# The Evidential Argument From Evil

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## My Intentions

I wanted to give a response to the evidential problem of evil, as it seems that the atheist has had much success in defending and winning over many people to the idea that God (if He exists) should prevent such evils as rape and murder, and the fact He doesn't is somehow evidence that God probably doesn't exist.

I believe the Christian has a good response to this challenge, and in fact, such apparent evils, are in fact expected if a perfect God exists.

I particularly wanted to address this problem, as many Christians have typically had no response to this issue, other than handwaving and the often-used refrain "God works in mysterious ways" or "Just have faith", such responses and silence on this issue, and other topics, is driving our teenagers and those going off to university away from Christianity and into the hands of the atheists, who have ready answers why God probably doesn't exist.

People of my generation need to have answers to the sceptics, and to impart our knowledge to the next generation to fight the tide of doubt and unbelief that is growing among the western world.

We have no need to fear such questions or doubts, as there is a wealth of information and arguments that can give reasons to believe and have a satisfying and rational belief, that God in fact does exist.

## Introduction

In a fairly recent tweet I made to @RealAnthology, which challenged me on my view on the problem of evil. The Real Anthology Podcast, are an excellent group of people that hold to the idea, God does not exist, and recommended the books by Paul Draper, J.H. Sobel, or William Rowe, as they believed my response was lacking.

In this regard I have acquired a copy of "The Evidential Argument From Evil" edited by Daniel Howard-Snyder, the book has 16 papers from some excellent philosophers; William L. Rowe, Paul Draper, Richard Swinburne, Eleonore Stump, Alvin Plantinga, William P. Alston, Stephen John Wysktra, Peter Van Inwagen, Bruce Russell, Richard M. Gale and Daniel Howard-Synder.

The book has been a great read and has challenged my understanding on the subject, but not significantly or to change my mind that the atheist has an overwhelming case against theism and in particularly to Christianity. Rather, my views have been challenged regarding to the weight of the theist's argument, as we must face the challenge given by the sceptic to show why, an omniscient and wholly good being would allow significant evils, it has become clear, this necessarily requires an extensive answer to justify the 'evils' that are prevalent in this world!

Due to the size of the topic and my limited time and resources, I have limited my response to only Rowe and Drapers arguments, I did plan on tackling Sobel's and possibly Michael Tooley's responses as well. But I feel that this would be too large a task at present, and believe my response, will give an adequate challenge to the problem of evil.

This is the challenge I now face; It is clear both the theist and the atheist can have good epistemic reasons to hold to either view and be rational. So, to convince the cynic, one must have an overwhelmingly persuasive argument to have any chance to win over the atheist or sceptic, this may be a tall order for any person to undertake.

I hope my response is adequate to the task.

## 1. William L. Rowe – The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism.

The first chapter written by William L Rowe; He sets the stage by explaining the issue by listing three interrelated questions: (1)

1. Is there an argument for atheism based on the existence of evil that might rationally justify someone being an atheist?
2. How can the theist best defend his position against the argument for atheism based on the existence of evil?
3. What position should the informed atheist take concerning the rationality of theistic belief?

Rowe spends some time defining terminology, which I will not go too deeply into. However, Rowe, defines a theist as someone who believes in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, supremely good being who created the world, and the atheist or sceptic is someone who doesn't believe that.

Rowe gives a simple deductive argument, which goes as follows: (2)

1. There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting sone evil equally bad or worse.
3. There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.

The argument is valid, that means if the premises are true, it follows logically that there isn't a being best described as God. But what justification does Row give for his ambitious claims?

### The First Question:

Rowe, starts to answer the 1$^{st}$ question by giving justification for the validity of P2, he writes, "*Let $sl$ be an instance of intense human or animal suffering which an omniscient, wholly good being could prevent. We also suppose that things are such that $sl$ will occur unless prevented by the omniscient, wholly good (OG) being. We might be interested in determining what would be a sufficient condition*

of O$G$ failing to prevent $sl$. But, for our purpose here, we only need to state a *necessary* condition of O$G$ failing to prevent $sl$. That condition, so it seems to me, is:

> *Either (i) there is some greater good, $G$, such that $G$ is obtainable by O$G$ only if O$G$ permits $sl$,*
> *Or (ii) there is some greater good, $G$, such that $G$ is obtainable by O$G$ only if O$G$ permits either $sl$ or some evil equally bad or worse,*
> *Or (iii) $sl$ is such that it is preventable by O$G$ only if O$G$ permits some evil equally bad or worse.*
>
> *It is important to recognize that (iii) is not included in (i). For losing a good greater than $sl$ is not the same as permitting an evil greater than $sl$. And this is because the absence of a good state of affairs need not be an evil state of affairs. It is also important to recognize that $sl$ might be such that it us preventable by O$G$ without losing $G$ (so condition (i) is not satisfied but also such that if O$G$ did prevent it, $G$ would be lost unless O$G$ permitted sone evil equal to or worse that $sl$. If it were so, it does not seem correct to require that O$G$ prevent $sl$. Thus, condition (ii) takes into account an important possibility not encompassed in condition (i).”* (3) (*emphasis his own*)

It is important to note the way in which the argument and justifications are being placed, Rowe is willing to admit, that 1. Some suffering is warranted to gain higher order goods e.g. dentist appointment to remove teeth, to avoid further, extreme pain later. 2. God may not have grounds for preventing some instances of intense suffering, without causing equal or worse suffering as a consequence. These concessions are testament to his credit. He has realised though wisdom and extreme study, that it might be the case God has justifications we have no possible understanding, due to our limited capabilities.

In justification of Premise 1, Rowe imagines a flash of lightning which hits a dead tree, a forest fire results, a fawn is trapped (here to named Bambi) by the fire and is horribly burned, Bambi in agony for several days, eventually dying of her injuries. Rowe further supposes that there is no apparent reason for allowing this, as there appears to be no good that has resulted from it. Which leads to P1 – ***There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.***

Rowe goes on in support of his claims that cases like Bambi are happening all the time. But he notes *“It must be acknowledged that the case of the fawn's apparently pointless suffering does not prove that (1) is true. For even though we cannot see how the fawn's suffering is required to obtain some greater good (or to prevent some equally bad or worse evil), it hardly follows that it is not so required… The truth is that we are not in a position to prove that (1) is true. We cannot know with certainty that instances of suffering of the sort described in (1) do occur in the world. But it is one thing to know or prove that (1) is true and quite another thing to have rational grounds for believing (1) to be true.”* (4) he continues *“Consider again the case of the fawn's suffering. Is it reasonable to believe that there is some greater good so intimately connected that suffering that even an omnipotent, omniscient being could not have obtained that good without permitting that suffering or some evil at least as bad? It certainly does not appear reasonable to believe this. Nor does it seem reasonable to believe that there is some evil at least as bad as the fawn's suffering such that an omnipotent being simply could not have prevented it without permitting the fawn's suffering. But even if it should somehow be reasonable to believe either of these things of the fawn's suffering, we must then ask whether it is reasonable to believe either of these things of all instances of seemingly pointless human and animal suffering that occur daily in our world. And surely the answer to this more general question must be no.”* (5)

## The Second Question:

So, Row has given a fairly decent attack on the theistic idea of God, but what about the second question: What justification does the theist have, if any, in offence of this argument? Rowe considers it most likely that a theist will find it more favourable to deny premise 1, than to reject 2 as he deems it the case the theist has less to lose by denying premise 1. Rowes solution to the argument is to use a procedure he calls "the G. E. Moore shift," so named to honour G. E. Moore. The operation Moore used was in disproving sceptical philosophers. E.g. David Hume, had advanced an argument to prove that no one can know of the existence of any material object, the Moore's procedure went something like this:

1. I do know that this pencil exists.
2. If the sceptic's principles are correct, I cannot know the existence of this pencil.
3. Therefore, the sceptic's principles (at least one) must be incorrect.

Rowe, then shows how the Moore's procedure can be used to his evidential argument from evil, it goes as follows:

Not-3. There exists an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.
2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
Therefore,
Not-1. It is not the case that there exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse. (6)

## The Third Question:

As for the 3rd question, that is, 'What position should the informed atheist take concerning the rationality of theistic belief'? It is obvious that, the atheist which finds such an argument convincing, then they will find the theist who rejects it, as holding a false belief, or maybe even irrational! Just as the theist will find the atheist wanting in this regard. Rowe identifies three major positions the atheist can take in regard to how to deal with the theist's response, the first positions he dubs 'Unfriendly atheism', which believes, no theist is rationally justified for holding that particular view. The second he dubs 'indifferent atheism', which is essentially states, that they hold no position on the situation. Thirdly and last view, he dubs 'friendly atheism', which states that theists are rationally justified in their belief.

Happily, Rowe seems to be in the camp of friendly atheism, he writes "If no one can be rationally justified in believing a false proposition, then friendly atheism is a paradoxical if not incoherent position. But surely the truth of a belief is not a necessary condition of someone's being rationally justified in having that belief.  So in holding that someone is rationally justified in believing that the theistic God exists, the friendly atheist is not committed to thinking that the theist has a true belief. What he is committed to is that the theist has rational grounds for his belief, a belief the atheist rejects and is convinced he is rationally justified in rejecting." Rowe continues his thoughts by wondering how these two propositions can be true at the same time, that is, believing they are correct in holding their belief, yet hold the theist is rational in holding their view? Rowe thinks so, he

gives a hypothetical scenario, where a friend goes on a plane to Hawaii, the plane happens to crash into the sea 8 hours into flight, they do a search and rescue mission, but no survivors were found, his friends are rational to conclude their friend is now dead, but the man will hardly think this as he lays helpless, holding on to some wreckage, wondering why they haven't found him yet.(7)

So, it seems that both the theist and atheist can both be rational in holding different views, as long as, one has reasons for such beliefs. This is something I can agree with Rowe on, I think it would be disingenuous to say otherwise, as it is clear, there are many very credible atheists, who have reasons for their disbelief.

The question remains, is this argument any good at showing God doesn't exist?

As I have stated previously, it is a valid argument, that is, if the premises are correct, the conclusion follows.  Even if we grant all these premises, all that follows is that the typical theist understanding of God doesn't exist, not that it disproves Deism false, or an indifferent God as false.  But this is little comfort to those who wish to maintain the typical theistic understanding of God.

## 2. Paul Draper – Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists.

### Section 1 – The problem

Draper describes theism as "There exists an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect person who created the Universe..I will use the word "God" as a title rather than as a proper name, and I will stipulate that necessary and sufficient conditions for bearing this title are that one be an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect person who created the Universe. Given this (probably technical) use of the term "God," theism is the statement that God exists."(8) He continues "*philosophers who agree that theism fails to explain most of the evils we find in the world deny that this creates an epistemic problem for theists— that is, they deny that this explanatory failure is a prima facie good reason to reject theism. This disagreement has led to a debate over how much evil, if any, theism needs to explain to avoid disconfirmation… What the members of both sides of this debate have failed to recognize is that one cannot determine what facts about evil theism needs to explain or how well it needs to explain them without considering alternatives to theism. The important question…contemporary philosophers of religion have ignored, is whether or not any serious hypothesis that is logically inconsistent with theism explains some significant set of facts about evil or about good and evil much better than theism does*."

Draper goes on to explain his formulation of his argument:

The Hypothesis of Indifference ($HI$): neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of benevolent or malevolent actions performed by nonhuman persons.

$O$ is an observation of any reported observation of pain of a sentient being experiencing pain or pleasure. By pain Draper means "Physical or mental suffering of any kind." (9)

$C$: $HI$ explains the fact $O$ reports much better than theism does.

$C$: independent of the observations and testimony $O$ reports, $O$ is much more probable on the assumption that $HI$ is true than on the assumption that theism is true.

For the sake of brevity, I will use $P(x/y)$ to represent the probability of the statement $x$, independent of the observations and testimony $O$ reports, on the assumption that the statement $y$ is true. Using this notation, I can abbreviate $C$ in the following way:

$C$: $P(O/HI)$ is much greater than $P(O/theism)$.

## Section 2 – The Biological Utility of Pain

"*The claim that $P(O/HI)$ is much greater than $P(O/theism)$ is by no means obviously true. The fact that $O$ reports observations and testimony about pleasure as well as pain should make this clear. So an argument for this claim is needed. I will argue that it is the biological role played by both pain and pleasure in goal-directed organic systems that renders this claim true.*"(10)

This notion of biological utility enables me to introduce a statement logically equivalent to O that will help me show that C is true. Let "O1,""O2," and "O3" stand for statements respectively reporting the facts O reports about:

> (1) moral agents experiencing pain or pleasure that we know to be biologically useful,

> (2) sentient beings that are not moral agents experiencing pain, or pleasure that we know to be biologically useful, and

> (3) sentient beings experiencing pain or pleasure that we do not know to be biologically useful.

Since O is obviously logically equivalent to the conjunction of Ol, O2, and O3, it follows that, for any hypothesis h:

P(O/h) = P(O1 & O2 & O3/h)

But the following theorem of the mathematical calculus of probability holds for epistemic probability:

P(O1 &O2&O3/h) = P(O1/h) X P(O2/h&O1) X P(O3/h & O1& O2).

Thus, C is true—P(O/HI) is much greater than P(O/theism)—just in case:

A: P(O1/HI) X P(O2/HI & Ol) X P(O3/HI & Ol & O2)

is much greater than

B: P(O1/theism) X P(O2/theism & Ol) X P(O3/theism & Ol & O2).

## Section 3 – The Moral Value of Pain and Pleasure

"a certain goal, that even God must produce or permit certain evils in order to accomplish that goal, and that accomplishing the goal is, from a moral point of view, worth the evils. I will say that a statement h* is an "expansion" of a statement h just in case h* is known to entail h. (Notice that h* can be an expansion of h even if it is logically equivalent to h.) The effect of a theodicy on P(O/theism) can be assessed by identifying an appropriate expansion Tn of theism that the theodicy

employs and then using the following principle to evaluate P(O/theism) (cf. Adams 1985, appendix, p. 252): P(O/theism) = (P(Tn/theism) x P(O/Tn)) + (P(~Tn/theism) x P(O/theism & ~Tn)).7 I will call this principle the "Weighted Average Principle" ("WAP" for short) because it identifies one probability with a probability weighted average of two others. Roughly, WAP tells us that P(O/theism) is the average of P(O/Tn and P(O/theism & ~Tn).This average, however, is a probability weighted average, the weights of which are P(Tn/theism), and P(~Tn/theism). The higher P(Tn/theism), the closer P(O/theism) will be to P(O/Tn). And the lower P(Tn/theism), the closer P(O/theism) will be to P(O/theism & ~Tn). WAP clarifies the relationship between theodicies and the argument for C I gave in Section II. For example, suppose that, for some expansion Tn of theism that a certain theodicy employs, P(Tn/theism) is high. My argument for C in Section II ignores this theodicy and so in effect equates P(O/theism) with P(O/theism & ~Tn). Since P(Tn/theism) is high, WAP tells us that P(O/theism) is actually closer to P(O/Tn) than to P(O/theism & ~Tn) (assuming that these are not the same). To successfully defend my assumption in Section II that this theodicy does not significantly raise P(O/theism), I would need to show that P(O/Tn) is not significantly greater than P(O/theism & ~Tn). In other words, I would need to show that, independent of the observations and testimony O reports, we have little or no more reason on than we have on theism & ~T to believe that O is true." (11)

## 3. Paul Draper – The Skeptical Theist.

### Section 1

Most skeptical theists attack probabilistic arguments from evil by arguing for something like the following skeptical thesis, which I will call "skeptical thesis #1" or "*ST1*" for short:

> *ST1*: Humans are in no position to judge directly that an omnipotent and omniscient being would be unlikely to have a morally sufficient reason to permit the evils we find in the world. (12)

Let '*E*' stand for an example of your favourite fact about evil.

Let '*G*' stand for (traditional) theism, which is the view that there exists an omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect being who created the universe. One could demonstrate that $G$ is false if one could demonstrate that the following statement is necessarily false or at least that it is false:

> *M*: An omnipotent and omniscient being would have a morally sufficient reason for allowing $E$.

If one could prove that $M$ is necessarily false, then (since it is a necessary truth that a morally perfect being would not permit $E$ unless it had a morally sufficient reason to do so) $G$ would be disproved by virtue of its inconsistency with $E$. If one could prove that $M$ is false, then $G$ would be disproved by virtue of its inconsistency with the conjunction of $E$ and the denial of $M$. (13)

Draper ultimately concludes with some reason that ST1 isn't a justified claim, as he writes "*What troubles me most about the position of skeptical theists like Alston is not ST1, but rather the inference from ST1 to the conclusion that all probabilistic arguments from evil fail. One is reminded of those philosophers who attack one teleological or cosmological or ontological argument for theism and then conclude that the teleological or the cosmological or the ontological argument fails*." He continues later "*ST1 is more ambitious: given our cognitive limitations, we can't even show that M is improbable. The reason it is tempting to treat ST1 as a reply to all probabilistic arguments from evil is that it is natural to assume that probabilistic arguments from evil have the same basic structure as*

*logical arguments from evil are thought to have, the only difference being that whereas the latter sort of argument aspires to certainty—M is certainly false—the former aspires only to probability—M is probably false. To put the point another way, a familiarity with the literature on logical arguments from evil may seduce one into thinking that there is only one available strategy for constructing probabilistic arguments from evil: show that G is improbable by showing that M or some statement that M entails is improbable. ST1, if true, can be used to refute all probabilistic arguments from evil employing this particular strategy.*

*Another reason it is easy to overestimate the apologetic power of ST1 is that almost all contemporary proponents of arguments from evil employ this strategy. Indeed, in a recent article, Michael Tooley claims that "there is general agreement concerning the basic structure of the argument from evil" and that "one guiding idea is that the core argument should turn upon the existence of what might be called unjustified evils, where an evil counts as unjustified, in the present context, if an omnipotent and omniscient being could have prevented it, and would not have been justified in not doing so." The best known defender of such a strategy is William Rowe. He chooses a particularly inscrutable evil as his replacement for E, and then argues for the conclusion that the following statement is prima facie probable:*

*Q: No good state of affairs is such that an omnipotent, omniscient being's obtaining it would morally justify that being's permitting E.*

*He must believe that M entails ~Q (otherwise he couldn't conclude that G is prima facie improbable); so his argument for the prima facie probability of Q is in effect an argument for the prima facie improbability of M. If ST1 could be shown to be true, then Rowe's argument would fail."*(14)

Draper continues by stating that his argument doesn't rely on this type of reasoning, and his preferred choice is to use what he calls "*Humean probabilistic arguments from evil*", he maintains that they "*do not rely, either explicitly or implicitly, on a premise asserting that an omnipotent and omniscient being would probably not have a morally sufficient reason to permit certain facts about good and evil. Of course, if the theist could construct a very successful theodicy and thereby prove that an omnipotent and omniscient being probably would have such a reason, then Humean arguments from evil would be in trouble. But Humean arguments do not depend on showing that there probably is no such reason.*" (15)

## Section 2


Draper then goes into another line of reasoning if the theist admits ST1 has limited or no impact on his Humean argument from evil:

ST2: Humans are in no position to compare theism's ability to explain certain facts about good or evil to some other hypothesis's ability to explain those facts.

Peter Van Inwagen offers a type of ST2 argument against Drapers Humean argument from evil, with the notion of epistemic surprise. (16)

Draper concedes "*I believe that van Inwagen's discussion does suggest a strategy for attacking my argument.*"(17)

The central claim of Drapers argument is the following:

C: O is antecedently much more likely on HI *(hypothesis of Indifference – see section 2 in this paper)* than on G.

"O" stands for a statement reporting the observations and testimony upon which one's knowledge about the pattern of pain and pleasure in the world is based. By "antecedently" I mean "independent of the observations and testimony O reports." HI is the hypothesis of indifference, the statement that neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth results from actions performed by benevolent or malevolent nonhuman persons. For the sake of convenience, I will abbreviate C as follows:

C: P(O/HI) >! P(O/G).

">!" means "is much greater than," and "P(x/y)" stands for the antecedent probability of x given y.

If we revise ST2 so that it applies specifically to my argument, we obtain the following:

ST3: Humans are not in a position to compare the antecedent probability of O on G to the antecedent probability of O on HI. (17)

Draper maintains that for ST3 to be true, or more plausible, the theist would need to show that the pleasure and pain *(see section 2 in argument 2. Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem of Evil)* utility he argues for is somehow defective or flawed. Another possible way for a theist to defend ST3 is to challenge the argument in section 3 of Argument 2, that P(O/G) how much theodicies raise the likelihood of theism. (17)

Draper gives justification why he believes that he has warrant for holding that his argument is sound and these two possible defeaters are not adequate. **(I encourage you to look read his response (18), which I will try to tackle this in my response later in this paper.)**

## Section 3

In this section Draper sets out what conditions he thinks a theistic story must satisfy in order to be a successful defence; he writes:

*"I will begin by stating two necessary conditions for a theistic story (D) to be a defensive success. One is that we be unable to assign any specific range of values (like "low" or "high") to P(D/G)—to the antecedent probability of the story conditional on theism. The meaning of antecedent here is the same as before: "independent of the observations and testimony O reports." I will call a theistic story that satisfies this condition an "aprobable" story. A second condition is that P(O/HI) must not be much greater than P(O/D&G): O must not be antecedently much more probable on HI than on D conjoined with theism. I will call a theistic story that satisfies this condition a "good" story."* (19)

He then gives justifications why he thinks, the atheist has grounds for rejecting such stories by way of parody. **(Again, I will encourage you to read Drapers reasoning behind his reasoning (20), I will endeavour to give a defence in my response.)**

## Section 4

Draper then, for the sake of the argument, grants that, if a theist gives numerous good 'aprobable' undefeated stories, this might suffice to giving grounds for accepting ST3. Draper thinks however, no story so far, that has been told, that satisfies the conditions he has set out in the two arguments he has put forward.

He writes:

"*The basic problem confronting the skeptical theist is that good stories tend not to be both aprobable and undefeated. Consider, for example, the following two theistic stories.*"

He gives 6 stories which he claims are approximate stories given by the theist and he shows what he thinks are "counterdefence". **(Again, I will encourage you to read Drapers reasoning behind his reasoning (21), I will endeavour to give a defence in my response.)**

He gives the following challenge:

"So I conclude here with a challenge to the skeptical theist to produce some good, aprobable, and undefeated theistic stories… They (the theist) may use any or all of their religious beliefs to try to explain the pattern of pain and pleasure we observe in the world in terms of theism. But then these beliefs must be treated like any other theistic story. Either they are successful theodicies or successful defenses or they are no help at all".(21)

## 4. William L. Rowe – The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look.

### Section 1

Rowe in this argument, tries strengthens his case by adding an additional evil to bring to bear on the theist, additionally changing the formulation of the argument as follows:

"E1 is the case of a fawn trapped in a forest fire and undergoing several days of terrible agony before dying. E2 is the case of the rape, beating, and murder by strangulation of a five-year-old girl.

P: No good we know of justifies an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2; therefore,

Q: no good at all justifies an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2; therefore,

not-G: there is no omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being." (22)

### Section 2

Rowe in this next section, admits that perhaps, his original argument wasn't as clear as necessary. So, he sets forward his claims and gives a clearer case.

Rowes argument now revolves around two particular evils: E1. Bambi – the fawn trapped and horribly burned in a forest fire and slowly dies and E2. Sue – The five-year-old girl, who is raped, beaten, and murdered by strangulation.

Rowe writes:

"*What then does P entail? P entails that among the good states of affairs that we know of (however dimly or through a glass darkly) none is such that it justifies an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2. So long as we keep in mind the features of the being in question, we can abbreviate our formulation of P as follows:*

*P: No good we know of justifies God in permitting E1 and E2.*"(23)

Rowe concedes that; given theism, one must allow and even expect that, the good in question be, what he calls 'conjunctive goods', he writes "*Perhaps there is a good we know of that justifies God in permitting El. Perhaps there is some other good we know of that justifies God in permitting E2. If so, then we will allow that it is true that some good we know of (a conjunction of the goods in question) justifies God in permitting E1 and E2.*"(23) Rowe goes on to say, that "*It should be obvious that I am trying to pose a serious difficulty for the theist by picking a difficult case of natural evil, E1 (Bambi), and a difficult case of moral evil, E2 (Sue). Should no good we know of justify God in permitting either of these two evils, P is true.*"(23)

Rowe tries to clarify what he means by a 'good', he writes "*What counts as a "good we know of"? I do not mean to limit us to goods o o that we know to have occurred. Nor do I mean to limit us to those goods and goods that we know will occur in the future. I mean to include goods that we have some grasp of, even though we have no knowledge at all that they have occurred or ever will occur. For example, consider the good of Sue's experiencing complete felicity in the everlasting presence of God. Theists consider this an enormous personal good. I have no doubt that it is. So, even though we don't have a very clear grasp of what this great good involves, and even though we don't know that such a good state of affairs will ever obtain, we do mean to include the good of Sue's experiencing complete felicity in the everlasting presence of God as among the goods we know of Of course, if the good in question never does occur, then it is not a good that justifies God in permitting E1 or E2. So if some good state of affairs we know of does justify God in permitting E1 or E2, that good state of affairs must become actual at some point in the future, if it is not already actual.*" (23)

Rowe, goes on to give what he considers to be conditions for this good, and some objections. *(I encourage you to read Rowes justifications and reasonings (24).*

## Section 3 & 4

Rowe starts with asking four questions:

1. Does P make Q more likely than it would otherwise be? That is, is $Pr(Q/P\&k) > Pr(Q/k)$?

2. Does P make Q more likely than not? That is, is $Pr(Q/P\&k) > 0.5$?

3. Does P make G less likely than it would otherwise be? That is, is $Pr(G/P\&k) > Pr(G/k)$?

4. Does P make G less likely than not? That is, is $Pr(G/P\&k) > 0.5$?

With a lot of justification and reasoning, Rowe ultimately arrives at the probability of P and Q is as follows:

"*…to our list of propositions we have established given that Pr(G/k) — 0.5 and that Pr(P/G&k) < 1. This is the better argument I mentioned earlier for the view that P not only makes Q more likely than it otherwise would be but also makes it more likely than not.*" *(I encourage you to read Rowes justifications and reasoning (25)*.

## Section 5

Rowe in this chapter discusses the likelihood of events and the warrant one can have given a certain proposition. Using Bayesian probability, Rowe makes the claim that even given the prior probability of 0.5 of P and Q that Pr(G/P&k) = 0.333. Rowe ultimately concedes with Wykstra that even if it can be shown that Pr(G/P&k) = 0.333, this isn't low enough probability to warrant a sceptic to move scepticism to atheism. *(I encourage you to read Rowes justifications and reasoning (26)*.

## Section 6

In this section, Rowe contemplates the notion of Wykstra's that God existence is quite likely, and the goods for sake of which he permits many instances of suffering (including Bambi's and Sue's) are beyond our ken.  Wykstra calls this the parent analogy, where a parent will allow their child to go through sufferings that the child will not necessarily understand why. Rowe, doesn't find this analogy any good, for the following reasons:

> *"1. The parent does riot prevent the child's suffering (due to disease, etc.,) simply because the parent is unaware of the cause of the suffering or unable to prevent the suffering.*
>
> *2. The parent does not prevent the child's suffering because the parent has other duties to fulfill that preclude her from being in a position to prevent the suffering. Unlike God, parents cannot be everywhere at once.*
>
> *3. The parent permits present sufferings for distant goods not because these goods are incapable of existing sooner, or better for being distant, but because of insufficient intelligence and ability to realize the goods in the present or near future.*
>
> *If we do apply the parent analogy, the conclusion about God that we should draw is something like the following: When God permits horrendous suffering for the sake of some good, if that good is beyond our ken, God will make every effort to be consciously present to us during our period of suffering, will do his best to explain to us us why he is permitting us to suffer, and will give us special assurances of his love and concern during the period of the suffering".* He concludes by saying "*In any case, I think we are justified in concluding that we've been given no good reason to think that if God exists the goods that justify him in permitting much human and animal suffering are quite likely to be beyond our ken."* (27)

## Section 7 & 8

Rowe believes that the evidential problem of evil derives its strength from an almost inescapable conviction that any so-called goods that fall within our intellectual grasp, none can be reasonably be justified to constitute God's justifying reason for permitting such horrendous evils as E1 and E2. Rowe states "*Tough-minded theists have held that the facts about evil in our world do not render God's existence less likely than not. Indeed, some have held that the facts about evil do not even make God's existence less likely than it would otherwise be. In this chapter I have argued that these views are seriously mistaken. Given our common knowledge of the evils and goods in our world and our reasons for believing that P is true, it is irrational to believe in theism unless we possess or discover strong evidence in its behalf. I conclude, therefore, that the evidential argument from evil is alive and well."* (28)

*(I encourage you to read Rowes justifications and reasoning (29)*.

## 5.  My Response

So, what can the theist say?

In my study into this vast subject, I was racking my brain, wondering what I could say, if anything that was worthy of note, or any kind of substantive objection. But as I got deeper in, I had a feeling of despair, if brilliant minds like Alvin Plantinga haven't been able to find any decisive knockout blow to make theism more plausible than atheism, what chance do I have? But after some time, a bit of revelation has come my way, that might, I hope, give the atheist, pause for thought, and possibly make God more likely.

I noticed that the objections the atheist is presenting for the evidential problem of evil is to try and disprove theism, with a blanket term to describe the 3 great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The definition the atheist uses to describe this theistic God is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Wholly Good. I am not sure why philosophical theists concede this definition the atheists give for God, maybe, I am missing something important, but, on first inspection, one might not see why this is particularly an issue, but this isn't really the full picture of what a Christian believer will typically describe as God, yes, these properties are included, but it is a kind of unintentional malformed version.

I call this, the 'Apples and Pears Objection'.

### Apples and Pears Objection

The Apples and pears objection, goes something like this, Pears sometimes can look like apples, they can have the same outward appearance, but are materially different inside e.g. texture and taste. Person 'A' likes apples, person 'B' likes pears. Person 'A' starts to describe to person 'B' their favourite fruit, "it is kind of round, red, delicious and it is my favourite" person 'B' thinks that sounds a lot like my favourite too, so the next day person 'B' buys person 'A' a pear as a treat. When person 'B' gives Person 'A' the pear, he is grateful and bites into it and doesn't like it! "What's that!?" person 'A' says. "It's a pear" exclaims person 'B' "It sounded a lot like my favourite, so I got you it as a treat" continued Person 'B'.

In this admittedly contrived scenario, I tried to show how atheists and theists have been trying to have a dialogue, yet speaking about different things, unaware and getting nowhere.

It might well be the case, this is completely irrelevant, or that someone with philosophical training, will pick so may holes in my reasoning that a sieve would holds more water, but we will see.

It seems that, both theists, sceptics, and atheists alike, all want to represent each other's views as accurately and as honestly as we are able, and given a proposition, what is being proposed has to be given due respect and at least be granted possibility status. Given this standard, the theist has certain assumptions that must be granted at least temporarily, unless something contradictory or absurd can be shown from these starting assumptions.

So, let me outline what I consider essential desire's and properties that the atheist or sceptic must consider, when raising any such objection:

1. Purpose – God purpose for humanity (in particular) is that we know Him, Honour, and love Him.

2. Freewill – God wants a relationship with his creation, for them to freely choose to love and to want to spend eternity with Him. It is therefore impossible for God to create beings (like ourselves) to always freely choose Him, because, almost immediately at the point of creating the possibility for freely choosing to fellowship with God, you open the possibility to freely not to choose to fellowship with God.

   It is therefore, true then, that with freewill, agents will have the opportunity to do anything, either good or bad.

3. Morally perfect – God is morally perfect, and due to His moral perfection, He has written on our hearts an almost universally accepted moral code e.g. it is wrong to steal, rape, murder and lie. This code is objective, that is, it is valid even if no one recognises it.

   In line with freewill and this objective moral code, it becomes clear that, in life, a person will have a variety of different options and possibilities, to do what is right and what is wrong. Due to free will, inevitably some people freely choose to do the right thing, but sometimes even though, deep in their hearts they know something is wrong, they make a wrong choice.

4. Holy – God being Holy, will judge every right or wrong thought, action or deed at the correct time, to make restitutions of evils and wrongs committed.

5. Just – God being just, will not judge unfairly, He will do the right thing, and in keeping with His omniscience has complete understanding and insight, so will always be impartial and fair.

6. Merciful – God being merciful, will allow anyone reprieve, who is truly seeking, time to find Him.

7. Heaven – For all those who freely choose to love Him, will finally get to see be in His presents and experience life to the full. without fear, regret, anger, pride, hate or any other negative emotion.

8. Omniscient – God knows all true facts.

9. Omnipotent – God has the ability to do anything logically possible.

10. The universe is ordered – In keeping with God Omniscience and Omnipotence, the universe and the laws, operate in a uniform and predictable manner.

First let us look at the 1st premise again:

- There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse. *(It seems that this is a common objection throughout the four arguments I am covering and in the other critiques of theism from other objectors)*

It seems then we have a form of asymmetry, as with my apples and pears objection, it seems we are discussing a different thing. I am not saying this is deliberate on the part of the sceptic or atheist, as the literature is replete with arguments and analysis from perfect being theism etc. for philosophers like Rowe or Draper to make such mistakes deliberately.

However, what I am saying is that it appears that the hidden assumption in this premise, that the goal for human beings is the avoidance of suffering, that is, an omnipotent, omniscient being would prevent suffering, unless it was impossible not to allow something equally bad or worse.

But this seems wrong, given the starting assumptions:

**Purpose ($P$):** Our purpose is to know and love God, as Jesus said in Mark 12: 28-31 'One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'' Luke 10:27 states the same, which is from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Deuteronomy 6:6-9 'These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.' So, it seems that we have good grounds for asserting that our goal in life is to honour, love and worship God.

**Freewill ($F$):** Given $P$ and $F$ we are called to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, this then must be done freely, as one cannot be forced against ones will to love, as this is impossible to instantiate in any possible world. So, it is the case, that given $P$ God must allow $F$, given $F$ then, opens possibilities of not fulfilling our $P$, and as a result allowing great goods and other evils such as E1 and E2.

**Morally perfect ($M$):** God is morally perfect, in other words, He is the ground of the good, and an objective moral standard, which theists insist are written on our hearts as an innate sense of moral standards, by objective I mean the truth of such morals are independent of our understanding them. I give justification of such a claim in my version of the moral argument for God existence.

**Holy ($H$):** Given Gods $M$, God is also $H$, by this I mean that in virtue of His Holiness, He will not allow forever, the evils that have been perpetuated in history to go unanswered, every act, thought or deed will be judged, and restitution will eventually be adjudicated and instantiated to everyone.

**Just ($J$):** Given $M$ and $H$, and inline with $J$, God will not judge anyone, more severely than is warranted, as Luke 12:47-48 states 'The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows.  But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.' So, we have reasons to believe that God will not judge someone without justification and with proportionality.

**Merciful ($ML$):** Given $P,F,M,H,J$ and $ML$, God will be merciful to all who honestly seek and freely love Him, God promises to credit, to them, righteousness and will come into relationship with them.

**Heaven ($H$):** Given $P,F,M,H,J$ and $ML$, God will allow all who has freely chosen to love Him into heaven. Where, those who are in heaven, will experience true joy, peace, happiness and love.

**Omniscient ($OS$):** God is $OS$, meaning He knows all true facts.

**Omnipotent ($OP$):** God is $OP$, and in line with His $OS$, He can do anything logically possible.

**The universe is ordered ($UO$):** Given $P,F,H,J,ML,OS$, and $OP$, God made the world to operate in a ordered and predictable way, in line with cause and effect. For example:

- Our planet, in keeping with his $OS$, made the earth with a magnetic field to protect us from the radiation and the striping away of our protective atmosphere, to have a magnetic field, requires and molten core, which then requires volcanoes and plate tectonics to ensure pressure regulation and crust recycling. This then necessitates, earthquakes and lava flows. If this wasn't the case, the planet and life could never exist.
- Law like facts, like the laws regulating pressure e.g. density, temperature and force, life could never exist, as we could never pump blood and oxygen to our body. Heat could never rise and things like the water cycle, would be impossible.
- The sun that sustains life, can also cause sun damage if you are left outside exposed without any protection.
- The water that sustains all life has the ability to drown you.

So, in line with some of these facts, God allows necessary sufferings as a greater good to sustain life as a whole, this has sometimes been called natural evils; but this seems mistaken, as I will try to show in the following sections.

In line with OU and the other properties outlined above, it is required that agents (like ourselves) require freewill, this then means agents have the option to not follow the objective standard we all agree is right. Our actions therefore, must have consequences and meaning to have any sense of worth, for example; if no matter what we do, God makes our actions without consequence e.g. the hot water that is about to burn you, the water suddenly turns cold. Or you are about to lie and God suddenly comes down and slaps you round the head, or a booming voice says "you've been a naughty boy (insert name here) tell the truth!". So, it seems actions need to have consequences to have any meaning and in line with $F,H,M,J$ and $ML$ a person will be judged at the right time.

I might be accused of an argumentum ad absurdum at this point, but what else can the atheist mean? They assume a wholly good God will prevent a world without morally sufficient suffering, but what does that mean?

## In the case of Sue, the little girl raped and murdered:

So, what can be said in response? Should God have stopped this clearly evil act? There are several issues I have with this kind of reasoning:
1. They are using this malformed version of God, which, isn't technically what any theist would mean by God.
2. God in line with $H$, will judge all sentient life at the right time, so, because God doesn't act straightway, doesn't mean God will not punish such acts.

3.  Humans have a moral obligation, if we are capable to stop such actions, as we are temporal and limited to our spacetime. So, any evil, like in the case of Sue, we would have some obligation to stop it. But as point 2, states, God will be the ultimate judge of any wrong doings.
4.  Given, Gods H and F, if God did judge the rapist in the case of Sue, He would need then need to judge every 'evil'.

So, what is the atheist asking here? They assume that E2, is a case of evil that counts against God's existence, but is it? How can God have free creatures that always do the right? I maintain this is impossible, like the notion of a married bachelor. For example:

If it were possible for me to travel 15 years into the past before I met and married my wife, and even, if I know, that us being together is for her best and we will be happy, would it be right for me to force her to marry me? Obviously not, as my wife wouldn't have chosen to love me back, this seems to me, to be the case with God. Even if it were possible to create a 'heaven right now' it would still be impossible to have free agents to choose to follow and love God, as they never chose to be in heaven.

In other words, if God was able to cycle through possible worlds and only pick those who would freely choose to love Him, it would still be impossible to pop them into heaven, as possible worlds are not the actual world, so any such free creatures, never actually freely chose to love God.  It is necessary then, that free agents choose to freely love God, in the actual world and then those in heaven, will be in His presence freely.

Given point 4, on what basis, is God judging which evil's to intervene? Given Gods Holiness, every evil as described in Matthew 5 should plausibly be grounds for God's judgement. Is God to intervene every time you have an angry or lustful thought? What should the punishment for such a crime be? Or do we only mean. That God should judge the really bad people!? That is, someone else?

For example:

If God was to stop the rape and murder of Sue, what then should the punishment be for the person who was to commit the crime?  Where would they go to be punished? Moreover, why is God only allowed to judge these so called 'inscrutable' evils, why is God dependent on what we call evil? Surely Gods holiness is the judge, and Matthew 5, is the best explanation of what God deems to be right and wrong. If this is the case, then it is a good, that God doesn't judge the world of every evil, as every lustful and angry thought, every idle word, will be judged and found wanting.

Additionally, in law and policing, a crime must be committed before  any such actions of punishment can be enforced. In cases of stakeouts and the like, law enforcement must witness the criminal doing something against the law before they can act, and sometimes law enforcement takes years before any prosecution can take place. Surely this is analogous to something like what God does, an evil is committed, and God will judge and pass sentence at the appropriate time.

So, it seems to me, points 1 & 2, are reasons that are in favour of theism than that of atheism. 1. We, have reasons to think the atheist's definition isn't what the theist is talking about, that is, we are talking about apples and pears! 2. God, in virtue of the assumptions given above, we have reasons to think that God will judge such evils at the correct time. These seem to be more likely on theism than on atheism.

But what about point 3, is it the case that because we have an obligation to stop evils, does this mean God has too?

It doesn't seem so, as God will judge all such evils at the right time, God has no obligation to fulfil things on our time frame, our lifetime, in the grand scheme of eternity, is a blink of an eye. We, however, have some obligation to defend those who are unable to defend themselves, the strong, should help the weak, as these are moral virtues that would be in keeping within a objective moral framework.

## Other points

When I was around 12, I was in the passenger seat of a car, being taken to school, it was in the winter and the sun was low in the sky, the sun was beaming down into my eyes, because I wasn't tall enough for the sun visor to be effective. After several days of this, I became indignant and asked for the sun to be out of my eye. What was God meant to do in such a scenario? Is God meant to change the tilt of axis of the earth? Suddenly turn the sun off? Rotate the earth, super-fast, so it becomes night-time? Suddenly envelope the sky with clouds? Or allow nature to continue as per the laws of nature?

Clearly, all but the last two option are absurd and are not plausible for an omniscient, omnipotent being to do. But why is it the case that God is required to give a positive answer to any prayer? God isn't beholden to anyone. In virtue of Gods $OS$, $OP$ and $OU$ it seems to me that God forcing the sky to develop clouds suddenly, isn't that plausible given $OU$, as clouds do not normally develop like this in seconds and may have negative effects if God is producing millions of clouds to stop the sun going into young people's eyes in cars. So, it may be the case the only option that God has, is that He must allow nature to take its course, that is, refrain from any direct intervention.

Another case is that of my dearest mother, who had struggled for about 6 years with cancer, due to treatments that she had to try and stop the cancer from spreading, the lymph nodes in her right arm pit, became damaged, which as a result, caused her arm to swell with liquid that would otherwise be resolved naturally by the body.

This swelling then impacted on her dexterity and the last 9-12 months of her life, she wasn't able to do the things she loved to do, which was paint stones, with little messages on them, like 'God is good' or 'God will not leave or forsake you' and play guitar. Especially in the last months of her life, she was in almost constant pain or feeling sick, and the only things that did work, meant she wasn't able to communicate or experience anything! My mother didn't like that, so my Dad had a constant juggling act of keeping her pain-free and conscious enough that she was able to have some quality of life. Eventually, my mother had to go into a local hospice. The staff there where brilliant, they cared for my mother, with love and compassion. Luckily, the Covid crisis, started to ease and I was able to visit my mother every day in the last few days of her life.

All my family and I, prayed for a miracle, but for one reason or another, this didn't happen. Is this proof that God doesn't exist? Far from it, my parent's faith only grew stronger, they prayed and read the bible all through this suffering, in fact, when I would come to see her in the hospice, I would find her listening to YouTube videos of David Pawson or listening to the bible, as she was unable to read, due to her bad arm. Additionally, I would hear her witnessing to the staff about her faith and sharing the gospel message.

In the last few days, when the hospice staff finally gave the bad news to my father, that she had deteriorated, and she would likely pass away very soon. My dad said to my mother, "do you want to

know the truth what they said?", my mother said "of course", my dad said, "you only have days to live". My mum lifted her good arm and said "Halleluiah", she shook her arm in defiance of her circumstances and praised God.

She passed away on the 3rd July 2021, there isn't a day that I do not miss my mother and I think about her often, but for my mother, she is now more alive now, then she ever was in this life. Death and tragedy are not the end and blow as they are for those who have no hope. Those of us that believe, have hope, this life is only like a dream, that we will wake up from, and such troubles that we face here, will fade away into the background, as we see God as He truly is and experience life as it was intended from the beginning.

Additionally, although I will miss my mother till I get to heaven myself, and I will see her again. so, in a sense, I have no real loss, other than the temporary separation, death necessarily permits.

My mother was only 64 when she went to be with her maker, in the grand scheme of eternity, it is a blinking of an eye. Our troubles here on earth are necessarily all encompassing and important to us now, and they take priority at the time, this seems to be a ubiquitous experience of human life. Such issues takes us away from our true purpose of life, which is seek God and to love and honour Him. Anything else, possessions, wealth and fame are all secondary to the main purpose.

Was it possible that God could have healed my mother? I see no reason why it would be impossible. Why then, did not God answer our prayers? There could be any number of reasons why:

- Why is it the case that as soon as something that doesn't happen the way we want, this is somehow cause to doubt God existence, why is God beholden to us? How is God our debtor? No answer is an answer.
- There could be reasons beyond our understanding why such things must happen; maybe this was the best possible way for my mother to go, maybe if she had lived another 15-20 years, her suffering would have been much worse?
- Death of loved ones, cause people to take stock of their lives and important changes can occur, which otherwise, may never happen. Maybe, due to my mother's witness, in the hospice, one of the nurses becomes a Christian.

So, we have some reasons for thinking that the case of Sue, there can be given satisfactory answers to think theism is plausibly true. No doubt the atheist, will challenge any such attempts, and they will naturally question our starting assumptions, but this should too be expected, no atheist worth their salt, will rollover and capitulate to our claims, as we shouldn't concede any attempts to the atheist on points we ought to disagree with, else they have a foot in the door and their argument take a foothold.

## In the case of Bambi, the fawn trapped and burned:

What can be said in defence of this situation?

1. Again, we have reason to question the atheist's definition of God.
2. God given $OU$, must allow acts like forest fires to happen due to natural laws that are an overall good for life.
   - Laws need to be such that fire/heat can be a possibility.
   - The fire that keeps us warm, cook food and provide energy (goods for humanity), has the ability to kill.

3.  Often such natural disasters are due to a lack of management and care from us as stewards of this planet.
    - Bad forest management can allow for fires to spread out of control.
    - Humanity changing topography, can mean water channels or waterways not following the way they used to, meaning forests might not have enough water, causing dry trees, making forest fires more likely.

What can be said about this situation, is the case of Bambi getting caught in a bush and getting horribly burned and slowly die a horrible, painful death days later. Is this evil? It doesn't seem so.

## Bad, good, suffering, evil and morals

Some confusion is generated by slippery terms of use. As I have alluded to in my justification of the moral argument for God's existence, I distinguish between what is bad, good, from what is evil and things that are moral, further I show that suffering, though it may not be what we should desire, isn't equal to being evil or moral.

We can talk about things being good or bad moves in chess, but if you move your rook, that doesn't necessarily mean you have done something evil, it might be objectively good or bad in winning the game, but you wouldn't get a court fine or jail time for it. We can talk about professions being good, e.g., it is good profession to be a plumber or doctor, but one is not obligated to be either, one might want to be a hairdresser or an engineer instead, which are different kinds of good professions. Additionally, we have multiple choices in life like this, which shoes to wear, what to eat or drink, which may or may not be good or bad, yet are not necessarily moral or evil actions. E.g., wearing a t-shirt and shorts may be bad a choice to wear in the middle of winter, but you would be mistaken if you think this is evil.

Is suffering evil? It seems that it is something we should avoid, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it is evil, e.g., stubbing your toe, isn't suddenly evil because you are in pain, moreover, suffering is subjective to the one experiencing it. The suffering my daughter might have if she cuts her finger, wouldn't be the same suffering I would face with a similar injury. It is obviously unpleasant, but it isn't suddenly evil or a moral issue.

Additionally, suffering is a difficult term to pin down, is suffering only to do with pain, or is it depression or loss of some kind? It seems to be. Is depression suffering? It seems like it is something we should avoid, but it doesn't mean it is evil, *(a person who is depressed should seek help from family or by getting professional help and not allow it to become a serious problem.)* e.g., is a person who is deep in debt and feeling depressed by itself evil? *(Note, this is not meant to belittle anyone's suffering who is going through this kind of situation, I too, have felt depressed to varying degrees, so understand the real pain it feels when experiencing such feelings. This response is a logical answer to an emotionally charged situation.)* Well, no, again! anyone who is depressed, should talk to someone, and try to get help. It is a bad situation, but it isn't evil, the person hasn't done anything wrong necessarily by getting a loan or credit card, they have just gotten into a situation that has gotten out of control, but it isn't a necessarily evil or a moral situation.

Is loss suffering? Again, it is something we should try to avoid, but is it evil? No! yes! it is painful and it can take a long time to recover, but losing a loved one isn't necessarily evil, it is a process that, try as we might, will get to everyone one day.

Having said that all of this, some situations are moral, e.g., with the case of Sue, which I have tried to address in the previous section.

## Natural evils

But what about these types of so called 'natural evils'?  Is the slow death of Bambi wrong? Clearly, If one saw the fawn trapped, it would clearly be good to free them, but given these unseen wrongs, is this justifiable for God to allow?

As I have stated previously in my version of the moral argument, it seems to me, that animals have no moral dependence to other animals e.g. when a lion kills the zebra, the lion hasn't actually done anything evil, it has no choice.

So, although we have some obligation to take care of our pets and to help, if we can, help trapped or injured wild animals where possible. It doesn't seem like it is somehow evil that Bambi is trapped, the likelihood is that, Bambi would be eaten before it would suffer too much, or why assume Bambi wouldn't die from the fire anyways? Additionally, animals in general avoid fire, that is, they aren't stupid, they know how to avoid fire. So, unless in extreme situations like the forest fires in Australia this year, animals can escape out of harm's way nine times out of ten.

Moreover, I maintain that many forest fires and other natural disasters are preventable, with proper management. E.g. flooding can be mitigated by ensuring dikes, waterways, rivers and dams are maintained properly to allow for maximum water flow away from cities etc. Forests can be maintained, so dead  trees and overgrown areas are cleaned, to help stop the spread of a fire if it every happens. Earthquake zones, houses and buildings can be built in such a way that prevents buildings being unsafe if and when earthquakes happen, reducing the loss of life, or now we know where these earthquake zones are, people could move away from these areas into more safe zones.

Additionally, with issues of drought and famine that seem to be prevalent in poor countries are due mainly to bad governance of resources of people in charge; due to corruption and greed, those at the top are ruining their country and causing misery to the people they represent. If these people in charge allowed the aid that is often given, to allow to filter as it should to those truly in need, then a lot of the needless suffering would be prevented.

## Other considerations

What about Rowe and Draper's Bayesian probabilistic approach to the evidential problem of evil? I have no way of assessing this based on my objections; how is one meant to give a probability of $H$ or $M$ or any of these other properties of God I have given in consideration? I have no idea; it seems that these probabilities are not truly objective, given my assumptions and background knowledge I rate them very high, but the atheist isn't necessarily going to concede this. How would one even plug these considerations into a formula? I have no training in how to use Bayesian calculations, moreover it seems that a feature of mathematics is that the more parameters you have, especially when dealing with numbers lower than 1 e.g., 0.5 the answer is always going to be lower, so even if I give all my parameters a probability of 0.75 you end up with a lower probability as you multiply each additional parameter.

I freely admit I am completely ignorant on this matter and maybe someone better than I, can give a satisfactory answer to the probability of my argument in Bayesian terms. But sadly, I cannot, nor am I convinced that Bayesian probability is even applicable to such a problem as this, as the starting probabilities are person relative.

## 6. Conclusions

I have tried to give an account of this necessarily difficult issue from a Christian perspective. I think I have pointed out and have shown an asymmetry in the definition of what we are calling God and that this asymmetry has led to this unintentional malformed version, which has led to the argument for the evidential problem of evil and its wide spread acceptance in the atheistic community. I believe, I have given reasons for thinking this version is not what the Christian ought to consider as God and have instead given a more complete definition.

No doubt, the atheist will not accept my argument, but I hope it is a pause for consideration and maybe a more fruitful dialogue between atheist and theist can ensue. I believe it is grounds for the theist to reject the atheist's argument and push back on the definitions and why these so-called evils can be justified in light of the God's attributes I gave.

Thank you for taking the time to reading my response and God bless you.

## References:

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