfare, including emotionally. Third, it's not an enviable position to be placed in a forced-choice circumstance where you must kill a human being in order to survive. (It's unspeakably worse when the person you must kill is your sibling.) If God loves you, God will agonize with your difficult choice and the fact that you defensively killed someone. Since God loves you and your human victim as their own children, all of the above is even worse for God.

Suppose now that someone unjustly tries to kill you, and that lethal defense is required to prevent it. Either you attempt to kill them or not. If you do, then either (a) you succeed: you survive and they are killed, (b) you fail: you are killed but they survive, or (c) you fail: you are killed and so are they. Each would involve significant harm to God, as both you and your unjust attacker are human beings whom God loves and *both* of you attempt fratricide. By contrast, *foregoing* self-defense would result in *less* harm to God because only one of you will attempt fratricide. Thus, God is harmed significantly more if you *pursue* self-defense than if you forego it.⁵⁸ Because God is a nonliable party, there is a presumption grounded in wide proportionality *against* self-defense.

Because this is not an obviously standard way of applying wide proportionality, I shall dispel some initial worries, using the case of *Double Threat* to explain. If there's some problem with thinking that Eve's interests matter here for wide proportionality, it must be because they differ in *degree* or in *kind* from more standard interests (e.g., physical harms). So, if they differ in neither respect, then Eve's interests (and therefore God's same interests) matter for wide proportionality. Let's first consider the possibility that Eve's interests differ in kind. Why would this be? Here are three proposals:

- (A) The harms to Eve don't count against wide proportionality because they're merely *psychological* harms;
- (B) There are *no harms* to Eve;
- (C) The harms to Eve don't count against wide proportionality because they're not linked to her *physical integrity*.

⁵⁷ This reason further supports the argument, where I argue that God is devastated even by the death of culpable offenders: Culpable offenders (further) destroy relationships with their culpable actions, particularly fully culpable murderers. Thus, even for theists who deny that God is saddened by the killing of fully culpable would-be murderers, it remains possible (and plausible) that God is saddened by the destruction of the relationship, and by the predicament of the justified self-defenders to kill others.

⁵⁸ I stipulated that you could prevent being killed *only* by killing. If you think most self-defense cases are more optimistic than that because the person threatening you might *fail*, this helps the argument, since then the premise would look like this: *If you don't attempt to kill them, then either (d) they succeed: you are killed but they survive or (e) they fail: you both survive.* That disjunction is even *better* for God's welfare than the possibilities under pursuing self-defense. So, from the vantage of wide proportionality, foregoing self-defense is clearly preferable to pursuing it.

Psychological harms to nonliable parties count towards wide proportionality because they are *harms*. Consider the following case:

Double Threat: Abel is threatened by Cain and Serpent, both of whom intend to kill Abel unjustly. Luckily, Abel needs to kill only one of them to dissuade the other from attacking: Killing Cain would dissuade Serpent, and killing Serpent would dissuade Cain. Whereas Cain has a mother, Eve, who loves him and would be forever devastated by his loss, Serpent has no such family. Abel knows all of this.

The case clarifies two matters. First, it's impermissible for Abel to kill *both* Cain and Serpent. Only one of those killings is necessary for defensive success, and thus killing both fails to be instrumental in defensive success. While we might excuse Abel for killing both if he didn't know that killing one would save his life, that would be an excuse and not a justification (thus preserving the impermissibility of killing both), and, more to the point, Abel *isn't* ignorant in *Double Threat*. The second thing that's clear about the case is that who Abel kills isn't a matter of *moral indifference*. There's a clear reason for Abel to kill Serpent over Cain: because killing Cain will have a serious adverse effect on Eve, whereas killing Serpent wouldn't have that effect on Eve (or anyone). To say otherwise is to discount Eve's interests too much.⁵⁹ Thus, (A) and (B) are false.

I'll offer two arguments against (C). The first is that (C), if true, entails that *disembodied* persons have no legitimate claims to defensive harming. If humans invented lethal anti-angel weaponry and angels could prevent themselves only by killing (embodied) humans, it's implausible to think it impermissible to do so *in principle*. Since angels would have such defensive permissions, it follows that their interests are of the right kind despite being lacking any link to their physical integrity. The same would be true of a nonliable, disembodied God. The second argument can be built on the following dual cases:

Deprivation: Abel, who is now only twenty, will live well past ninety and his life will be filled with exquisite, almost indescribable joy, pleasure, and meaning—unless Cain murders him, which he does.

Nihilator: Same as *Deprivation*, except Cain is unable to *kill* Abel. However, Cain *is* capable of depriving Abel of all joy, pleasure, and meaning with a special ray gun: the Nihilator. Cain uses it.

It's hard to see an important moral difference between Cain's actions in the two cases because, first, it's the *deprivation* that partially explains the impermissibility of killing Abel in *Deprivation* and, second, because Abel suffers identical deprivation in *Nihilator* (Fischer and Brueckner 2013; Blatti 2012; Bradley 2007, 2004). So, we should maintain that Abel retains standard defensive permissions in *Nihilator*. So, we should reject (C). Perhaps there are other arguments for the view that Eve's interests are kind-irrelevant to wide proportionality

⁵⁹ It might seem unfair to prioritize killing Serpent over killing Cain since Serpent lacks a loving family, which is a matter of luck. But we can distinguish between two kinds of luck here: luck that alters Serpent's *liability* and luck that alters the *all-things-considered permissibility* of killing Serpent. It's arguably unjust for the former to depend on luck, which is why some in the ethics of self-defense take an externalist view of liability. But it's false to claim that the latter can't depend on luck. In *Matricide*, for example, it's sheer luck that Eve would be struck by Abel's spear, but that doesn't make it permissible for Abel to kill Eve. For a defense of an externalist view of liability, see Firth & Quong (2012, 680). For an internalist reply, see Frowe (2014, 94-106).

calculations, but I don't know what they are, and I have surveyed and rejected the best *prima facie* reasons to think otherwise. At the very least, then, it falls to defenders of the kind-irrelevant position to offer further arguments.

Moving on, then, to the second possibility: Eve's interest differ sufficiently not in kind but in *degree*. If true, this means that the psychological harms to Eve in cases like *Double Threat* count towards wide proportionality calculations but fail to make defensive killing widely disproportionate. That is, the harms to Eve count some, but not enough. God, however, is a *normatively perfect* parent with *maximal love* for their children. If this is true, then there is no 'cap' on the emotive or otherwise psychological devastation wreaked upon God at the loss of one of their children, and this harm is only compounded when that loss is incurred by *another* divine child. A paradox of normatively perfect parenting is that God would at the same time be maximally *relieved* by the preservation of the other child in cases of lethal self-defense, but this does not change the wide proportionality calculus. God's maximal interest in preserving Abel was satisfied prior to the confrontation between Cain and Abel. Thus, even if Abel kills Cain in self-defense, Abel merely keeps that interest afloat. But by killing Cain, Abel defeats two of God's interests: the preservation of Cain and the preservation of the relationship between Cain and Abel. Of course, Abel cannot preserve this alone, and Cain has already made quite a mess of the relationship. And if, contrary to stipulation, Abel had *nonlethal* alternatives to preventing the harms Cain threatens, the relationship between the brothers might be preserved. However, even this isn't guaranteed, as even nonlethal violence can destroy relationships. What Abel *can* do is not damage the relationship further by turning against his brother and killing him. At the very least, Abel can avoid harming *God* further by refraining from turning against his brother. It is admittedly difficult to imagine a normatively perfect parent, but we can reasonably expect that such a parent would place an exceedingly high price on siblings's not killing each other (justifiably or not), and that they would be proportionately invested in avoiding this outcome. God loves them not only as individuals, but as *siblings*, and God's maximal love for them on both counts entails maximal satisfaction with their flourishing as individuals and siblings and maximal devastation with their destruction as individuals or siblings.

One might object that a normatively perfect parent would be *slightly* more distraught by the death of Abel than Cain, since only the former is unjust. A perfectly just God would prefer the death of the unjustified attacker over the defender, and therefore *foregoing* self-defense would violate wide proportionality by satisfying fewer of God's preferences.⁶⁰ Here, we can understand God's preference that Cain rather than Abel be killed as either a preference that affects God's welfare or a preference that doesn't (i.e., a mere moral preference). If the former is true, then wide proportionality is satisfied (other things being equal) *only if* Cain is killed rather than Abel. Because wide proportionality is a restraint on permissible harming, it follows that Abel's killing Cain is *morally obligatory*. The problem generalizes: The defensive harming of *any* unjustified aggressor is morally obligatory in cases where the alternative is the nonliable defender being harmed or killed. This, however, contradicts the consensus view that self-defense is at least sometimes, if not quite often, a moral *prerogative* (i.e., a mere permission) and not a moral *obligation*. Thus, the objection (under the first interpretation) fails, and its success would independently establish TDI. If the second interpretation holds and God's preference is a mere moral preference, then God's preference doesn't change the wide proportionality calculations and the objection is question-begging. God would still be maximally psychologically harmed by the death of even the unjustified attacker, who is nevertheless God's child. Thus, Abel's self-defense against Cain still maximally harms God's psychology,

⁶⁰ My thanks to Mark Murphy for raising this objection in correspondence.

thereby violating wide proportionality and making Abel's defensive action morally impermissible. Thus, God wouldn't prefer Abel's self-defense since it is widely disproportionate and therefore morally impermissible. Of course, if God *waived* their right against unjust harm, then harming God would not violate wide proportionality. However, I see no reason to believe God has done so.

We can press harder on the first objection. Perhaps God's welfare-based preference that Cain die rather than Abel doesn't *tip* the wide proportionality scale so much as *balance* it. That is, Abel's choice whether to engage in self-defense or forego it is a wash with respect to wide proportionality: the harm of injustice versus the harm of brother against brother.⁶¹ However, we have good reason to believe that a normatively perfect parent would be harmed more by the latter than the former. First, parents should have greater *emotional* investment in their children's relationship than in the Right or the Good, which is distinct from saying they should *prioritize* those relationships over the Right or the Good. Second, suppose Eve reacted to Cain's death in the following way: "I am aggrieved by Cain's death, yes, but far less upset than I would have been if Abel, who was in the right, had been killed instead!" If we interpret Eve's remarks as signaling *lesser grief* by virtue of Cain's having rightly been killed, this seems like a *parental imperfection* on Eve's part even if it's a moral perfection for a more neutral third party. Third, if Abel in fact turns against Cain because he feels he must do so to save his own life, this actualizes a secondary injustice: namely, innocent Abel feeling practically (but not morally) forced to turn against the brother he loves. It is not merely bad, but *unjust* that Abel is forced to feel this way, and the injustice is compounded the greater Abel's compulsion to act—and thus *worse* if Abel is sufficiently motivated to act rather than not act. By foregoing self-defense against Cain, therefore, Abel avoids inflicting this further harm upon God. Thus, the objection fails.

In sum: Since God's psychological interests differ in neither kind nor degree, it follows that God's psychological interests should be counted in wide proportionality calculations. Moreover, the severity of the psychological harms to God given certain facts about divine love entails that wide proportionality is supremely difficult, if not impossible, to satisfy.

4. Conclusion

Does theism make a difference for the ethics of self-defense? Herein, I have argued that a fistful of popular theistic beliefs about the afterlife (Hellism, Annihilationism, Universalism, and Danteanism) and God's nature (Omnisubjectivity and Divine Love) take us far afield from commonsense views of self-defense. Each of these arguments therefore supports TDI, the view that common theistic commitments entail non-trivial restrictions on either the scope or the explanation for permissible defensive harming. Taken together, these six arguments offer a powerful cumulative case for TDI.

The result is that theists committed to any of these popular theistic beliefs, including this author, have some thinking to do. Here, I shall make four recommendations for future research. First, theists should expand their focus to achieve greater reflective equilibrium: They should tailor their theisms with self-defense in mind and tailor their defensive views with theism in mind. Once we learn that theism has implications for self-defense, we can use orthodox views of self-defense as a cudgel against certain theistic views. Second, if views

⁶¹ My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for sharpening this objection.

relatively indispensable to theism entail radical theses about self-defense, that may provide reason to reconsider theism. The third recommendation flows naturally from the first: If theists find certain theological assumptions indispensable and those assumptions problematize orthodox views of self-defense, then self-defense orthodoxy should be reconsidered if not abandoned.⁶² Fourth, if the problem centers on commitments controversial among theists, then further reflection on theism and self-defense may inform in-house debates among theists.

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⁶² For example, to ameliorate some of the problems, we might join Peter Vallentyne (2016) in his view that *any* degree of defensive harming is necessarily narrowly proportionate against culpable threateners. Frowe (2014, 118) claims this view is unique to Vallentyne.

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