

2016

“Recognizable Goodness” A Response to Beversluis’ Understanding of God’s Goodness

Emily McCarty
Liberty University, emccarty@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/montview>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Literature in English](#), [British Isles Commons](#), and the [Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McCarty, Emily (2016) “Recognizable Goodness” A Response to Beversluis’ Understanding of God’s Goodness,” *Montview Liberty University Journal of Undergraduate Research*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 12. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/montview/vol2/iss1/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Research and Scholarship at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Montview Liberty University Journal of Undergraduate Research by an authorized editor of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

Emily McCarty
Liberty University
Lynchburg, Virginia
May 2016

“Recognizable Goodness”

A Response to Beversluis’ Understanding of God’s Goodness

In *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*, John Beversluis points out that Lewis’ method for answering the problem of evil is to redefine the main terms in the classical formulation of the problem of evil. Those terms are *good*, *happy*, and *almighty*. Beversluis takes issue with Lewis’ tactic, particularly his redefinition of *good*:

Instead of distinguishing the multiple meanings of these terms and specifying the ones he has in mind, he ascribes *new* meanings to them that are not only absent from ordinary usage, but often at variance with it. Having done so, he claims that these new meanings are not only better but also ‘deeper’ than the popular ones....The legitimate and clarifying process of disambiguating terms is very different from the illegitimate and obfuscating process of redefining them.¹

According to Beversluis, this misuse of language leads Lewis to bad theology. Beginning with this redefinition in *The Problem of Pain*, Beversluis charges Lewis of a shift from a Platonist view of God’s goodness toward an Ockhamist view of God’s goodness in *A Grief Observed*.²

Beversluis examines the Euthyphro Dilemma as a backdrop to the Platonist and

1. John Beversluis, “The Problem of Evil,” in *C. S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus, 2007), 227-29.

2. Beversluis, “The Problem of Evil,” 265.

Ockhamist views of God's goodness. A Platonist would claim that God's goodness is something that conforms to an "objective moral standard,"³ such that men and God abide by a similar standard of good. An Ockhamist, however, would argue that God's goodness is something that he chooses, as opposed to a standard outside himself.⁴ Beversluis notes of Lewis' view:

God's goodness must be defined in terms of (what Lewis often calls) "ordinary" moral standards. By "ordinary" he does not mean whatever moral standards an individual or society happens to accept, but *objective* moral standards discoverable by reason independently of faith and common to everyone. He agrees that divine goodness differs in some important respects from human goodness, but he insists that it must be still be *recognizable* goodness; otherwise, "good" will be emptied of all content.⁵

Beversluis will latch on to this notion of recognizable goodness to construct his argument for Lewis' supposed move to Ockhamism. The notion of God's goodness as recognizable goodness is the lynchpin of Beversluis' argument. He will use this notion at each point along the way to attempt to demonstrate Lewis' falling away from Platonism. If one can show that Lewis maintains God's goodness as recognizable goodness, then Beversluis' argument fails. The demonstration of Lewis' consistency to God's "recognizable goodness" will be the goal of this paper.

Beversluis' main objection to how Lewis resolves issues of God's goodness in *The Problem of Pain* lies with Lewis' redefinition of *good* itself. Beversluis hones in on several

3. Ibid., 229.

4. Ibid., 229-32.

5. Ibid., 229.

pieces of this redefinition of *good*, but James Petrik makes a crucial observation about this mode of argument in this particular work. He argues that Lewis' redefinition is not at odds with a Platonic notion of morality: in fact, it is quite in line with it. He writes, "Against the Sophists, Plato advocated reliance upon reason to reveal objective moral standards whose scope of application includes both the gods and human beings. He was, therefore, unwilling to subject either human beings or the gods to "ordinary" moral standards and the caprice of majority."⁶ A Platonic notion of morality often clashed with the popular opinion on the matter. Socrates was notorious for rejecting the moral opinions of his day. Plato's goal was to show that reason discovers morality, but at times it will clash with the common notions.⁷

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis takes some common items and turns them into examples of God's love for us. Lewis frames God's love in four pictures. An painter revisits a work and redoes it multiple times "until it has a certain character."⁸ A man cures the beast of its wild ways "that he may love it."⁹ A father who loves his son will train character into him and the son ought to submit to his father's seasoned instruction as one who knows more. A man will not tolerate the straying of the wandering wife. In each example, the greater pushes the object of its love toward greater goodness, even if, at the time, the object does not see value in such unpleasant measures. The artist reworks the painting to the nth degree until that painting becomes his masterpiece. The man trains the wild out of the beast that the beast may love and be loved—he

6. James Petrik, "In Defense of C.S. Lewis's Analysis of God's Goodness," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 36, no. 1 (August 1994): 45-46, accessed 26 October 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40021238>.

7. Petrik, "In Defense," 46-47.

8. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1996, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperOne, 2007) 570-571.

9. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 571-72.

sees value in the beast and trains it even through pain to itself and the animal. A good father loves his son and will not allow him to fall into criminality even if the son must pass up some fun. The loving husband will not see his wife fall into adultery.¹⁰ In these examples, a familiar picture of good is given. Lewis parallels each familiar notion of good to God's love for us. Lewis is arguing for God's goodness as recognizable.

Beverluis, however, has a few more detailed objections that one would do well to address. One of the biggest charges that Beverluis levels is that Lewis is unclear in his handling of the terms *kindness* and *love*:

[Lewis] does not explain why he thinks kindness involves "a certain fundamental Indifference" to its object, much less "something like contempt" for it. Nor does he explain why he thinks kindness "consents very readily to the removal of its object" and "cares not whether its object becomes good or bad, provided that it escapes suffering."... People are kind to strangers they will never see again as well as to members of their own families whom they love very much.¹¹

However, Lewis asserts that most people confuse Divine goodness and lovingkindness, and this kindness is "the desire to see others than the self happy ... but just happy." Lewis goes on to explain in his Grandfather-God example from which Beverluis derives such confusion that most people tend to think of God as an approving old man who should smile upon our enjoyment of life.¹² Lewis challenges this and argues that "Love is something more stern and splendid than mere kindness," and that love is "exacting" and expects more of its recipient.¹³ What Lewis may

10. Ibid., 570-73.

11. Beverluis, "The Problem of Evil," 250.

12. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 569.

be going for is a distinction between mere kindness-as-politeness versus a true interest in the object of love. I may be polite to someone without really being truly interested in who they are or who they become. I can be quite darling toward someone whom I could care less about seeing again. In other words, I don't care about that individual as a person. But toward someone I love, or who claims to love me, I will expect more and will seek their best. I can be kind to them, it's true, but I am not merely kind—I love *them*.¹⁴ In arguing something along these lines, Lewis is not making God's goodness unrecognizable, but using illustrations that cut against the common notions.

Petrik also addresses Beversluis' contention that Lewis' version of love depicted in the Problem of Pain example “impose(s)...inordinately severe demands on the beloved.”¹⁵ One of these “inordinately severe demands” has to do with Lewis' assertion that of those we love, “we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes.”¹⁶ Beversluis interprets this as Lewis arguing “that many of the things that children think are good (or good for them) are not good and that therefore God, being wiser, cannot be faulted for failing to keep us well supplied with them.”¹⁷ He conceives of this like a parent who withholds an item from a child because they are aware of certain things that the child is not. In justification of this, Beversluis appeals to the opening lines of “Divine Goodness” in *The Problem of Pain* where Lewis writes “if God is wiser than we His judgment must differ from

13. Ibid., 569-70.

14. Ibid, 573. Lewis hints at this in this portion of *The Problem of Pain* and I will further explain below more of what this means.

15. Petrik, “In Defense.” 49.

16. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 570; also Petrik, “In Defense,” 49.

17. Beversluis, “The Problem of Evil,” 256-57.

ours on many things, and not least on good and evil. What seems to us good may therefore not be good in His eyes, and what seems to us evil may not be evil.”¹⁸ There is some ambiguity involved in Lewis’ meaning here¹⁹ but he may mean that one would prefer to see one they love suffer rather than to enter into a morally bankrupt lifestyle.²⁰ For Lewis, “moral and spiritual excellence” is the greatest good for men and women, and suffering is one way that they may be rattled to see their failure to attain and need for such excellence.²¹ However, there is something that we must recognize here: when it comes to morality, we, unlike children, do not somehow attain God’s knowledge of right and wrong: “Adults never grow into divinity, so that when they mature they will equal God in rationality and knowledge.”²² Lewis’ acknowledgment that God is wiser than us when it comes to morality and we will not outgrow this condition.

Another of these “inordinately severe demands” is that God, in order to get our attention, brings suffering our way. Beversluis rejects Lewis’ Shattering Thesis: “God inflicts pain and suffering to shatter their illusions of self-sufficiency or to make them realize that the good things they presently enjoy will disappoint them, leave them unsatisfied, and ultimately make them miserable.”²³ This makes God a jealous deity who “uses people—to the point of inflicting pain on innocent children—in order to achieve his own ends,” and a God of such unrecognizable

18. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 567; Beversluis, “The Problem of Evil,” 257.

19. Beversluis, “The Problem of Evil,” 256; Petrik, “In Defense,” 49.

20. Petrik, “In Defense,” 50.

21. *Ibid.*, 48-49.

22. Matthew Flannagan, “Is Ethical Naturalism More Plausible than Supernaturalism? A Reply to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong,” *Philo* 15, no 1, (Spring-Summer 2012): 24-26, accessed 19 November 2015. *Philosopher’s Index with Full Text*.

23. Beversluis, “The Problem of Evil,” 259-62; quote from 259.

goodness who brings suffering is not to be worshipped, according to Beversluis.²⁴

Beversluis is correct: God is a jealous God, but he is jealous for our good. Lewis writes in *The Problem of Pain*: “When Christianity says that God loves man, it means that God *loves* man: not that He has some ‘disinterested’, because really indifferent, concern for our welfare, but that, in awful and surprising truth, we are the objects of His love.”²⁵ Similarly to how we had to differentiate kindness as impersonal and love as toward the object itself, Lewis locates this passionate love as toward a personal object. Lewis anticipates objections that this makes God’s goodness unrecognizable. God’s love is not selfish and does not need us to fill a need, as a jealous human lover might need the beloved to do:

Human love, as Plato teaches us, is the child of Poverty—of a want or lack; it is caused by a real or supposed good in its beloved which the lover needs and desires. But God’s love, far from being caused by goodness in the object, causes all goodness which the object has, loving it first into existence and then into real, though derivative, lovability. God is goodness. He can give good, but cannot need or get it.²⁶

Lewis further explains that “God wills our good, and our good is to love Him.”²⁷ Not only is God our good, but “the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator.”²⁸ According to Lewis, only the individual can make the choice to re-submit their will to God; and if one does

24. *Ibid.*, 251.

25. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 573.

26. *Ibid.*, 575-76.

27. *Ibid.*, 577.

28. *Ibid.*, 602.

not, the soul will lose its true self in hell, where it will endure eternally “the horrible freedom [it has] demanded.”²⁹ God uses pain, like a megaphone, to warn us of the danger ahead—even on those whom we would deem already morally healthy.³⁰ The morally healthy may not love him and if not, they will face this eternal consequence.³¹

Beverluis also argues on this point that pain-infliction becomes dangerous in human relationships. When we do such things to one another, it is considered morally wrong by our standards. God is setting a bad precedent.³² This activity of God does not reflect a recognizable goodness. However, there are times when it may be appropriate for one person to inflict pain on another because of their knowledge of the situation. In this regard, Petrik gives the example of surgery. He, who has only received philosophical instruction, could not perform a life-saving surgery whereas a surgeon who has gone to medical school could. He highlights the point that the surgeon’s “knowledge or expertise” qualifies him to cause pain in a way that he, a philosopher cannot:

Note, however, that both the surgeon and I are bound by the same standard of non-maleficence, for we are both called to inflict no undue harm upon others; thus, our different latitudes of morally permissible action are not to be traced to a difference of moral principles operative in the two cases.³³

There is a human precedent as it were that we can recognize. Because of God’s knowledge of the

29. *Ibid.*, 621-26.

30. *Ibid.*, 604, 606-7.

31. *Ibid.*, 606.

32. Petrik, “In Defense,” 50; Beverluis, “The Problem of Evil,” 253-56.

33. Petrik, “In Defense,” 51.

individual sufferer, he can inflict pain in a way that we cannot.³⁴ Beversluis' contention fails because God can still practice a similar morality even in causing pain. A reason for this is that while it may appear that God abides by a different morality than us mere mortals, "a human being's vision of the good will always be impaired in this life by an imperfect intellect and a corrupt character."³⁵ Lewis hints at this in *Mere Christianity*, when he notes that men are quick to point out how others have offended them, yet quick to seek excuse from others and from God when they are offensive. Lewis notes that if God is Judge, he will be impartial.³⁶ Our how view of justice can become warped. And this warping just might apply to our vision of God's goodness, too.

Beversluis contends that, in "The Poison of Subjectivism," Lewis moves toward Ockhamism when he claims that God "is identical with" the moral law.³⁷ Lewis explains that the bifurcation we see between the moral law and God, or between a law and the legislator, results from our human view of things. We tend to think that one either abides by the law or constructs the law; one and the same entity cannot do both. According to Beversluis, "Instead of accounting for God's goodness in terms of his conformity to some *external* moral law or independent moral standard, Lewis now accounts for it by grounding it in God's *internal* nature such that the moral law is *identical with* God and both definitive of his nature and expressive of it."³⁸ Beversluis again charges Lewis with wordsmithing and asserts that there is a difference between ontological

34. *Ibid.*, 51-52.

35. *Ibid.*, 47.

36. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1996, in *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 15-18, 33-35.

37. Beversluis, "The Problem of Evil," 267-69.

38. *Ibid.*, 265-67, 269.

and grammatical entities. Even if God and the good are one and the same, we need a word-distinction to help us recognize such that both are the same. Beversluis writes that “Unless there is *something*, some *discernable and, in principle, expressible* property that God embodies or exhibits or manifests that *constitutes* his goodness and differentiates him from an evil God (or a God who is ‘beyond’ good and evil), Lewis claims about his goodness are as vacuous as the Ockhamist’s claims about the goodness of his commands.”³⁹ Without some meaning attached to the good, we cannot say what it means for God to be good, and this indeed cuts against Lewis’ contention that God’s goodness is recognizable to us.

In “The Poison of Subjectivism,” Lewis is responding to moral subjectivism. He argues that morality does not change based on our desires (contra subjectivism’s attack on morality) and that it needs an objective standard in order to actually be evaluative of persons or situations.⁴⁰ Lewis claims that “practical reason” is the standard by which we discover morality.⁴¹ We can, by reason, understand the law’s demands. Our perception of the right and wrong may be skewed in places but it is not destroyed, and we are still able to acknowledge good.⁴² Lewis has not, so far, shifted from God’s goodness as recognizable goodness.

Contrary to Beversluis’ argument, Lewis does not empty the good of its meaning. He merely joins God and the good. He says, “God neither obeys nor creates the moral law. The good is uncreated; ... it lies, as Plato said, on the other side of existence...[Christians] know that what lies beyond existence, what admits no contingency, what lends divinity to all else, what is the

39. *Ibid.*, 270-71.

40. C.S. Lewis, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” *Religion in Life* 47, no. 3 (October 1978): 289.

41. Lewis, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” 291.

42. *Ibid.*, 289, 291, 294.

ground of all existence, is not simply a law but also a begetting love.”⁴³ Lewis does not empty the good, nor blur meanings; instead he joins good to an eternal being. But what Lewis is *not* doing here is destroying God’s recognizable goodness. Even if Lewis merges the two ontologically, the epistemology of good and God are distinct. How we *come to know* what these terms mean are distinct from their *meaning*.⁴⁴ Lewis still maintains that we can recognize morality or goodness by reason, and his argument allows that we may come to know God separately from the law. Inherent in this portion of the argument is that we need to join the good to God, whereas before we recognized them as distinct.⁴⁵ “The Poison of Subjectivism” argues that we need to join God to morality in order to give morals “an eternal and objective” source.⁴⁶ God can have the metaphysical property that makes him good and be the source of the good. But I could know what good is before I know that God is good and the source of the good. In fact, without knowledge of the good, I could not know that God is good. Moral good is epistemologically prior to God’s goodness, but God’s goodness and God as goodness is metaphysically necessary for moral good.⁴⁷ Lewis is not taking away God’s recognizable

43. *Ibid.*, 295.

44. I am indebted to Saul Kripke for his insights on metaphysical, epistemological, and linguistic distinctions. Saul Kripke, “Identity and Necessity,” in *Metaphysics: the Big Questions*, eds. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 519-543. I am indebted to class lectures by both Dr. Ed Martin for clarifying Kripke’s meanings, as well as Dr. Thom Provenzola for another distinctions between epistemology and metaphysics. Dr. Edward Martin, Class Notes and Lecture. PHIL 430: Metaphysics, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Fall 2015. Dr Thomas Provenzola, Class Notes and Lecture. PHIL 420: Classical and Religious Epistemology, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Spring 2015.

45. Lewis, “The Poison of Subjectivism,” 294; Inherent in Lewis’ argument here is that we need to join the good to God, whereas before we recognized them as distinct.

46. Lewis, “Poison of Subjectivism,” 295.

47. Again I am indebted to the explanations and examples given by Dr. Ed Martin and Dr. Thom Provenzola for the argument that appears here. Those explanations and examples provided the structure upon which this argument forms. Dr. Edward Martin, Class Notes and Lecture. PHIL 430: Metaphysics, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Fall 2015. Dr Thomas Provenzola, Class Notes and Lecture. PHIL 420: Classical and Religious Epistemology, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Spring 2015.

goodness; rather, he joins God and goodness after we have come to know them separately.

According to Beversluis, Lewis becomes an Ockhamist in *A Grief Observed* when he seems to admit that God is good, seemingly without argument as to how God is recognizably good. Beversluis writes,

The God who knocked down Lewis' house of cards is an Ockhamistically conceived deity who is *called* good no matter what. The upshot is that Lewis' "rediscovered" faith is a faith in a God whose goodness is so unlike our own that he can be called good only by laying aside our ordinary moral standards and our ordinary criteria for determining who has true faith.... "Good" now means not only "whatever God *commands*" and "whatever God *wills or permits*" but also "whatever God *is or does*."⁴⁸

Beversluis contends that Lewis comes to position because he acknowledges that his faith was false until the point of his wife's death rather than attend to the proof against God's goodness provided by his own suffering. Because Lewis forfeits his ravings against God and maintains that God was shattering his faith to show him his error, because the fault now lies in Lewis' faith and not in God's actions, Lewis is charged with no-reason-necessary, what-God-chooses-is-good Ockhamist view of the goodness of God.⁴⁹

Baggett points out an important distinction that Beversluis fails to make when reading *A Grief Observed*. He writes that "[Beversluis] seems to assume that Lewis' faith in God's goodness, *come what may*, was an affirmation of ongoing faith *no matter what, even in principle*;

48. John Beversluis, "C.S. Lewis's Crisis of Faith," in *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus, 2007) 286-87.

49. Beversluis, "C. S. Lewis's Crisis of Faith," 284-85.

versus come what may, *given the nature of a faithful and loving God.*”⁵⁰ Lewis was not arguing, as an Ockhamist would, that God is good, “no matter what”, but rather that he trusted that “a truly good God...would never do something that we cannot ultimately reconcile with our best, non-negotiable moral intuitions,” even when faced with the deepest sorrow, even if we must grapple with that reconciliation.⁵¹ Lewis noted that people can be wrong about what good is but simply because particular beliefs are incorrect does not mean that all are up for revision.⁵² God could hone Lewis’ assumptions about his goodness, “but that is not the same as God’s replacing it altogether, substituting good for bad and bad for good.”⁵³ Baggett is quick to note that we as humans do have “epistemic limitations” when it comes to understanding divine action in the light of evil, and perhaps, as Lewis noted, we ask “the wrong questions” when “silence” is appropriate until we are ready to learn and listen.⁵⁴

Earlier we noted that Beverlsuis sees a major problem in Lewis’ argument when it comes to the use of language, particularly when it come to the redefinition of terms. But Beversluis may not be accurate in his understanding of language at play in Lewis’ work, either. Baggett notes that

Beverlsuis’ inadequate epistemology is related to his equally problematic linguistic insistence that “goodness” be used univocally where God is concerned....Either we use “good” univocally or equivocally. Either God conforms

50. David Baggett, “Is Divine Iconoclast as Bad as Cosmic Sadist?” in *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*, eds. David Baggett, Gary R. Habermas, and Jerry L. Walls (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 124-125.

51. Baggett, “Is Divine Iconoclast as Bad as Cosmic Sadist?” 125.

52. *Ibid.*, 126.

53. *Ibid.*, 126.

54. *Ibid.*, 127.

to our every expectation and we then call him good; or if he does not and we continue calling him good, we thereby abandon our ordinary meaning of goodness altogether...Rather, language about God is to be understood analogically, owing to differences in modes of being, say, between John Beverlsuis and God, while preserving the fact that it is in God's image that we have been created.⁵⁵

Beverlsuis is correct in pointing out that language is a tricky thing and should communicate the reality of our metaphysics. But he has forgotten that God is greater than us, particularly in knowledge. This means that God certainly knows things that we do not. As has been noted before, humans, while not able to know all things that God knows, are not completely in the dark when it comes to morality. There is a metaphysical difference between us and God that bears upon our understanding of the good, and by extension, God's goodness.⁵⁶

Baggett's insight will help clarify what is wrong with Beverlsuis' argument as a whole. In all three works, Lewis does not strip God of recognizable goodness. Rather, Lewis is saying that we can recognize goodness but that God knows and shows us its perfection. Lewis writes:

When the relevant difference between the Divine ethics and your own appears to you, you will not, in fact, be in any doubt that the change demanded of you is in the direction you already call "better." The Divine "goodness" differs from ours, but it is not sheerly different: it differs from ours not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child's first attempt to draw

55. Ibid., 128. I am indebted to class lectures for the philosophical definition of analogue and its use, as well as Lewis use of analogue. Martin, Edward. Class Lecture and Notes. PHIL 430: Metaphysics. Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Fall 2015. Martin, Edward. Class Lecture and Notes. PHIL 465: The Thought of C. S. Lewis. Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Fall 2015.

56. For more on the "metaphysical gap" between God and man, see Millard J. Erikson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, ed. L. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001) 130-36.

a wheel. But when the child has learned to draw, it will know that the circle it then makes is what it was trying to make from the very beginning.⁵⁷

If God is essentially an omniscient being, it is fitting that he knows more than we. We may know some of the same things that he does about morality, but he knows these truths more deeply. In an analogy given in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis claims that in the relationship between a father and son, “the father uses his authority to make the son into the sort of human being he, rightly, and in his superior wisdom, wants him to be” and this is similar to God’s love for us.⁵⁸ Lewis elsewhere hints that morality leads us to something more, something deeper with God, “the Divine Life.”⁵⁹ Perhaps this is part of the “better” that the child must learn when drawing her circle.

What lurks in Beversluis’s objections as a whole is the question of omniscience and our knowledge. If we accept that God knows more than we do, then God’s goodness can *differ* but also be *recognizable*. This epistemological gap points to the metaphysical differences—the “modes of being”—between God and humans. Lewis does not make God’s goodness unrecognizable. He acknowledges the differences between us and God and points out that sometimes we get it morally wrong.

This paper has shown that Beversluis’ argument against Lewis fails. Lewis maintains throughout these three works that God’s goodness is recognizable. In *The Problem of Pain*, what seems unlike or even not good to us, is upon reflection, good. In fact, there are similar human

57. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 568. Both Beversluis “The Problem of Evil,” 233 as well as Petrik, “In Defense,” 47-48 used this quote to demonstrate how Lewis understood God’s goodness as recognizable goodness or ‘better’ goodness. Their use was helpful to my own.

58. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 572.

59. C.S. Lewis, “Man or Rabbit?” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper, (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1970), 112-13.

examples that show God's goodness is not so very unlike our own. In "The Poison of Subjectivism," Lewis does not empty good of meaning: rather he sources that meaning in the divine so that our morals have enduring meaning. In *A Grief Observed*, Lewis is not denying recognizable goodness by accepting what has happened; He is acknowledging that God knows more than him, including more about morality. God's goodness is recognizable, but one must be willing to accept that God knows more than we do. This acceptance does not make one an Ockhamist but is rather acknowledges an important metaphysical truth. God attempts to teach what he knows, like a teacher helping her student draw a circle. And if we allow Him, He will show us that what he knows is "better."

Bibliography

- Baggett, David. "Is Divine Iconoclast as Bad as Cosmic Sadist?" In *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty*. Edited by David Baggett, Gary R. Habermas, and Jerry L. Walls. 115-130. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Beverluis, John. "C.S. Lewis's Crisis of Faith." In *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*. 273-302. Amherst, New York: Prometheus, 2007.
- . "The Problem of Evil." In *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*. 227-271. Amherst, New York: Prometheus, 2007.
- Erikson, Millard J. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. Edited by L. Arnold Hustad. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Flanagan, Matthew. "Is Ethical Naturalism More Plausible than Supernaturalism? A Reply to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong." *Philo* 15, no. 1. (Spring-Summer 2012): 19-37. Accessed 19 November 2015. *Philosopher's Index with Full Text*.
- Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed*. C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1996. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 647-688. New York: HarperOne, 2007.
- . "Man or Rabbit?" In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 108-113. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970.
- . *Mere Christianity*. C. S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1996. In *The Complete C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 1-177. New York: HarperOne, 2007.
- . "The Poison of Subjectivism." *Religion in Life* 47, no. 3 (October 1978): 288-296.
- . *The Problem of Pain*. C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1996. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 543-646. New York: HarperOne, 2007.
- Kripke, Saul. "Identity and Necessity." In *Metaphysics: the Big Questions*. Edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, 519-543. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008.
- Martin, Edward. Class Lecture and Notes. PHIL 430: Metaphysics. Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Fall 2015.
- . Class Lecture and Notes. PHIL 465: The Thought of C. S. Lewis. Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Fall 2015.
- Petrik, James. "In Defense of C.S. Lewis's Analysis of God's Goodness." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 36, no. 1 (August 1994): 45-56. Accessed 26 October 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40021238>.

Provenzola, Thomas. Class Notes and Lecture. PHIL 420: Classical and Religious Epistemology, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, Spring 2015.