

# Justice Without Cosmic Guarantees — 44

## Moral Longing, Two Missing Bridges, and the Urgency of Finite Repair

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### Central claim

Unrepaired suffering gives us decisive reasons to seek justice, but neither its moral force nor its persistence warrants belief in a cosmic settlement. Two bridges need independent support: from what justice demands to what reality will supply, and from any final settlement to a personal justice-guarantor. Unfinished justice is expected on a non-guarantee view, so it cannot simply count as evidence for the guarantee introduced to overcome it. This leaves rational hope, practical faith, an afterlife, and independently supported theism open while making finite repair urgent.

### Preview:

| Moral starting point                                                                                     | First bridge                                                          | Comparative record                                                                                        | Second bridge and response                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Some grave harms remain unacknowledged, unpunished, and beyond finite repair; that loss is morally real. | “This ought to be answered” does not entail “reality will answer it”. | Unfinished justice is expected if no cosmic guarantee exists; delay therefore does not favor a guarantee. | Even a final settlement would not by itself select a personal guarantor. Require independent support, permit hope, and pursue finite repair now. |

*The conclusion concerns what longing and unfinished justice establish by themselves; independent arguments for cosmic justice or theism remain open.*

### Visual preview:



*The preserved image compresses the paper's moral starting point, the demand–evidence gap, proportionality pressure, and turn toward finite repair. The native Preview separates that compressed warning into two bridges. The image's inherited use of the unqualified term God is vernacular shorthand; this paper uses God-concept for a specified conception of a deity. Its limited conclusion is that longing does not supply metaphysical proof, not that no cosmic settlement is possible.*

### Abstract

Some wrongs are never punished, some victims never receive public recognition, and some losses cannot be undone by any finite institution. The question is whether this tragedy and the moral demand it creates warrant belief in a cosmic settlement administered by a personal justice-guarantor. This paper argues that they do not by themselves. The inference crosses two bridges: from what justice demands to what reality will supply, and from a final settlement to a justice-guaranteeing God-concept, meaning a specified conception of a deity committed to ensuring such a settlement. Neither bridge is supplied merely by intensifying the demand. The comparison also runs in the opposite direction from the familiar argument: unfinished justice is expected on a non-guarantee view, so the earthly record cannot simply be counted as evidence for the guarantee introduced to overcome it. A distinction among recognition, protection, accountability, repair, restoration, and proportionality then shows why no single punitive or redemptive mechanism follows from the word *justice*. Kantian practical faith, redemptive defeat, pragmatic commitment, and revelation remain serious routes because they add premises or evidence. The result does not disprove theism, an afterlife, cosmic justice, or rational hope. It requires readers to name hope as hope, evidence as evidence, and finite repair as urgent when no final settlement can be assumed.

**Keywords:** ultimate justice; philosophy of religion; moral repair; afterlife; problem of evil; hope; evidential responsibility; theism

## 1. The Wound Before the Argument

The case for ultimate justice begins with a fact that should not be softened for argumentative convenience. Courts fail. Perpetrators die unexposed. Victims are disbelieved, forgotten, or remembered too late. Genocide destroys communities whose later recognition cannot restore the lives, languages, attachments, and futures that were taken from them. Private betrayal can alter a person permanently even when the offender apologizes. A world without final repair would not merely disappoint a preference. It would leave morally serious claims unanswered.

That is the wound. The argument begins when a further claim is attached to it: reality cannot finally be that way. There must be an order in which hidden wrongs are disclosed, sufferers are restored, wrongdoers are judged, and the moral account is closed. For many believers this is not a detachable theorem. It is part of what makes grief endurable and moral action intelligible. A critique that treats the longing as childish has already failed to understand its object.

Moral seriousness, however, makes the inferential question sharper rather than weaker. A victim can deserve recognition even if no one ever provides it. A person can deserve rescue and still die unrescued. A destroyed relationship can deserve repair when repair has become impossible. The word *deserve* states what agents owe; it does not automatically describe what the universe contains. Tragedy is precisely the possibility that what ought to happen does not happen.

The governing thesis has four connected parts. First, the moral authority of a demand does not contain a descriptive guarantee that reality will satisfy it. Second, even an independently established final settlement would not by itself identify its mechanism or a personal guarantor. Third, unfinished earthly justice is expected on a non-guarantee view and therefore cannot simply serve as positive evidence for a cosmic guarantee. Fourth, none of this makes hope irrational or finite justice trivial; it makes honest hope and present repair more urgent. The absence of a final settlement would be terrible, but terror is not contradiction.

## 2. State the Two Bridges Precisely

### 2.1 What “ultimate justice” could mean

Ultimate justice is not one outcome. It may mean that every hidden fact becomes known, that every wrongdoer receives a proportionate response, that every victim is acknowledged, that stolen opportunities are restored, that

damaged agency is healed, that relationships are repaired, or that moral worth and well-being finally correspond. These aims can conflict. Punishing an offender does not recreate a victim's lost childhood. Forgiving an offender does not by itself protect future victims. Compensation can acknowledge a debt without making an irreversible loss commensurable with money. A true account of events can validate a victim while reopening trauma.

Institutional theories such as Rawls's address principles for a social basic structure; they do not promise that every historical wrong will be reversed (Rawls, 1971). Walker's victim-centered account of moral repair is closer to the present problem because it treats validation, responsibility, trust, hope, and amends as practices for rebuilding moral relations after wrongdoing (Walker, 2006). Even that richer framework does not imply that every harm can be erased. It instead clarifies how many distinct achievements are concealed by the phrase *made right*.

This paper uses *theism* for the general position that at least one deity exists. A *God-concept* is a specified conception of a deity. The target here is not bare theism but a *justice-guaranteeing God-concept*: a conception of a personal deity able and committed to ensuring an ultimate settlement of grave wrongs. Different Christian, Jewish, Islamic, deistic, universalist, annihilationist, and retributive accounts fill out that guarantee differently. The diversity matters because a desire for justice does not select one mechanism merely by being intense.

## 2.2 The two-bridge justice-guarantee inference

The argument can be stated sympathetically:

- J1.** Some grave harms remain beyond adequate finite repair.
- J2.** Such harms ought not remain finally unanswered.
- J3.** A rationally authoritative moral demand is not ultimately futile: reality contains the conditions for its satisfaction.
- J4.** Only a transcendent personal agent could know every harm, preserve persons through death, restore victims, and judge with complete justice.

**Proposed conclusion.** Reality contains ultimate justice administered by a justice-guaranteeing God-concept.

J1 and J2 have considerable moral force. J3 is the first bridge, from what ought to be to what reality will supply. J4 is the second, from the required outcome to a personal guarantor. Neither bridge follows from J1 and J2; each needs its own defense.

### The two missing bridges

**First bridge: demand to settlement.** "This ought to be answered" can create duties; it does not predict what reality will supply without a demand-to-settlement principle.

**Second bridge: settlement to guarantor.** A final settlement would not identify a personal guarantor without a supported selector among possible mechanisms.

Defenders may support one or both bridges through practical reason, revelation, desire reliability, religious experience, or an independently established God-concept. Those are arguments. Longing alone is not.

## 3. Why Longing Does Not Supply the First Bridge

### 3.1 Moral force and truth-directed force are different

Longing can reveal values. Grief discloses attachment; outrage discloses the judgment that someone was wronged; the refusal to forget can preserve a victim's standing against official erasure. These functions are morally and psychologically important. They do not make every proposition that would satisfy the longing more probable.

The distinction is familiar in the ethics of belief. Clifford's strict evidentialism insists that the comfort or social usefulness of a belief cannot substitute for adequate inquiry (Clifford, 1877). James offers the strongest classic reply: when an option is live, forced, momentous, and not decidable on intellectual grounds, a person may be permitted to commit rather than wait indefinitely (James, 1897/2014). The present thesis need not settle their full dispute. Even James's permission is not a device for turning desirable consequences into public evidence. A pragmatic right to commit and an evidential reason to expect truth answer different questions.

The same separation applies to ultimate justice. Believing in a final settlement may sustain courage, restrain vengeance, or help a bereaved person continue living. It may also, in other settings, defer urgent reform or encourage harsh judgments. These effects matter when assessing the practice of belief. They do not establish the metaphysical claim unless a further truth-linking premise is defended.

### 3.2 The bridge overgenerates

Suppose the bridge says that every deep and rational human demand corresponds to a real condition of satisfaction. Human beings also long for reunion with particular dead persons, immunity from irreversible loss, narrative closure, indefinite continuation, perfect understanding, and a world in which love never ends involuntarily. Some of these desires may be fulfilled. Their authority does not show that all are.

A defender may narrow the bridge to *properly basic*, *natural*, or *morally required* desires. That move is legitimate only if the narrower class is identified without selecting it because its members happen to have the desired objects. The distinction must explain why the demand for complete justice reliably tracks cosmic reality while comparably deep demands do not. Otherwise the bridge merely restates the conclusion in a protected vocabulary.

Hare's development of a Kantian "moral gap" illustrates a more serious route. He argues that the demand on us and our natural capacity to meet it generate a role for divine assistance within a larger Kantian and Christian framework (Hare, 1997). That position does not infer a deity from undifferentiated desire. It supplies a structured account of moral obligation, human limits, and the resources required for moral transformation. The cost is instructive: the stronger conclusion comes from the added framework, not from longing alone.

### 3.3 Unfinished justice does not rescue the first bridge

The justice-guarantee inference often treats unfinished justice as a gap that a divine hypothesis fills. Comparative reasoning asks a prior question: under which view is unfinished justice more expected? Under a non-guarantee view, finite institutions fail, natural events erase evidence, and death closes possibilities for repair. Under a justice-guaranteeing God-concept, the same record is compatible with eventual settlement, but its long delay and concealment require explanation.

Compatibility is not confirmation. A final settlement could redeem every apparent failure; until independent evidence supports that settlement, the earthly failure is not what we would ordinarily cite as evidence for a guarantee. It is the condition the guarantee is introduced to overcome. The problem is not a formal contradiction. It is comparative pressure.

Table 1: Comparison ledger. Each row identifies what the observed record contributes and what it cannot establish by itself.

| Observed pressure               | Justice-guarantee view                                                                    | Non-guarantee view                                                                          | Limited conclusion                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Irreparable earthly loss</b> | Eventual restoration can be promised, but the delay and mechanism need support.           | Permanent incompleteness is directly expected.                                              | The loss creates the question; it does not favor the promised answer.                                       |
| <b>Moral longing</b>            | May fit created moral agents oriented toward a highest good.                              | May arise from attachment, cooperation, protest, and awareness of violated norms.           | Shared expectation makes longing weakly discriminating without a defended origin story.                     |
| <b>Competing final models</b>   | One model may be true, but selection requires further theological or evidential premises. | Cultural and philosophical variation is unsurprising.                                       | Desire for justice underdetermines punishment, restoration, universalism, annihilation, and other accounts. |
| <b>Proportionality pressure</b> | A final account must explain why its response is just for offender and victim.            | No cosmic punishment is predicted; earthly practices remain answerable to finite standards. | A proposed remedy can create a new justice problem rather than solve the old one.                           |

Table 1 does not prove the non-guarantee view. It establishes the comparative part of the first-bridge critique: earthly incompleteness cannot simply be booked as evidence for the guarantee introduced in response to it.

## 4. The Second Bridge: Beyond the Cosmic Ledger

Suppose independent evidence established that some final settlement exists. A second question would remain: what would count as justice, and why would a personal deity be its necessary administrator? The phrase *final accounting* suggests that every wrong can receive an entry that balances it. But harms are not always commensurable with responses. A penalty imposed on an offender can express condemnation while leaving a victim isolated. A public apology can restore standing without restoring opportunity. A survivor may reasonably reject reconciliation while still deserving protection, truth, and material repair. Justice has several functions, and no single mechanism or guarantor follows from the word by definition.

Table 2: Functions hidden inside “ultimate justice.” The distinctions explain why a promise of final judgment is not yet a complete account of repair.

| Function                      | What it can accomplish                                                                | What remains unresolved                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Truth and recognition</b>  | Establish what occurred and affirm the victim’s moral standing.                       | Knowledge does not undo terror, death, lost time, or damaged agency.                                                                      |
| <b>Protection</b>             | Prevent further harm and secure conditions for agency.                                | Prevention may come too late for prior victims and does not itself answer desert.                                                         |
| <b>Accountability</b>         | Require offenders to answer, change, make amends, or bear proportionate consequences. | Punishment alone may neither restore victims nor transform offenders.                                                                     |
| <b>Material repair</b>        | Return resources, opportunity, access, or compensation where possible.                | Some losses have no equivalent and some opportunities cannot be recreated.                                                                |
| <b>Relational restoration</b> | Rebuild trust, agency, and moral relations when victims freely accept that path.      | Reconciliation cannot be owed by victims or imposed as the price of healing.                                                              |
| <b>Proportionality</b>        | Keep a response connected to culpability, harm, capacity, and purpose.                | Infinite or identity-altering responses need an account of why the same person remains responsible and why the response is not excessive. |

Walker's analysis of moral repair helps here because it gives priority to the victim's validation and the reconstruction of moral relations rather than to an abstract balancing device (Walker, 2006). The point is not that earthly repair is sufficient. It is that a cosmic proposal inherits the same conceptual burdens on a larger scale. Omniscience and power could expand the possible remedies; they do not make every proposed remedy just by definition.

The limitation is especially important when harm is irreversible. If a person is resurrected, receives goods, and flourishes forever, the prior wrong may be defeated within the whole life without being made not to have happened. That is a coherent distinction. It also means that "making it right" should not be used as though it named a single transparent operation. The account must say what is preserved, healed, compensated, forgiven, judged, or transformed, and why those outcomes respect the victim rather than merely improve the final total. This is the burden of the second bridge: a proposed settlement must identify both a just mechanism and an independent reason to believe that this mechanism is real.

## 5. A Defended First Bridge: Practical Faith Rather Than Proof

Kant presents a more disciplined argument than the simple claim that moral longing proves a cosmic judge. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the highest good joins virtue with happiness proportionate to moral worth. The moral law gives rational agents a practical commitment to that end, while nature and finite agency do not ensure it. The postulates of immortality and a moral author of nature make the highest good thinkable as an object of practical reason, even though they do not become objects of ordinary theoretical cognition (Kant, 1788/2015). Recent scholarship continues to debate the role and persistence of personal immortality in this structure; Pasternack defends its continued importance for the proportionate distribution central to Kant's account (Pasternack, 2024).

This route deserves respect because it changes the claim. It does not merely say, "We want justice, therefore it exists." It begins from a theory of practical reason, an account of the highest good as a necessary moral end, and a claim about what rational commitment to that end permits or requires agents to assume. The postulates function as practical rational faith, not as a discovered object in the way an observed institution or event is discovered.

The distinction both strengthens and limits the reply. It strengthens it because the bridge is visible and philosophically motivated. It limits it because practical necessity is not automatically public confirmation of the postulated objects. A reader who rejects Kant's account of the highest good, the duty to promote it, or the transition from duty to postulate has not been answered merely by the tragedy of incomplete justice. A reader who accepts the framework may have a practical reason for faith without claiming that earthly injustice is empirical evidence for a justice-guaranteeing deity.

The conclusion can therefore grant an important point: a person may rationally inhabit a practical-faith framework in which hope for final justice is not an idle wish. What remains blocked is the claim that longing itself, without the framework's added premises, supplies public metaphysical evidence.

## 6. Testing the Second Bridge: Redemptive and Punitive Models

Redemptive and punitive accounts make the second bridge concrete by specifying what a final settlement might do and why it might count as restoration or judgment. Coherence matters, but each account must still show that its mechanism is just and that there is independent reason to believe it will be realized.

### 6.1 Redemptive defeat

Adams offers one of the strongest Christian responses to horrendous evil. Her project is not to show that a later reward numerically outweighs a victim's suffering. It is to explain how participation in divine good could defeat a horror within the person's life as a whole, so that the horror no longer has the power to make that life not worth

living (Adams, 2000). That model directly addresses a weakness in cosmic-ledger language: victim restoration must be personal and meaning-sensitive, not merely distributive.

As a coherence proposal, redemptive defeat is significant. It shows that a sophisticated final-justice account need not rely on retaliation or pretend that compensation erases the past. It also demonstrates the paper's central boundary. A coherent model of how a deity could redeem horror is not yet evidence that such redemption will occur. Its truth still depends on the truth of the relevant God-concept, personal survival, and the redemptive relation Adams describes. The wound motivates the search for such a model; it does not select the model as actual.

## 6.2 Freedom-based final loss

Walls defends a traditional doctrine of hell by connecting final loss with a person's decisive free orientation rather than with an externally imposed infinite sentence for a finite list of acts (Walls, 1992). This is stronger than the crude picture of a deity assigning endless torment simply because a temporal offense has an infinite victim. It locates responsibility in continuing agency and attempts to preserve divine goodness and human freedom together.

The defense nevertheless accepts substantial burdens. The account must explain the quality of freedom under conditions of ignorance, formation, trauma, and unequal evidence; the relation between a finite history and an irrevocable orientation; why remedial opportunity ends; and how endless loss serves justice rather than merely respects refusal. If the response instead invokes continuing postmortem freedom and continuing opportunities for reconciliation, the model moves away from fixed retributive punishment. Either route may be coherent, but neither is entailed by the desire that victims receive justice.

The proportionality challenge should therefore be stated conditionally. A model that answers finite and developmentally conditioned wrongdoing with externally imposed endless suffering appears disproportionate unless a further account changes the unit of culpability, the nature of the suffering, or the purpose of the response. A freedom-based model offers such an account; it then inherits questions about agency and finality. The paper need not declare every doctrine of hell incoherent. It asks whether a proposed solution actually satisfies the justice standards that motivated it. Taken together, redemptive and freedom-based models show how the second bridge may be defended; they do not show that longing or unfinished justice has already crossed it.

## 7. Comparative Evidence: Why the Earthly Record Does Not Favor a Guarantee

The history of the problem of evil is useful because it distinguishes contradiction from evidence. Rowe's influential formulation does not claim that suffering logically contradicts every form of theism. It argues that apparently gratuitous suffering can make a perfectly good, powerful, and knowing God-concept less reasonable to believe (Rowe, 1979). The shift matters here. The absence of complete earthly justice is not a deductive disproof of a final settlement. It can still exert comparative pressure.

Consider the relevant expectations. A justice-guaranteeing God-concept can permit temporary injustice for reasons involving freedom, soul-making, stable natural order, moral formation, hidden goods, or eventual redemption. A non-guarantee view expects no cosmic correction at all. Both are compatible with a victim dying unheard. The event is nevertheless less surprising under the second view unless the first supplies reasons for the delay, concealment, and distribution of repair. Eventual settlement may answer the moral story; it cannot be used as evidence for itself merely because the earthly story is unfinished.

This creates a cumulative rather than decisive case. First, the moral demand for repair establishes duties and ideals but does not cross the first bridge to cosmic satisfaction. Second, the non-guarantee view predicts unfinished justice without auxiliary explanations, so the earthly record does not favor a guarantee. Third, the many functions of justice underdetermine the second bridge from settlement to mechanism and guarantor. Fourth, specific theistic solutions add expectations about proportionality, agency, revelation, and redemption that require

independent support. Together, these strands lower the evidential force of the justice-guarantee inference even though none deductively disproves cosmic justice.

The conclusion should not be reversed into triumphalism. If there is no final settlement, reality contains moral tragedy on a scale no theory repairs. The critic gains no moral victory from that. The point is epistemic: a view can be bleak and true, consoling and false, or consoling and true. The emotional cost of a possibility does not decide among them.

## 8. Hope and Finite Justice Without Counterfeit Knowledge

Hope is not a failed version of certainty. A person can hope that a missing victim is alive while admitting that the available evidence does not justify belief. A community can act in hope that repair remains possible without predicting success. Religious hope can organize endurance, worship, forgiveness, and resistance while remaining explicit about the difference between commitment and public demonstration.

James's pragmatic account makes this possibility vivid. When evidence cannot decide a live and momentous option, refusing commitment is itself a practical posture (James, 1897/2014). The paper's demand–evidence distinction does not forbid that posture. It asks that the justification be named accurately. “This hope enables faithful action under uncertainty” is a practical claim. “The intensity of our need makes the hoped-for settlement likely” is an evidential claim. The first can be true while the second remains unsupported.

Scheffler's “collective afterlife” provides a secular parallel. Many present projects depend for their meaning on the expectation that other people will live after us, even without personal survival after death (Scheffler, 2013). The example shows that future-oriented confidence can be morally indispensable without entailing personal immortality. It also redirects attention to what finite agents can actually preserve: institutions, testimony, knowledge, ecological conditions, practices of care, and the lives of future people.

Camus's posture of revolt likewise refuses to infer a cosmic answer from the human confrontation with suffering and absurdity (Camus, 1955). One need not accept his full existential program to see the ethical possibility. The absence of a guarantee does not entail apathy. It can make resistance more urgent because no later tribunal may correct what finite agents permit now.

That urgency has practical content:

- preserve testimony before evidence disappears;
- build institutions that reduce dependence on the virtue of powerful individuals;
- center victims in decisions about recognition, repair, and reconciliation;
- impose proportionate accountability aimed at protection, acknowledgment, and responsible agency;
- transmit truthful memory when restoration is impossible; and
- hold hope as hope when the evidence does not support a stronger report.

These acts are finite. Their finitude does not make them null. Justice need not become ultimate before it becomes real.

## 9. Objections and Replies

These objections test the same map: some propose a bridge, while others offer independent practical or revelatory support. The question is not whether those routes are possible, but whether longing and the unfinished earthly record have already supplied their premises.

## 9.1 Without ultimate justice, evil wins

Some wrongdoers escape and some victims lose goods that no human action replaces. Calling that a defeat is understandable. It does not follow that truth-telling, solidarity, protection, or partial repair becomes worthless. The claim that finite goods count for nothing unless the total story closes is itself a theory of value; it gives the universe a veto over courageous action.

The stronger reply is practical rather than metaphysical: agents should live so that evil does not win where their action can matter. That imperative survives uncertainty about final settlement. Indeed, it becomes harder to outsource.

## 9.2 Only a deity could restore the dead

Perhaps. Complete restoration may require powers no finite agent possesses. But “only such an agent could do this” does not entail “such an agent exists” or “such an agent will do this.” An ability condition identifies what a successful mechanism would require. It does not establish actuality. Independent arguments for the relevant God-concept and personal survival would change the case; the unmet need alone does not.

## 9.3 Moral obligation would be irrational if the highest good were impossible

This is the Kantian reply in its strongest form. It depends on an account of practical reason in which agents must promote the highest good and may or must postulate its conditions. The response deserves engagement because it supplies the missing bridge. Its conclusion, however, is practical rational faith within that framework, not ordinary empirical confirmation from the observed failure of justice. Readers must assess the framework’s claims about duty, possibility, and postulation. The longing has not done all the work.

## 9.4 Revelation promises final judgment

If a revelation is independently well supported, it can supply evidence unavailable to the longing argument. That route is logically open. It also concedes the present thesis: the evidential work comes from the credentials, interpretation, and content of the revelation. Competing revelatory traditions and interpretations then require comparison. The felt need for justice cannot authenticate the source by first assuming that a true source would meet the need.

## 9.5 The desire itself may be divinely implanted

A deity could create agents with a reliable orientation toward final justice. Yet the same desire also has plausible roles in attachment, cooperation, protest, reputation, deterrence, and moral learning. To use the desire as evidence, a defender must show that its origin or reliability is better explained by the relevant God-concept than by alternatives. Without that comparison, the implanted-desire proposal is a possible explanation, not a confirmed one.

## 9.6 Skepticism about guarantees destroys hope

It defeats one claim to confidence: that we know reality will close the account. It need not destroy hope, commitment, prayer, symbolic protest, or practical faith. Hope reported as hope can remain courageous; possibility reported as certainty borrows authority it has not earned.

## 10. Conclusion

The longing for ultimate justice is a morally serious response to a world in which some harms are never adequately repaired. It establishes reasons to remember, protect, acknowledge, hold accountable, make amends, and refuse easy closure. It does not, by itself, cross either bridge at the center of this paper: from what justice demands to what reality will supply, or from a possible final settlement to a justice-guaranteeing God-concept.

The strongest support for that conclusion is cumulative. The normative claim that a wrong ought to be answered does not contain a descriptive guarantee that it will be. The observed incompleteness of justice is directly expected under a non-guarantee view, while a guarantee view must explain delay. Punitive, restorative, universalist, and freedom-based accounts then answer different parts of justice and do not select one another or a personal guarantor. Kantian practical faith, Adams-style redemptive defeat, Jamesian pragmatic commitment, and revelation are serious alternatives precisely because they add the premises, mechanisms, or evidence that the original inference lacks.

The principal limit remains important. Nothing here deductively disproves theism, personal survival, cosmic justice, practical faith, or a well-supported revelation. Independent evidence could cross one or both bridges. Until it does, readers should not confuse a morally justified protest with a metaphysical report or a coherent model with evidence that the model is actual.

The requested change is therefore both intellectual and practical. Call tragedy tragedy without calling it contradiction. Hold hope without manufacturing evidence. And because no final court can be assumed, treat the justice finite agents can enact—truth, protection, repair, proportionate accountability, and faithful memory—as urgent now.

### A. Formal Reconstruction of the Central Thesis

#### A.1 The two-bridge argument

- P1.** Facts about grave unrepaired harms and the moral demand that they be answered warrant belief in a cosmic settlement only if they either entail that settlement or are connected to it by an independently supported bridge principle.
- P2.** Grave unrepaired harms and the moral demand that they be answered do not entail a cosmic settlement: their conjunction with the absence of such a settlement is tragic but not contradictory.
- P3.** Those facts do not by themselves support the proposed first bridge—that every rationally authoritative moral demand is guaranteed satisfaction by reality. That principle requires an additional account of practical reason, divine action, revelation, desire reliability, or other evidence.
- P4.** Even the independently established existence of a cosmic settlement would not by itself entail that a personal deity administers it. That second bridge requires a selector among punishment, impersonal moral order, reincarnation, restorative afterlife, universal reconciliation, and other possible mechanisms.
- P5.** Unfinished earthly justice is expected under a non-guarantee view. Its existence therefore supplies neither missing bridge and cannot simply count as evidence for the guarantee introduced to overcome it.

**Conclusion.** Grave unrepaired harms, the demand that they be answered, and the unfinished earthly record do not, by themselves, warrant belief in either a cosmic settlement or a justice-guaranteeing God-concept. Independent support is required for the first bridge to a settlement and the second bridge to a personal guarantor. Both conclusions remain possible and open to other arguments; finite repair remains urgent whether or not they are true.

#### A.2 Validity and support

Premises 1–3 give valid necessary-condition reasoning: if warrant requires entailment or an independently supported bridge and the facts supply neither, they do not warrant a cosmic settlement. Premise 4 extends the point to a personal guarantor; Premise 5 explains comparatively why the unfinished record is not positive support simply because a guarantee would solve it.

Validity does not establish the premises. Premise 2 is conceptual; Premise 3 is epistemic; Premise 4 claims underdetermination; Premise 5 compares expectations. Practical faith, revelation, or independent theistic arguments may supply the needed support. Success would cross one or both bridges on other grounds, not show that longing or incomplete earthly justice did so alone.

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