

Liberty University

**Atheistic Problem of Good**

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in Candidacy for the Degree of  
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by

Bruce L. Davis Jr

Lynchburg, Virginia

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## Contents

CHAPTER I.....	1
Introduction .....	1
CHAPTER II .....	6
The Problem of Evil .....	6
Three Problems.....	7
The Logical Problem .....	7
The Emotional Problem.....	8
The Evidential Problem .....	10
Some Answers .....	12
The Free Will Defense.....	12
Greater Good Defense .....	15
Conclusion.....	19
CHAPTER III.....	21
The Byproduct of Evil .....	21
Evil Thus Good.....	22
Defining Good .....	24
Objective Morality.....	27
Naturalism .....	28

Theism .....	31
Origins Of Good .....	33
The Euthyphro Dilemma .....	33
Divine Command Theory .....	34
Guided Will Theory .....	35
Essence of God .....	36
Conclusion .....	38
CHAPTER IV .....	40
Gratuitous Goods .....	40
Some Examples .....	41
Purpose .....	46
Conclusion .....	49
CHAPTER V .....	51
The Compass Effect .....	51
Goods Point to God .....	52
Evil Points to God.....	55
A Paradigm Shift .....	59
An Abductive Argument .....	59
Atheistic Problem of Good.....	61

Conclusion.....	62
CHAPTER VI.....	64
Conclusion.....	64
Bibliography.....	69

## CHAPTER I

### **Introduction**

One of the most difficult problems the theist must face is the theological and philosophical problem of evil. Philosophers such as David Hume, J. L. Mackie, and William Rowe have expressed the unlikelihood of the existence of God based on such a problem. Each of the above-mentioned philosophers argue the existence of God is irrational and doubtful because of the evil which exists in the world. It is called the problem of evil simply because in the atheist's view, evil is thought to successfully undermine belief in the theistic God. The theist is left to answer for said problem. However, this apparent problem of evil has been successfully answered for by theists such as Alvin Plantinga, John S. Feinberg, and Marilyn McCord Adams, as well as others.

With the success in answering the apparent problem of evil as noted above, a new problem emerges. The new problem is not a problem for the theist, but a problem for the atheist. Evil, or the problem of evil, necessarily demands good exists in the world. If there is no good, then neither can there be evil. The theist can ask the atheist in the same respect to answer for why there is good in the world. What is the problem of evil for the theist, can now be seen as the problem of good for the atheist. Because of what the problem of evil implies, its opposite is also valid; therefore, the atheist needs to provide a sound understanding for the existence of good found in the world. This thesis in part will seek to answer for the problem of evil by using the atheistic problem of good as a springboard. Doing so will point to what can be abductively argued for the necessity of God's existence.

As alluded to in the previous paragraphs, the problem of evil is not only a problem for the scholar, but attention should be brought to the lay persons as well. There are too many who

refuse to be receptive of the gospel message because of work of atheists as mentioned above. Answering for the problem of evil by juxtaposing the atheistic problem of good should cause those assessing the problem of evil to look more closely at the good which exists in the world we live. Therefore, the atheist will need to consider the possibility of evil without good. Doing so will naturally lead to the metaphysical question of why good even exists. If one, then views good without any *a priori* beliefs about good will quickly realize “just because” or “brute fact” answers will not suffice; no more then it is a viable answer for the theist to use when examining the problem of evil. Therefore, this thesis will be using both good and evil in an apologetic argument for the existence of God in which the burden will be placed on the atheist.

The purpose of this thesis will be to enable the theist the ability to transition from the defensive to the offensive in the apologetic conversation of the existence of God. The work here should also provide a new solution to the problem of evil by engendering a paradigm shift in the argument of good and evil as it pertains to the existence of God. The hope is, by bringing emphasis to the problem of evil by focusing on the good in the world will allow the problem of evil to be viewed in a new light, allowing the theist to answer in a way that will shift the burden to the atheist. Doing so will provide another line of argumentation the theist can deploy when the topic of the problem of evil arises. The intention in this work is not to be a theodicy but to shift the burden of proof onto the atheist. Although a theodicy can be formulated what will be argued for herein will focus on an abductive approach. The shift is not designed to attack the atheist, but rather to encourage a different intellectual train of thought when examining evil. In other words, the atheist will be asked to recognize the problem used as a proof against the existence of God will raise the question of good. However, the atheist will likely be hard pressed to develop a sufficient response to such questions.

Another purpose will be to encourage the reader to not accept the popular atheistic view, without considering the good in the world. The following chapters will also show it is not proper to deal with the problem of evil without giving due diligence to the good, especially those of the gratuitous type. In what will be offered in this thesis should prove useful in adding to the collaboration of God's existence by articulating a point that has not had much research conducted. In most cases, when laying forth any work on the problem of evil, the topic of good is only briefly mentioned. Furthermore, to bring both good and evil together in philosophical and theological discussions will have a significant impact on the conversation. The work here will be to encourage others in the apologetic field to bring forth a stronger argument for the existence of God. By looking at evil while considering good, should bring with it new possible argumentative avenues for the theologian and philosopher alike. Fulfilling 1 Peter 3:15 in which the theist will be able to bring a defense to the hope theist have in Jesus Christ.

Bringing a new perspective on the problem of evil by transitioning it to a problem the atheist must answer, significantly adds to the conversation, something which seems inadequate in philosophical literature. There is a need in philosophical and apologetical circles to address the other side of the problem, goods. For too long the conversation focused on evil without the understanding evils can only exist if goods do. It is important to address both sides of the apparent problem both on the theistic and atheistic sides of the debate. Asking atheists to address their problem of good will likely bring a new focus in the argument for God's existence. Understanding this will become evident by arguing both evils and goods are not after all gratuitous but find their purpose in differing ways pointing to the existence of God.

The various replies by the theist have significantly blunted the force of the problem of evil as laid out by atheist. Although there is still work to be done, this thesis will seek to further



advance the strength of the philosophical/apologetical argument in favor of the theist. Doing so adds to the conversation in a way which will allow another advancement in the debate on the existence of God. The argument within the proposed thesis will lend support to the Christian community by giving the theist another way to present and answer for the problem of evil in an abductive manner. Doing so will further the conversation in which strength will be added to the theistic worldview by both the argument and the ensuing conversation because of the argument.

The position held here is the only rational<sup>1</sup> answer to the atheistic problem of good is an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God exist. It will be argued that the inference to the best explanation concerning the atheistic problem of good is theism<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, as will be argued there is an effect that comes from both good and evils, what will be called “The Compass Effect.” Evil and good via the compass effect, point to the need of relationship with the theistic God.

The second chapter will deal primarily with the problem of evil and show three contemporary arguments from evil. After discovering the three main arguments against theism, three responses will be provided. The responses are well-known arguments which successfully answer their respective problem of evil. The purpose in showing the success of the given arguments is not necessarily given for their “proof” but only to show the problem of evil can and has been successfully answered. Chapter two will then lead to a discussion of the byproduct of evil in chapter three. Here the argument will be made, if the atheist accepts evil, it assumes its byproduct per se, metaphysically, must also exist. The objective in chapter three will be to argue

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<sup>1</sup> Alvin Plantinga explains several variations of rationality. The version in mind in this thesis is best understood as “deontological rationality” related to the Aristotelian type of rationality, which as Plantinga argues is of the justified type. See pages 87 and 109 of Plantinga’s *Warranted Christian Belief*.

<sup>2</sup> Theism will assume Christian theism, however many of the concepts and arguments put forth in this thesis may be adopted for other forms of monotheism such as Judaism and Islamic beliefs.

essentially, if evils exist then necessarily goods exist. After developing the argument for the necessity of good, goods will be given a definition proper for us within the remainder of the thesis. After a working definition is established the foundation of such goods will be argued.

In the contemporary literature of the problem of evil, one of the most prominent arguments is the argument from gratuitous evils. After arguing in chapter three that goods are necessary, it naturally follows in chapter four if indeed there are gratuitous evils on the atheist view, then *mutatis mutandis* there are gratuitous goods. Some examples of goods of gratuitous nature will be discussed to show support. It will be briefly argued these types of goods are only gratuitous given atheism. Goods of this type have a foundation given theism; the same foundation argued in the previous chapter examining objective morality.

The final chapter before the concluding chapter will flesh out what has been coined herein the compass effect as alluded to earlier. The compass effect is built on the previous chapters up to this point. While it can be seen and developed into a theodicy, its intention is more abductive in nature in which the compass effect provides a better answer for both good and evil than what the naturalist can provide. If accepted as sound it will leave the atheist with their new problem of good.

## CHAPTER II

### The Problem of Evil

Before arguing for the atheistic problem of good, it will prove beneficial to dedicate a chapter to the problem of evil. There has already been much ink spilled over the problem of evil, so this chapter will not seek to answer for the problem. Chapter two will provide an overview of the main arguments and how they have been successfully answered. Detailing these arguments and their answers, will help set up the main argument of the thesis; by showing indeed the theist has been able to answer for their problem of evil. If successful, as in any good debate, a rebuttal will be able to take place in which the atheist must now answer what will later be developed as their problem of good.

There are three main arguments against the existence of God from evil. They are the logical, evidential, and emotional problems of evil.<sup>3</sup> It has been well said, the problem with evil is not necessarily the concept of evil, but the results of such evil, suffering to some extent or another. Eleonore Stump in her magnificent work *Wondering in Darkness* explains, “what is bad about the evil a human being suffers is that it undermines (partly or entirely) her flourishing or it deprives her (in part or whole) of the desires of her heart or both.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, evil would not be problematic if it did not negatively affect people. Stump further points out it is not necessarily evil that needs to be explained, but the suffering which results from it.<sup>5</sup> Stump does not mean to say evil (metaphysically speaking) does not need any explanation, rather the

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<sup>3</sup> Paul M. Gould, Travis Dickinson, and R. Keith Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2018), 145–61.

<sup>4</sup> Eleonore Stump, *Wondering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Stump, 11.

pressing issue with evil is the suffering in the world. In this case, the problem with evil is directed towards humans. However, this line of thinking could be developed and should work well for any sentient beings, as will be noted later in the section laying forth greater goods. For now, a brief overview of each of the three main forms of evil with some successful answers will serve the purposes of this thesis.

### **Three Problems**

#### The Logical Problem

Each argument from evil tend to show in some form of argumentation it is not reasonable or rational to believe in a theistic God (God as will be articulated herein refers to the monotheistic God of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). While they are quite different, each form of the problem seeks to undermine the existence of God. For example, the well-known atheist J. L. Mackie insisted evil (logically speaking), posed an unanswerable problem for the theist.

Mackie claimed:

not that religious beliefs lack rational support, but that they are positively irrational, that the several parts of the essential theological doctrine are inconsistent with one another, so that the theologian can maintain his position as a whole only by a much more extreme rejection of reason than in the former case. He must now be prepared to believe, not merely what cannot be proved, but what can be disproved from other beliefs that he also holds.<sup>6</sup>

However, in the same article he admits this only obtains if the premises in his argument hold true. His argument is as follows,

- (1) God is omnipotent.
- (2) God is omnibenevolent and

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<sup>6</sup> John L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," in *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 25.

(3) evil exists.

As one can see, Mackie has made a strategic move here in which if any two obtain then the third does not. But it seems Mackie has overstated his case. For starters, omnipotence does not necessarily demand God can remove all evils, unless of course, as some atheists believe (surprisingly some theist as well), God could contradict logic. Not all theists hold to a view of omnipotence Mackie seems to hold to. The evidence base (as Plantinga so calls it<sup>7</sup>), for Mackie and those who hold his views do not contain the same evidence base a theist might. Feinberg explains, “not all forms of theism understand omnipotence that way. Hence, not all theistic systems entail that God can remove all kinds of evil.”<sup>8</sup> Another successful answer to the logical problem of evil is “The Free Will Defense.” While it is credited to Alvin Plantinga, it was used by Augustine long before. “The Free Will Defense” will be explored in further detail later. For now, the point is to show the logical problem can and in fact has been answered for successfully. Before moving on to an overview of the emotional problem of evil, it should be explained of what is meant by “successful” in argumentation. These answers for the problem of evil are successful in the sense they are consistent and form a sound conclusion. It does not mean (although possible) it defeats the problem of evil.

### The Emotional Problem

The emotional problem of evil brings its own set of problems for the theist. Here is the problem needing answered, “if there is a God why do I suffer?” The emotional form of the problem of evil remains a problem in the sense it does not seem to be answerable in a

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<sup>7</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 167.

<sup>8</sup> John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, Revised and Expanded (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2004), 18.

philosophical/theological way. C. S. Lewis referred to this type of problem as the problem of pain.<sup>9</sup> Rather than conceptual or logical, emotional evil deals with the pain and suffering that is brought on by some type of emotional tragedy, say the death of a loved one in an auto accident. Emotional pain and suffering are the byproduct of evidential evil. It is this type of pain Lewis comments “pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, the emotional effects of evidential evils cannot be ignored, there is an immediate need to cope with such pain and suffering.

The emotional problem of evil may just need time. But how does that solve the problem? In short, it does not. In fact, there does not seem to be a philosophical solution to the problem of emotional evil. However, theism is still able to answer for evil in a consistent way. It is on a theistic world view; emotional evil can be dealt with in a productive way. Christian theism explains God is not some impersonal being who sets back while the world squanders in their pain. Rather, God has went to the extreme by sharing in humanities pain and suffering. He does so through the second person of the trinity, who in Christian belief was innocent and suffered beyond all understanding when He bore the sins of the world. It is with this understanding of assessing the emotional problem of evil J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig say, “So, paradoxically, even though the problem of evil is the greatest objection to the existence of God, at the end of the day God is the only solution to the problem of evil. If God does not exist, then

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<sup>9</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*, First Edition (Broadway, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, 604.

we are locked without hope in a world filled with gratuitous and unredeemed suffering.”<sup>11</sup> While that concept may not be acceptable to the atheist, this answer does not negate an internally consistent solution to the problem.

Eleonore Stump, likewise, seems to be able to answer it quite well. Through a Thomistic lens she is able, it seems, to deal with this unique problem through narrative. In one example, she uses the Biblical story of Samson to articulate a state of emotional suffering that ended in some greater good per se.<sup>12</sup> Though it is a Biblical story, it is not necessary for the atheist to hold the belief in its occurring to make its point. In short, Stump argues (I think correctly) emotional pain can facilitate growth within an individual in which the desire of one’s heart trumps emotional pain (greater good), or at least after the fact. Speaking to Samson’s story, Stump explains while Samson suffered both externally (physical) and internally (emotional) he grew closer to God which was the desire of his heart.<sup>13</sup> The story of Samson and other stories do a good job of answering for the emotional problem of evil. Remember to be successful, an answer only needs to show it is possible (in some possible world), and it must be consistent. There is still one more problem of evil that needs to be explored.

### The Evidential Problem

The evidential problem of evil is probably the most problematic, contrary to what was quoted about Mackie above. The evidential form of the problem deals with the evil visible in the world. For example, murder, or rape are popular examples among atheists. The complaint deals with the fact there is just so much evil in the world. It comes down to a belief God cannot exist,

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<sup>11</sup> J. P. Moreland and W. L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 554.

<sup>12</sup> Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 227.

<sup>13</sup> Stump, 253.

if for no other reason than the evidence of evil in the world. The evidential version of the problem of evil has also been answered for by the theist extensively. One answer, as we will see later, is due to a person's free will (this is also the same defense used against the logical problem of evil). The overall point is evil is evident because of the fact of freewill to choose to do wrong. For example, murder and the like.

Another response to the evidential problem of evil to further consider is the greater good approach. The claim here which we may not see in our finite capacity, is the potentially greater good that results from such evil. An example can be likened to a butterfly in the Amazon flapping her wings and its causation of something happening as a result in some other part of the world or multiple parts. The greater good type of argument is often referred to as skeptical theism (not to be confused with doubt of God). Skeptical theism is the thought that there is a skepticism in thinking finite beings would or could know what reasons or justification God would have to allow certain things. It typically seeks to answer for the atheists claim of the amount of evil, gratuitous evils that seem pointless as William Rowe argues in his work.<sup>14</sup> Rowe claims there appears to be no purpose for the gratuitous evil in the world and thus it is not probable an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God exists. If so, He would not have allowed such evils to exist.

Rowe argues what Howard Snyder as coined the "noseeum argument." It goes like this, "since we are not able to discern God's reason for allowing evil (whether a particular instance or the overall amount of evil), there must not be one. Since we cannot "see-um," there isn't one."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 335–41.

<sup>15</sup> Gould, Dickinson, and Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel*, 157.



Initially this seems right, but Stephen Wykstra questions the epistemic grounds of such a claim. In turn he deploys what he calls CORNEA (Condition of Reasonable Epistemic Access). In short, does one have reason to believe they have access to epistemic notion of appearance? He says, “CORNEA thus forces us to ask the following question: if there were an outweighing good of the sort at issue, connected in the requisite way to instances of suffering like this, how likely is it that this should be apparent to us?”<sup>16</sup> He answers it is not likely, when thinking about the omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God of theism. As Wykstra mentions, for us to expect to know the greater good of such evils, would be analogous to an infant trying to comprehend and know what her intellectually advanced parents are up to. Therefore, on these terms there are successful answers to the evidential problem of evil. While mentioned briefly, both the “Free Will Defense” and/or the “Greater Good” (or some version of it) are used quite frequently to answer for the problems of evil as was explained in the preceding paragraphs. For the purposes of clarity then, they will now be looked at more closely.

### **Some Answers**

#### The Free Will Defense

One of the greatest arguments in answering for the differing evils in the world is the free will defense. It is important to first understand what it means to be free. It is the opinion of this author that to be free is exactly how it sounds. Some have made this idea difficult, philosophically speaking. For example, J. L. Mackie would state if God did in fact exist and was in fact omnipotent then it would be possible for God in all His power to create a world (a best

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen J. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of ‘Appearance’,” in *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 155.

possible world) in which free creatures could somehow be freely determined to choose in some determined way.<sup>17</sup> But that does not seem right. Imagine a child being held captive and then claiming the child is not limited in their freedom on the basis that if said child was not being held captive, she/he would indeed be free.

Freedom in the sense that the free will defense understands it, is a person is free to choose for or against something. To better understand, this means person p, can either do x (x being a decision or action) or not x. Augustine was one of the earliest proponents of the free will defense, and understood free will as a being able to determine one's own will. "For to consent and to refuse are functions proper to the will."<sup>18</sup> For a rough example, one may freely choose to eat Fruity Pebbles or Captain Crunch for breakfast. One over the other is not forced but is up to the will of the person who is eating. Although, much may depend on if mom and dad allow the choice, which is their free will choose. Free will, in this aspect, is known formally as libertarian free will in which free creatures are truly free without any outside influence.

With this understanding on what it means to have libertarian free will, the defense can now be explained. As mentioned, a moment ago, Augustine is one of the earliest proponents of the free will defense, however, it has been well said that Alvin Plantinga developed it in a sophisticated way which cannot be ignored. Feinberg commenting on Plantinga's defense says, "He not only answers Flew and Mackie but also gives the free will defense its most complicated and sophisticated expression, an expression that has convinced many. Whether one agrees or

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<sup>17</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 32–33.

<sup>18</sup> Saint Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, ed. Philip Schaff (Louisville, Kentucky: GLH Publishing, 2017), 14.

disagrees with Plantinga, one dare not overlook his work on this issue.”<sup>19</sup> So it shall not be overlooked here.

According to Plantinga the argument goes something like this. “A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all.”<sup>20</sup> What Plantinga is showing here, *a priori*, there is at least mutual agreement between atheism and theism that free will is good. More specifically, this understanding of good will be discussed later in further detail. For now, it is enough to understand a world full of mind slaves is not as good as one in which the mind is free to choose. There are some objections to the free will defense to be sure, but they seem unwarranted at best and grasping for straws at worst.

Friedrich Nietzsche is one such objector to the idea of free will and by default the defense. In his work *Beyond Good and Evil*, he complains about the idea of free will and those who advocate it. He says at length:

The *causa sui* is the best self-contradiction thought of to date, a kind of logical rape and violation of nature: but humanity’s excessive pride has succeeded in deeply and horribly entangling itself in this very nonsense. The desire for “freedom of the will,” in the superlative metaphysical sense, as it unfortunately still reigns in the minds of the semi-educated, the desire to bear on your own the entire and ultimate responsibility for your actions, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society of them is really nothing less than being just this *causa sui*, and it amounts to pulling yourself up by the hair out of the swamp of nothingness into existence...<sup>21</sup>

Nietzsche believes “free will” is a made-up metaphysical concept that is a scape goat and thus should be abandoned. As interesting as the concept may seem, it is improbable. If freewill did

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<sup>19</sup> Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, 79.

<sup>20</sup> Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil/On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, vol. 8 (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014), 25.

not exist, then how does one choose? How does a thesis mentor decide if he wants to take on another student? Here it seems oblivious to think free will is a self-made mechanism to deal with the things in the world. One may not like the idea of free will, but it does not warrant the abandonment of it.

Other objections exist as well, but it does not seem likely they are probable, in the sense we perceive free will in everyday life. Free will then, as Plantinga explains it, is able then to answer successfully for the problem of evil. Furthermore, free will can be seen as a greater good in this world. A good, in this sense, requires the opportunity for things to go wrong. On this understanding of free will, it would be expected to see evils in this world, even gratuitous evils seem to not stem from moral decisions. What about other evils that cannot be attributed to moral decisions, such as a fawn burning in a forest fire? To that, another answer for the problem of evil needs to be explored in more detail.

### Greater Good Defense

In the last section on free will it was alluded to that there is some sort of outweighing good that exists considering the evil in the world. Specifically, it was mentioned free will is a sort of overriding good in this world. That is, God when giving free will did so with the understanding things can go wrong. However, there other evils in this world that do not deal with moral decisions, at least as far as finite minds can gather. These other evils, have the idea of natural evils, the sort we would see in nature. For example, earthquakes, floods, forest fires and such. Now the same rule applies here as was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The fact natural disasters, as they are referred to, are not necessarily evil or bad. They only become so when human (or animal) suffering is involved.

One way to illustrate this is by analogy. A family builds their house in Kentucky and a F5 tornado blows over, killing both parents and the dog leaving only the child alive. Now this would be a natural evil as some would say. Then again, it could be objected that it was a human caused evil. After all Kentucky is prone to tornados. These objections would be fair and logical indeed, although another scenario may fair better. A person is hiking the Appalachian Trail as they do several times a year, on this day there happens to be a rare earthquake that causes a rockslide killing the hiker. The rare earthquake would seem to fit more with the idea of natural evil, there is no fault or cause on the human side of things. The thought then goes, there was no point in God allowing this earthquake at this specified time. It is this type of evil that can be referred to as gratuitous evil. Gratuitous evils are the type that there “appears” to be no good reason for. How can this type of evil be answered for?

William Rowe provided what some would call a compelling argument against the existence of God because of the gratuitous evils that exist. His argument:

- (1) There are instances of gratuitous evils (GE) in which an omnibenevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent being (O) could prevent without losing a greater good (G) or allowing a worse evil (E).
- (2) O would prevent GE without forgoing G or allowing E.
- (3) O does not exist.

Rowe is arguing against theism because of the fact of evils that do not “appear” to have any good or greater good attached to them. In the section above on evidential evil it was shown Wykstra has successfully answered for this with his CORNEA argument. In which it states, “If a maximally perfect God exists, there is no pointless evil, even if we are not privy to God’s reasons for permitting evil.”<sup>22</sup> However, the atheist arguments of the evidential problem of evil

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<sup>22</sup> Gould, Dickinson, and Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel*, 159.

seem to require a bit more. After all, it is difficult to answer for evidential evil without seeing an immediate (evidential) good.

Other forms of the greater good defense exist. For example, depending on whether one wants to hold to a consequentialism view or not, there is the greater good defense as laid out by Keith Yandell. His argument goes like this:

- (1) An omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient God exist.
- (2) Evil exists in this world.
- (3) Every evil is such that God has a morally sufficient reason for creating or allowing it.
- (4) All evil is logically necessary to some good which either counterbalances or overbalances it, some evil is overbalanced by the good to which it is logically necessary.
- (5) Every evil God allows is logically necessary to some at least counterbalancing state of affairs, and some evil is overbalanced by the good to which it is logically necessary, where one applicable criterion for a state of affairs being good is that it furthers the growth to moral maturity of some moral agent, and where the evils occurring to each agent are so arranged as to provide him maximal opportunity for moral maturity.<sup>23</sup>

Eleonore Stump provides a wonderful example of Yandell's defense when laying forth her example of childbearing. She expresses excellently what an overbalance of evil would look like.

Stump assessing the desires of one's heart (great good) says,

Although it does not take anything away from her pain, it makes all the difference in the world to a woman in the throes of the pain of childbirth to feel the presence of someone who loves her and to believe that her pain will eventuate in a baby who is the desire of her heart.<sup>24</sup>

It is difficult not to sympathize with such real-world example. There is no doubt to the truth of counterbalance or overbalance in examples like this one. However, Rowe also provides a good example in his story of the innocent fawn in the forest, which is more difficult to contend with.

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<sup>23</sup> Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, 135–37.

<sup>24</sup> Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 306.

Feinberg in his evaluation on Yandell's version of the greater good defense finds it internally consistent, which seems right, however there are some points of concern with this view that need to be mentioned in passing. As Feinberg mentions, "while the greater good defense handles many evils, it won't work for every evil, for it seems impossible to show that every evil is logically necessary to some good."<sup>25</sup> However, it "seems" in his response the CORNEA argument comes into play. That is, though it "seems" or "appears" to be difficult to answer, does not necessarily make it so. It "seems" Yandell's greater good defense, regardless of how it "seems," is consistent in successfully arguing against evidential evil.

Yandell's version of the greater good defense can be seen in other nuances. For example, John Hick's "Soul-Building Theodicy" in which it is seen that evil is essential to build character, in which evil (pain and suffering) are needed so the opportunity for soul-building can take place. Soul building is also the approach, at least in a basic form, that Stump takes in her example above.

Something more should be said when laying out the greater good defense. One of the fundamental ideas behind the free will defense covered above is the idea of free will as a great good, maybe even the greatest good. The idea of this greatest good, will become apparent in the chapter examining gratuitous goods. For now, it is enough to point to the fact that free will itself a great good, though it does not necessitate evil in the world, it is improbable to think of a world in which free will exists and there is no evil. The greatest good defense, then, can successfully account for the problem(s) of evil.

One brief word before concluding here with the problem of evil. The words defense and theodicy have been used interchangeably. Doing so is not an oversight, there is a relationship

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<sup>25</sup> Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil: Theological Systems and the Problems of Evil*, 138.

between the two. A defense can be a theodicy if one holds to a view of this world as such the world that the defense claims. In this case, the defense can and should be adopted as a theodicy. Therefore, a theodicy is stronger in the sense that if this world is indeed seen as such a world as the defense attempts to infer, it will justify God for allowing evil. Whereas a defense is strong in the sense that it exhibits what could obtain in a possible world. The conversation should not be dogmatic in either direction by the atheist or the theist. Stump explains, “nothing about such an explanation [theodicy] explains suffering away. Suffering remains suffering, and we need to retain our grief over it if we are not to lose our humanity.” So, it should be expressed, evil is not being viewed as a logical concept, or story but as something that all people deal with. Grappling with the problem of evil is better understood on a theistic worldview. According to N. T. Wright the problem is not how to answer for evil, but to find a solution to evil and it seems theism can better answer for it.<sup>26</sup> The point of these arguments (for theism) is not being able to prove the existence of God, but to show that theism can better answer for evil and ward off the attacks against God and theism in general.

### **Conclusion**

Theism, as alluded to in this chapter, does a better job explaining the problem of evil with the hope of a greater good; this greater good includes free will. Plantinga offers this question, “Suppose God does have a good reason for permitting sin and evil, pain and suffering: why think we would be the first to know what it is?”<sup>27</sup> This epistemic question is at the heart of how to deal with William Rowe and others that object to the existence of God based on gratuitous evils. As

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<sup>26</sup> N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 39.

<sup>27</sup> Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, 59.



this chapter concludes, it should be evident to be sure there are successful answers to the logical, emotional, and evidential problems of evil.

It should be clear the burden of proof for the problem of evil has been placed for some time in the lap of the theist. However, as this chapter was able to express, the theist has successfully answered for the burden. Not only has the theist answered for evil successfully, but theism is also better prepared to answer for evil. The atheist however has not offered a solution to the problem of evil, they have only succeeded in using evil as a springboard to remove God from the picture. Even if successful in their endeavor, the problem of evil still exists and as we will see in the following chapters that they will have to answer for their problem of good!

These answers tend to be a defense rather than a theodicy. That is not to say that either of the examples here cannot be adopted as a theodicy, if one holds that the current world is in fact the world as it is. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the examples used here are not exhaustive, rather the purpose is to point out the theists problem of evil has been well attested to and answered in a consistent manner. Being successful by no means is to be taken that these solutions or answers are the final word. Only that they have successfully answered for the questions posed by atheists. One of the arguments of this thesis is there is a defeater for the gratuitous evils that exists, and it is found in the good, more specifically the gratuitous goods found in the world. These types of goods will need to be examined further in the ensuing chapters. Before gratuitous goods can be examined however, there is a necessary byproduct of evil which will need to be discussed first.

## CHAPTER III

### The Byproduct of Evil

In the previous chapter, a cursory look at the problem of evil revealed it has been answered for successfully. Success is not to say evil is not a problem in the real-world sense of things, but to show solutions to the claim that God and evil as inconsistent has been provided. Some may reject the claims as solutions, but it is not belief, but consistency that philosophical concepts in this arena are after. Both the free will defense, and the greater good defense have indeed provided such a consistent view. Whether one agrees with those solutions or not will depend mostly on belief of *a priori* suppositions.

However, when assessing evil not much focus on its opposite is mentioned. It will be in this chapter that “good” will be defined. After a proper definition, it will be argued that good is a byproduct of evil.<sup>28</sup> Evil, therefore, understood as the privation of good infers the existence of evil is only available because of the good. Chapter three will be critical in the development of the argument at hand, it forms the basis of the purpose of good. The chapter will then explain good, metaphysically, and ontologically speaking, establishing the need to be able to answer sufficiently for the good that exists. In the second half of the chapter objective morality will be explained. Doing so will logically flow from the concept of good. Here it will be argued morality (things humans see as good and right) is objective, meaning it is grounded in something metaphysically, beyond human subjectivity. The argument will be established through the Euthyphro Dilemma in which objective morality is questioned. The chapter will also briefly deal

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<sup>28</sup> Byproduct as will be used here is not to say good comes from evil. It is a play on words which is meant to bring attention to what would logically stem from the problem of evil as argued in the previous chapter. Therefore, “byproduct” is for argumentative purposes to show how the argument from evil naturally brings attention to its necessary opposite, goods. The byproduct of evil is what comes as a result from the argument from evil, which will be understood as an argument from good. In this sense then, the byproduct of evil is an argument from good.

with DCT (Divine Command Theory), Guided Will Theory, and the Essence of God as it relates to the Euthyphro Dilemma and determining who decides what is good. The chapter will end by alluding to the concept of gratuitous goods which will be introduced in this chapter to prepare the reader for the next chapter.

### Evil Thus Good

One thing can be agreed upon to be sure by both the atheist and theist is the fact of evil, pain, and suffering exists in this world. Some might even say gratuitous evils (Rowe) while others prefer horrendous evils (Adams). The byproduct of evil will be the subject matter of this chapter. Both atheist and theist understand evil in some form exists. The converse is also true, the fact that there are goods in this world. Most often these goods are seen in the form of morals. However, there is yet another view, Nietzsche supposes that both evil and morality (good) should be abandoned. He sees morality and evil as a figment of imagination and should not be mistaken for natural drive either for the good or *mutatis mutandis* the bad.<sup>29</sup> It seems obvious however, despite Nietzsche and his followers, evil and for that matter morality (good) does exist. As seen in the last chapter, atheists such as Mackie and Rowe understand goods do exist based on the *a priori* understanding of evil.

When the topic of good is at hand, morality is most likely what is being discussed. It is also universally accepted that morals (good) exist. C. S. Lewis established this when he famously stated:

First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact

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<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil/On the Genealogy of Morality*, 8:80.

behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.<sup>30</sup>

There is little arguing that Lewis is speaking in practical terms, terms all humans understand, that right and wrong, good, and evil exist in this world. Volumes have been written on the topic of evil, many of which fail to recognize evil has a necessary consequence, to use the term loosely. Evil is problematic for everyone regardless of philosophical worldviews, even Nietzsche (whether he believed it or not) had to deal with evil.

However, the converse is also true, all deal with or experience goods, either symbolic or concrete. If evil exists, then necessarily good exists. Augustine expressed this in his work *City of God*, when he said, “if there be no good to take away, then no injury can be done.”<sup>31</sup> That is, if there is no good, then neither can there be the bad or evils. Giving up evil is something atheists will not be doing anytime soon. Therefore, the byproduct of evil must be accepted which becomes their problem of good. The point here, is to bring attention to the fact if one holds a view that evil is true and exists, then so does good. Paul Copan and Kenneth D. Litwak rightfully state “We can’t understand crookedness without an understanding of straightness, nor can we make sense of counterfeit money without an understanding of authentic currency. In the same way, evil can’t exist without goodness since evil is parasitic on the good.”<sup>32</sup> To add to their point, one cannot understand fear without courage or have a concept of death without knowing what it means to have life on so on *ad infinitum*. Therefore, to know and admit to the fact of evil is also to accept and admit the fact of good. The point is not to argue something most concede to

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<sup>30</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: MacMillian-Collier, 1960), 8.

<sup>31</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Monee, IL: Digireads.com Publishing, 2017), 326.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Copan and Kenneth D. Litwak, *The Gospel in the Marketplace of Ideas* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 44.

in this respect, but to make it aware this part of the problem of evil hardly gains any attention. Recognizing this fact is at the core of this thesis, so it is necessary to bring attention to good as a byproduct of evil.

It should be noted some of the goods which will be discussed here may seem subjective and credit will be given to such criticisms. Regardless the point remains the same, even with objections to what some deem good. For example, some may find the smell of gasoline as a sort of good, while others may despise it. For many, the comments made here about a given good can easily be replaced with another good within the same genus. It will be here an argument for the atheistic problem of good will have its roots, first however, good must be properly defined and evaluated. Then a discussion about objective morality and its roots.

### Defining Good

Good is a difficult term to define; like love, good is better understood in expression. In other words, at its base etymologically speaking, it is self-explanatory. There are many words with the same characteristics; for example, love as noted above. Truth is yet another term so basic other words cannot be used to define it. Rather than being defined, it is expressed as being something having justifiable knowledge. As such, the term good will be defined by demonstrating it in expression.

St. Augustine defined evil as the “privation of good”<sup>33</sup> something that was hinted at in the previous section. For Augustine there was never a time the good did not exist. Good, on Augustine’s understanding of it is objective, which can be expressed in the view in which being a created person is a good, indeed a great good. Augustine argues the fact that humans exist is

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<sup>33</sup> Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. E. B. Pusey (Monee, IL: Public Domain, 1838), 20.

attributed to God's will for creation. For Augustine, "the will of God belongeth to His very substance."<sup>34</sup> In this view, good has always existed. For many, good simply is the norm in some sense or another. An example can be seen in the way in which a supervisor may discipline their employee for a mistake they may have made; in which the weeks and months of good are overlooked. For the supervisor, the way things went before the bad was simply normal, the way things are supposed to be. The normal here on Augustinian terms is good. Adams also takes time to express this type of Augustinian thinking in her book *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, she mentions Augustine's Platonist appeal to metaphysical goodness, by noting how Augustine argues that existence is good, going as far to say those that suffer in hell even have reason to praise God for the goodness of existence.<sup>35</sup> The Augustinian understanding of goods are just one way to understand them. The point is to show how goods can be quite normal. As in what it would mean to live the "good life," although subjective, it establishes there is an understanding of good that exists in this world.

Philosophers such as Augustine and Aquinas and many modern thinkers rate goods on levels of goodness. For example, to hear a good story is not the same as having a good relationship with a loved one. To read a good book is not the same etymologically speaking as is the good that results from caring for others. Theists, especially Christians such as Augustine and Aquinas, believed all goods come from God, "with God being the highest good (*summum bonum*) and the source of all lesser goods."<sup>36</sup> Atheists may not support God as the highest good,

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine, 115.

<sup>35</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 42.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 353, <https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com>.

but most would agree on the concept of goods being ranked, nonetheless. Adams puts this concept this way,

An ontology that holds roughly that “what you see is what you get” may recognize such valuables as sensory pleasures (the beauty of nature and cultural artifacts, the joy of creativity, and loving person intimacy), but it will be less rich than ontologies which posit a transcendent good (such as the form of the Good in Platonism, or God, the infinite being and supremely valuable object, in Christianity).<sup>37</sup>

Understanding goods in this sense helps with defining good, because while goods are objective, they have a subjectivity to their value system. It is with this understanding of a value system that a final demonstration can be made about what good is.

In her Thomistic view, Eleonore Stump argues what is good is what a person cares about, her own flourishing or the desires of her heart or both.<sup>38</sup> There is an understanding according to Stump that all persons have some care about who they are and their flourishing. Articulated this way explains nicely what good is. To suffer therefore, is to have the desire of heart or flourishing destroyed or undermined. When people who loves dogs sees them being abused, they will have the desire of their hearts undermined and therefore be robbed of some good. A desire of one’s heart may be destroyed when they want to engage in a relationship with someone to only find out they are already married. Finding out information such as this, would destroy their hopes of such a relationship. Here the good would have been to be in such a relationship.

Some may object at this point and say it might have been the desire of one’s heart to do some harm to others. Stump anticipates this objection and recognizes some people’s desires may be wrongheaded. It is possible for an agent to be doubleminded about what is their ultimate

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<sup>37</sup> Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 11.

desire of their heart. On Stump's view and the view held here is "the greatest good for human beings is to be in a union of love with God."<sup>39</sup> Whether one agrees here or not has no bearing on the point being made. The point is to bring light to a proper understanding of what good is.

### Objective Morality

Before moving on, it should be noted not much has been written about goods in general, normally it is assumed morals are being discussed. In discussing objective morality below, "goods" and "morality" are being used synonymously. Because of their etymological closeness, there should be no issue in transposing one for the other. In the previous section, the necessity of good was discussed in a propaedeutic manner. Doing so brings awareness to the fact that if evil is being used as a polemic against the theistic God of Christianity, then an answer for its byproduct (good) bears the same burden on the atheist. First, it was argued if evil exists, necessarily good does. The fact of badness assumes its opposite in the same way fear assumes courage. Then because an etymological definition of good is difficult to come to, good was defined by way of demonstration through different understandings of the term. Though understanding good is useful, it does not help with understanding its foundation or frankly its purpose. While chasing after the desire of one's heart helps explain what good is, it does no justice in understanding its purpose or what makes good in fact good.

Often when the topic of good is discussed, it engenders a conversation about objective morality. Objective morality is the idea that morality, (to do what is right or what one ought to do), is a matter of fact. There are some, such as Nietzsche mentioned above, who would suggest morality should be abandoned. Other atheists understand morality in the same way. J. L. Mackie

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<sup>39</sup> Stump, 387.



for example stated, “Moral properties constitute so odd a cluster of properties and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the course of events without an all-powerful god to create them.”<sup>40</sup> David Baggett states these types of atheists, “stands in the tradition or at least vicinity of Nietzsche, thinking that the death of God entails an inversion of values, spells the end of objective duties, and disposes of sentimental rhetoric about human equality.”<sup>41</sup> For most thinkers, however, objective morality is accepted, and atheists and theists alike would agree such a thing as morality exists. Furthermore, the existence of morals brings with it obligations that are seen as axiomatic.

The question which is begging at this point is where do such morals (and for the purposes here good) come from? Baggett poses the same question in his book *Good God*, in which he explains that just because we know there are moral truths, still leaves unanswered where they come from.<sup>42</sup> There are typically two different views which attempt to answer such a question. On the one hand is naturalism, which normally takes an evolutionary approach and on the other theism, particularly as being argued throughout this thesis, the monotheist God held by Judaism, Islam, and Christianity (though the biased here is towards Christianity).

### Naturalism

Naturalism is the view that all there is can be found in the natural world we live in. In this system, there is no God, no spiritual realm, only what we have in front of us. Naturalism as mentioned above assumes an evolutionary worldview. However, naturalism has difficulty

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<sup>40</sup> J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (New York: Oxford Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1982), 115.

<sup>41</sup> David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *God & Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 36.

<sup>42</sup> David Baggett and Jerry L. Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 18.

accounting for morality. For some naturalists as mentioned above, nihilism becomes attractive. Nihilism, though, is not something many atheists are willing to accept. The answer to why, can be found in the quote from Lewis above that says all agents have this understanding of morality. Moral knowledge is something basic all agents, whether believers or not, understand morals *a priori*. According to Baggett, morality/good can be reliably accounted for “without making an inference; we simply find ourselves holding certain moral convictions.”<sup>43</sup> Baggett understands moral knowledge as something that is basic to humanity and thus would agree atheists and naturalists can have moral knowledge on a naturalistic world view. Baggett also gains support from Plantinga by showing the foundation for belief in morality is not believed on evidential basis one would get from propositions. Rather, they are believed on simply seeing they are true and accepts them.<sup>44</sup> An atheist or theist do not need to have it proven based on propositions that murder is wrong, it is something human agents fundamentally know.

Granting the fact of proper basic belief to the side of naturalism is an issue of epistemology, but there is not much argument here on either side. Accepting the point of being able to know morals/good in fact exist still does not give rise to how on a naturalistic worldview can the atheist account for good? Knowing morals exist proves nothing in answering this question. The glaring question that needs answered is how morality could have risen in a naturalistic world?<sup>45</sup> According to naturalism which assumes evolution, humans evolved from natural processes that enable people to succeed in the “four F’s” as Plantinga quotes Patricia

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<sup>43</sup> Baggett and Walls, *God & Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning*, 183.

<sup>44</sup> Baggett and Walls, 191.

<sup>45</sup> Baggett and Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, 16.

Churchland, “feeding, fleeing, fighting, and reproducing”<sup>46</sup> Plantinga uses this quote to prove his point that on a naturalistic worldview one could hardly trust any belief they have because their cognitive faculties are not meant to produce beliefs, but simply to act. He goes on to express “Darwin’s doubt,” a concept from Darwin himself, who in part doubts the convictions of man’s mind on the understanding they have developed from lower animals.<sup>47</sup> Plantinga then mounts his argument that on a naturalistic worldview according to what a Darwinian worldview assumes naturalists cannot trust their own cognitive beliefs. Therefore, Plantinga suggests any naturalist that accepts evolution is rationally obligated to give up their assumption that their cognitive faculties are reliable.<sup>48</sup> If Plantinga is right, and there seems to be no obvious defeater for his view, then objective morality cannot therefore be accounted for on a naturalistic worldview.

Morality and goodness on a naturalistic view poses more problems than answers for the foundation of morality. The atheist “face a particularly difficult version of the problem of goodness: how, in a naturalistic or otherwise atheistic world, can good be accounted for?”<sup>49</sup> It cannot if morals and goods “are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms”<sup>50</sup> as Bertrand Russell and others claim. Even William Lane Craig understands this problem when he states, “On an atheistic view, moral values are just by-products of sociobiological evolution.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, 315.

<sup>47</sup> Plantinga, 316.

<sup>48</sup> Plantinga, 326.

<sup>49</sup> Baggett and Walls, *God & Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning*, 280.

<sup>50</sup> Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 39, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=268270&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Kurtz and William Lane Craig, “The Kurtz/Craig Debate: Is Goodness without God Good Enough?” in *Is Goodness Without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2009), 31.

Furthermore, even atheists who subscribe to evolutionism, Darwin himself, cast doubt that human agents can trust their cognitive ability. This sort of doubt surely undermines any shot at arguing objective morality on naturalistic terms. Baggett rightly points out that on a naturalistic worldview, answering for morals is at best mysterious and at worst absurd.<sup>52</sup> Surely then something outside of the physical world is warranted.

### Theism

As established above, naturalism has a difficulty accounting for objective morality. The theist on the other hand claims morality is determined by a mind, a personal God. A world in which there are no foundations for morals can seem odd. George Mavrodes shows in his article “Religion and the Queerness of Morality,” the “queerness” of morals in a Russellian world (in which morals are subjective). Here Mavrodes argues, much like Plantinga does, that one cannot or could not trust any set of morals in such a world. Speaking to a Russellian world Mavrodes states, “Values and obligations cannot be deep in such a world.”<sup>53</sup> In this sense, Mavrodes is using the word “deep” synonymously with that of value, thus what is seen as goodness and morals. In such a world, it would seem purposeless to have moral facts such as obligations, values, or duties.

William Lane Craig in his debate with Paul Kurtz comes to the same conclusions. In this debate, both Craig and Kurtz are asked to answer the question “Is Goodness without God Good Enough?” Kurtz attempts to answer by showing objective morality exists without the belief in God. Kurtz mentions that humans are potentially moral; in such a way that all humans can make

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<sup>52</sup> Baggett and Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> George I. Mavrodes, “Religion and the Queerness of Morality,” in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright, n.d., 585.

moral choice regardless of belief in God.<sup>54</sup> The issue with that response is most theists do not question the ability of humanity to understand morals and goods. In response and it seems rightly so as far as debate points go, Craig can provide an answer for objective morality, by simply stating that morals stem from God. He states “moral values are rooted in God. He is the locus and source of moral value.”<sup>55</sup> Being able to answer the question with a source of objective morality is enough to put the burden of proof on those who purport a naturalistic worldview.

In the theistic worldview then, morals are foundational in who God is. There is some sense in the world that what can be seen as morally good is imbedded within all humanity. If the probability of such notions come up short on the naturalistic view, then something or someone else is responsible for such an intrinsic nature. C. S. Lewis explains this nicely in *Abolition of Man* when he writes,

Either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolute values of the *Tao*, or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasures of masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own ‘natural’ impulses. Only the *Tao* provides a common human law of action which can over-arch rulers and ruled alike.<sup>56</sup>

It is important to understand the *Tao* as natural laws or morals as Lewis understands it.

According to theism this “common law” found in all humans comes from the understanding that all humans are *imago Dei* (created in the image of God). Therefore, the theist has at minimum an answer for the case of objective morality, and at maximum the only coherent answer to the existence of goods. Craig, it seems would agree as he makes his case, “Theism therefore

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<sup>54</sup> Kurtz and Craig, “The Kurtz/Craig Debate: Is Goodness without God Good Enough?”, 28.

<sup>55</sup> Kurtz and Craig, 30.

<sup>56</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2001), 73.

provides a sound foundation for morality.”<sup>57</sup> Otherwise, as Craig points out in his debate, nihilism might seem more attractive than naturalistic humanism.

It should follow at this point, “persons themselves, especially persons with intrinsic value and dignity, seem much less likely to emerge from valueless impersonal stuff than from the intentional hand of a personal Creator”<sup>58</sup>. It was expressed objective morality exists to be sure, and it seems against the naturalistic view; the theistic God of Christianity can provide a better explanation for the moral facts which exist in the world. Leaving the atheist again with the problem of good. Ending this chapter here would suffice in articulating its point, but there is a further discussion that emerges from the above discussion. Understanding objective morals are better supported by theism does not answer the question sufficiently of the origins of good metaphysically speaking.

## **Origins Of Good**

### The Euthyphro Dilemma

Theism as inferred is, abductively speaking, better able to cope with the pressing needs in the source of objective morality. The previous sections underlined the basis for the truth of objective morality. Language that naturally flows and indeed is assumed with the term objective means they are fact whether one knows it or not. Establishing they are sourced from God does not clear the theist. It may be conceded objective moralities exist and they are best answered for in a theistic world, but it brings with it the problem of origin or source in a deeper manner. What is meant is does the God of theism put forth objective morality and good based on what he

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<sup>57</sup> Kurtz and Craig, “The Kurtz/Craig Debate: Is Goodness without God Good Enough?”, 31.

<sup>58</sup> Baggett and Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, 11.

commands or does God bring goods and morality about from another source that exists outside of Him? The aforementioned is referred to as the Euthyphro Dilemma. Socrates famously asked Euthyphro “whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods.”<sup>59</sup> Many philosophers often use the dilemma to refute that good or morals come from God or have any connection to Him. Paul Copan observes in one article,

They present the dilemma in (roughly) this way: either God’s commands are *arbitrary* (something is good because God commands it – and God could have commanded “You shall murder/commit adultery”) – or there must be some *autonomous moral standard* (which God consults in order to command).<sup>60</sup>

There is something significant when coming to understand the Euthyphro dilemma. How on a theistic worldview, which seems to be the better view, does God arrive and determining what is good.

The dilemma is typically used to argue against God being the source of goods. In the first horn of the dilemma “Divine Command Theory” (DCT) is what will be considered. The second horn often referred to as “Guided Will Theory” or Louis Antony’s “Divine Independence Theory” will also be considered. Both will be looked at briefly, as a complete analysis would demand its own work. Then a third view (for the purposes here) will be called “Essence of Being” which seems to hold more promise, will be considered.

### Divine Command Theory

The first horn of the Euthyphro dilemma as noted above has the idea something is good because God commands it to be. For example, the Biblical passage in which God commands one to love their neighbors as their selves (Matthew 22:39), on DCT gives a foundation for the good.

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<sup>59</sup> Plato, *Euthyphro (Illustrated)*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Istanbul: e-Kitap Projesi, 2014), 59.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Copan, “The Moral Argument,” in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Khaldoun A. Sweis and Chad V. Meister (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 188.

That is “there is no good or bad... there is nothing that is inherently good or bad, and thus nothing that explains God’s choosing which acts to endorse and which acts to prohibit.”<sup>61</sup> If this is true then it is also true that there (logically speaking) counterfactuals to this as Copan’s quote shows. Antony shows a type of counterfactual she states, “if God had commanded us to torture innocent children, then it would have been morally right to do so.”<sup>62</sup> The theist may claim such a counterfactual is not possible, but the atheist’s reply would simply ask why. It seems to answer this at least from the atheist perspective is question begging. However, Stephen Evans makes a good point in support of DCT in which he asks his reader to, “suppose there is a case where two possible acts are at least approximately equally good or equally bad. Without a divine command in such a case it would appear that the acts have the same moral quality.”<sup>63</sup> Thinking in this way could show the need or purpose for DCT on a theistic view. Because of the obvious problems listed briefly above, a look at the second horn of the dilemma may prove a better solution.

### Guided Will Theory

To avoid association with DCT because of the potential problems it has, some may choose to opt for the second horn of the dilemma. Here God commands what is good in virtue of good. That is, good or morality exist independent of God and He informs us what is good. For example, murder is wrong not because God says so per se, but God says so because it “*comes before* God’s commanding it.”<sup>64</sup> In this form, it is the act(s) that are good and thus the reason for

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<sup>61</sup> Louise Antony, “Atheism as Perfect Piety,” in *Is Goodness Without God Good Enough? A Debate on Faith, Secularism, and Ethics* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2009), 72.

<sup>62</sup> Antony, 71.

<sup>63</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *God & Moral Obligation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36.

<sup>64</sup> Baggett and Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, 38.



God's commanding them. Antony uses the same antecedent of torturing innocent children as she did with DCT to make her point. She argues given Guided Will Theory, (or DIT as she calls it) it would entail the following: if God commanded the torture of innocent children, then God would not be perfectly good.<sup>65</sup> If one would reject this counterfactual on the premise that God would never do such a thing and it is in fact impossible, Antony would charge you to holding to this view. She states, "Only the theorist who believes that right and wrong are independent of God's commands could have any basis for thinking she or he knows in advanced what God would or would not command."<sup>66</sup> Antony's statement would seem accurate and is not attractive for those who hold the omnipotence and omniscience of God. It would be a rather bitter pill for the theist to swallow, to say God is dependent on something beyond or outside of Him. So far DCT and Guided Will Theory have not been successful in answering the dilemma and given the origin of good. However, one more view needs to be considered.

#### Essence of God

The idea in which the only option in understanding the origins of good are found in answering for the Euthyphro dilemma are misguided. "Why" Copan asks, should the theist's alternatives be reduced to (1) a view in which good/morality is independent of God which God must consult before handing out commands; or (2) a sort of divine arbitrariness in which good is based on the whims of God?<sup>67</sup> The answer is in short, we don't. Louise Antony and others who want to use the Euthyphro dilemma to show the irrationality of God as the origins of good hold

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<sup>65</sup> Antony, "Atheism as Perfect Piety," 71.

<sup>66</sup> Antony, 71-72.

<sup>67</sup> Copan, "The Moral Argument," 188.

to a shallow understanding of God. The nature of God is what needs to be properly understood before a claim of how goods and moralities should be understood on the theist's view.

As alluded to in the above section on theism, God is by nature good, "He [God] is by nature loving, generous, just, faithful, kind, and so forth."<sup>68</sup> Therefore God does not arbitrarily command what is good, nor does God gain this information from that which is good. Rather, good flows necessarily from God, it is who He is. While speaking about DCT, Evan's points to a view held by Robert Adams who advocates the essence view of God. He says, "since God is essentially good and loving, his commands will be grounded in his understanding of the good and love for the good. The actions acquire the status of being moral obligations by being commanded by God, but they will have the status of being good antecedently to those commands."<sup>69</sup> In the same way water being made up of two atoms hydrogen and one oxygen is a necessary condition of the makeup of liquid water, so to God is the atomic makeup of good (only for the purpose of this analogy). As Copan expresses, "God, who is essentially perfect, does not have obligations to some external moral standard; God simply acts, and it is good."<sup>70</sup> Therefore the Euthyphro dilemma can be solved by showing the two horns of the dilemma are not the only options. The essence of God is a third option, that successfully answers not only why God's commands are good, but He is the origin of goods Himself. Thus, leaving the atheist to answer for their atheistic problem of good!

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<sup>68</sup> Kurtz and Craig, "The Kurtz/Craig Debate: Is Goodness without God Good Enough?", 30.

<sup>69</sup> C. Stephen Evans, "Moral Arguments and Natural Signs for God," in *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 137.

<sup>70</sup> Copan, "The Moral Argument," 189.

## Conclusion

In this chapter the byproduct of evil was discussed, with the purpose of showing good exist necessarily considering evil. In other words, if the atheist accepts evil, then they necessarily hold to the existence of good. The question begging to be answered is where does good come from? Before answering that question however, understanding what good is, was articulated by demonstration. Good, as it was argued, can be seen as the desires of our hearts. Understanding good led to a discussion on objective morality, which was used synonymously with goods. Here two worldviews we evaluated, naturalism and theism. It was argued that on a naturalistic worldview, objective morality was found to be problematic. Morality in a naturalistic worldview is typically answered in a molecule to man understanding. The Darwinian approach to such an understanding of morals was found wanting. It was then argued theism is better suited in answering for objective morality.

The claim stating theism is better suited to answer for objective morality, led to a further discussion on the origin of goods in which the Euthyphro dilemma was discussed. It was mentioned it is not enough just to say goods and morality come from God. The why and how they come from God needed to be briefly discussed. In doing so, the Euthyphro dilemma was examined which stated, either God commands what is good or God commands what is good because of the good. The dilemma gives way to two horns of the argument found in DCT and GWT however, they proved to not provide a sound solution for the origin of goods. Finally, a third view was discussed, the Essence of God, in which God commands what is good based on his essence of who He is. On this view, God is the essence of good and good flows out naturally from him. The essence of God view is better able to answer for the foundation and the source of the origins of good. In turn, this chapter provided the framework to establish what good is and its

source. Doing so again leaves the atheist with the burden of proof again supporting the atheistic problem of good. In which the atheist now holds the burden of proof to show in fact, God is not the source of all good. Now that the byproduct of evil has been adequately expressed, another form of goods needs to be considered, and is the focus of the next chapter. The next chapter will argue for the existence of gratuitous goods and their purposes. If successful, it will provide further support for the atheistic problem of good.

## CHAPTER IV

### Gratuitous Goods

The previous chapter attempted to argue if the problem of evil, as laid out by the atheist holds, then necessarily goods of the same sort exist. While this was fleshed out with a look at objective morality, it was argued differing goods (the desire of one's heart), can be used in place of morality. Now that goods, (more precisely an argument from goods) which was argued previously as the byproduct of evil has been established, there is yet another type of good which needs to be looked at. In the chapter above assessing the problem of evil, William Rowe's argument of gratuitous evils was discussed. His argument states because there are no apparent goods to off balance these gratuitous evils, then it is irrational to think an omnibenevolent being such as the theistic God would exist.

However, as will be argued here in staying consistent with the byproduct of evil, naturally if gratuitous evils exist the converse is also true; gratuitous goods<sup>71</sup> must exist as well. Unfortunately, not much attention has been given to this in philosophical argument. Chapter four will attempt to bring those types of goods which may be called gratuitous to light. Providing some examples of goods that can be called gratuitous, (which are goods that serve no apparent purpose to use Rowe's terminology), will help further this thesis in showing the atheistic problem of good. Likewise, this chapter will attempt to provide some purpose for gratuitous goods. If successful, the theist will now be able to offer the atheist a chance to answer for their problem of good.

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<sup>71</sup> Gratuitous goods should be understood as William Rowe understands them, purposeless or meaningless in abundance. Gratuitous goods are only gratuitous from the atheist's perspective. See William Rowe's "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism." Christian belief does not understand goods of any sort as the gratuitous type and should not be understood as such here.

The types of goods that will be expressed here will not attempt to be exhaustive, they are just a few examples of gratuitous goods. The same can be said of gratuitous evils, those examples used by philosophers are not exhaustive, just some of the examples of such evils. The attempt here may seem subjective, not all may see some goods in the following examples as great goods or gratuitous. However, a fair treatment will be attempted, in which both atheist and theist would tend to agree on. Gratuitous goods, as will be defined here, are such goods which seem to have no purpose specifically on the atheistic world view. It is important to understand the way this argument is being formed. Theists, especially those holding to Christian theism, have a consistent explanation for such goods. Here though, provided in these examples, the point will be to question their purpose on the atheistic world view.

#### Some Examples

Many examples of gratuitous goods are not initially recognized as such because they occur every day. These sorts of goods are often experienced in relationships, thoughts and even in nature. They may be found in a kind act, such as a fellow scholar providing insight, or a generous tip left for a waitress. Other examples may be found in goods, such as music like the way Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is able to elicit a sense of beauty. As will be alluded to below, gratuitous goods can even be found in the reactions to some of the most horrific calamities. The types of gratuitous goods as being expressed here, seem to have no purpose in a world that has evolved from atoms to man; they are truly gratuitous. Even the concept of love is a gratuitous good. Atheists all over the world experience love, love of art, such as Beethoven mentioned above or the Mona Lisa that one may see in an art gallery. Many have love of their country or love for their neighbor, all of which seem to serve no function on the atheistic world view.

Skeptics such as Bart Ehrman would argue, “we need to live life to its fullest and help others as well to enjoy the fruits of the land.”<sup>72</sup> In such language, Ehrman is showing there are great goods that can be achieved, by aiming for the fullest life. It is obvious then skeptics and atheists recognize gratuitous goods. Humans have an internal desire for good which is shared by all that goes beyond survival of the fittest such as expressed by Ehrman above. Arthur M. Melzer points out, “goodness or benevolence, consequences aside, seems to please us, to gratify and fulfill our nature, for it comes naturally and leaves us with a feeling of warmth, peace, and contentment.”<sup>73</sup> Even recognizing the need to correct the bad that goes on in society is a gratuitous good. How then, are these gratuitous goods explained by Ehrman and others such as Rowe or Nietzsche if the world is simply a collection of physical matter?<sup>74</sup> There is no doubt these types of goods exist.

Gratuitous goods are nowhere more apparent than what is found in nature, the awe of the vast universe that is on display in which people experience. One can simply rise early in the morning or take time in the evening to see the beauty found in the sunrise or the sunset. Some may attempt to argue the sun serves the purpose of photosynthesis and thus is necessary, which is a fair objection. However, how does that explain the sheer beauty in the colorful display the sun gives on the horizon when rising or setting? The sunset or sunrise need not be so attractive and beautiful for photosynthesis to take place, it could have been green or brown or some other color that would not cause awe and wonder as long as it serves its evolutionary purpose.

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<sup>72</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question-Why We Suffer* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 127.

<sup>73</sup> Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau’s Thought* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 32.

<sup>74</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, Darrell L. Bock, and Joshua D. Chatraw, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 15.

Plantinga also notices the problem with gratuitous goods on an atheistic world view. He brings attention to the uphill battle the atheist has in attempting to answer for the love of beauty. He speaks of the grandeur and beauty of what is seen in the mountains for example, or why the flower is so attractive or even why Alan Shepard was in awe at the sheer beauty of the earth from space. He states, “it is hard to see how a capacity to find marvelous beauty in such things would be of adaptive use to our hunter-gatherer ancestors.”<sup>75</sup> Even after seeing these aspects of the world hundreds or thousands of times it remains beautiful. J. P. Moreland also recognizes the existence of gratuitous goods. In arguing for the existence of God from design he mentions the “evidence that impresses me greatly is *the ubiquitous existence of stunning, gratuitous beauty.*”<sup>76</sup> He goes on to say the “world is teeming with overwhelming beauty.”<sup>77</sup> Gratuitous goods of this sort are plentiful and are recognized by both theist and atheist alike. Though nature may very well be the best source of gratuitous goods, they are also found outside of nature. Philosophical prose for example, indeed is a gratuitous good, it is not necessary to discuss metaphysics for humanity to survive. The world would get along fine without this thesis or any written work for that matter. The very faculties people have, including the intellect allowing one to form a thesis such as this is a gratuitous good.

William Rowe points out that, “intense human and animal suffering, for example, occurs daily and in great plentitude in our world. Such intense suffering is a clear case of evil.”<sup>78</sup> Based on such gratuitous evils, he makes his argument that because of gratuitous evils it is improbable

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<sup>75</sup> Plantinga, *Where The Conflict Really Lies*, 132.

<sup>76</sup> J. P. Moreland, *Love Your God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 175.

<sup>77</sup> Moreland, 175.

<sup>78</sup> Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,” 335.



an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God exists. If that is the case, then per the argument laid out in the previous chapter, same can be charged against the atheist *mutatis mutandis*. Indeed, the basis of argument here is something Rowe admits to in the form of the “G.E Moore shift” named after the twentieth century philosopher who altered the argument by shifting some variable while keeping others.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, using the “shift” the converse is also true for gratuitous goods.

There are abundant goods that seem to have no other purpose besides being great. Evil is not always defeated by good (something that can be successfully argued) but if gratuitous evils exist and demand an explanation, then so do the obvious gratuitous goods. Furthermore, as will be alluded to briefly here, there seem to be many more instances of gratuitous goods than evils. Thus, supporting a type of greater good defense. However, the purpose here is not to defend the greater good defense even if it is a byproduct of the argument here.

The pressing question then is this, on an atheistic worldview, given evolution, how can it be rational to hold such a view [atheism] given gratuitous goods? To use Rowe’s language there are no “apparent” explanations for such goods. Although it could be argued further, it seems, there are likely more gratuitous goods in the world than gratuitous evils. While some may find this unsettling and object, it would not be too difficult to comprehend. For a simple example, realizing the beauty of the sunset which appears on the eastern horizon would support this point. In which given evolution would have occurred some astronomical number of times before the first species of humans would have evolved. The byproduct of these examples surely seems, and maybe rightfully so, as a greater good defense. It should be reiterated for clarity, that is not the purpose in the examples used here. The examples here simply show gratuitous goods are vast in the world.

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<sup>79</sup> Rowe, 339.

Furthermore, if the death of a fawn on some isolated island can be seen as gratuitous evil, the birth of a fawn then, necessarily is a gratuitous good. Now it can be objected that on the atheistic world view, reproduction is necessary for continuance of life for further development. Even if that would be the case, it does not negate that it is a gratuitous good. Rather, it would support it. Not all creatures, at least in the amount we witness in this world are necessary. Even one or two in each species reproduced on a vastly smaller scale would prove the point. Reproduction could, logically speaking, simply stop and all life would die out. “The things we see do not appear to be things which had to exist, things which exist necessarily.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, life itself whether in vast amounts or not is a great good that is not necessary.

Another example, staying consistent with William Rowe, provides an account of a five-year-old little girl who was brutally beaten, raped, and murdered in Michigan.<sup>81</sup> He uses this example as a stronger version of gratuitous evil than in his previous treatment with the fawn. What is it in the example just given about the parents that allows them to forgive the perpetrator? They certainly do not need to do so; in fact, such kindness is entirely gratuitous. Nonetheless, people often offer forgiveness of such things. Surely the act of being able to forgive someone of such a horrendous evil is a gratuitous good.

The atheist again has a problem to answer for, the problem of good. On their worldview as argued here, there are great goods in this world (regardless of if there are enough to override gratuitous evils), that need to be answered. As in the previous chapter in mentioning objective morality, the atheist’s problem is now exacerbated with abundant goods in the world. To borrow

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<sup>80</sup> C. Stephen Evans and R. Zachary Manis, *Contours of Christian Philosophy: Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 69.

<sup>81</sup> William L. Rowe, “Evil and Theodicy,” *Philosophical Topics* 16, no. 2 (1988): 119–32.

from Leibniz's thought of why there is anything at all,<sup>82</sup> the atheist is left not only to ponder why there are goods, but why are there goods of the gratuitous sort? It seems rather difficult to answer given atheism, with theism however, there are purposes for such gratuitous goods.

### Purpose

The purpose of such goods can readily be answered for on a theistic worldview in which gratuitous goods point to the same conclusion as does objective morality from above. The beauty in the world for example would serve the purpose of awe and wonder (another gratuitous good) and deep thought about why anything exists at all. The same thought led Leibniz to conclude that God must exist on the contingency theory. Saying these goods are simply a "brute fact" as would Hume<sup>83</sup> or unrecognized as gratuitous goods are not a sound objection. If that was the case, then the entire argument from evil could be answered by simply stating "just because."

To see the purpose of gratuitous goods on a theistic worldview, is to understand He did not have to create at all. Thus, making mere existence a sort of gratuitous good. Baggett expresses, "Thomists, Anselmians, theistic Platonists, and theistic activists, including such contemporary analytic philosophers as Alvin Plantinga and Robert Adams, all concur that on a Christian understanding of reality, God and the ultimate Good are ontologically inseparable."<sup>84</sup> However, some may object that gratuitous goods are normal and just the way things are. A word about what is normal needs to be expressed here. If one would object to the notion of gratuitous good as a brute fact, just the way things are, then the same must be accepted for any gratuitous

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<sup>82</sup> Nicholas Rescher, "Text and Commentary," in *G. W. Leibniz's Monadology* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 116, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wrc4t.8>.

<sup>83</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* (Auckland, NEW ZEALAND: Floating Press, The, 2009), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=435863>.

<sup>84</sup> Baggett and Walls, *Good God: The Theistic Foundations of Morality*, 92.

evils, if the atheist's argument wants to be consistent. In other words, waking up with the ability to recognize the splendor of breathing or the ability to think, or something as simple as making a cup of coffee, can really be seen as a gratuitous good and cannot be seen as a brute fact of the way things are. Otherwise, if gratuitous goods as laid out here are to be considered just the way things are, then the same can be said of a fawn suffering in the woods and thus no problem to begin with, something the atheist will not be willing to give up anytime soon.

Gratuitous goods as well as evils, which will be argued in the next chapter, point to the existence of God. In a narrower sense and for the purposes of this chapter, great goods are foundational to the desires of one's heart. The purpose for such gratuitous goods then helps bring it about in a person, a desire for something more that is beyond what is naturally found in the world. The sunset is simply an aesthetic good, it is beautiful to look at but for what purpose? Its purpose is to reach humanity at some deeper level, beyond a "just cause" understanding of things. Marilyn McCord Adams argues contemplating such aesthetic goods for their own sake can be purposeful. She says, particularly, "that contemplation of unsurpassable beauty is itself immeasurably good for the beholder."<sup>85</sup> Goods of the gratuitous sort, such as the sunset then speak to our faculties for some purpose that is transcendent to what is found in an atheistic world.

While the atheist can sense the same goods in the world as the theist, their conclusions about such things will always seem to fall short, somehow requiring more. It may be fair to this understanding as subjective, but it will not answer for the lack of purpose for such goods given atheism. Adams recognizes this, she states,

An ontology that holds roughly that "what you see is what you get" may recognize such valuables as sensory pleasures (the beauty of nature and cultural artifacts, the joy of creativity, loving personal intimacy), but it will be less rich than ontologies

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<sup>85</sup> Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 147.

which posit a transcendent good (such as the form of the Good in Platonism, of God, the infinite being and supremely valuable object, in Christianity).<sup>86</sup>

It seems that in this respect, goods especially gratuitous goods, serve the purpose of satisfying the desires of one's heart. On the theistic worldview, the ultimate desire of one's heart will only ever be satisfied in God who is the ultimate good. An intimate relationship with God ensures the person who experiences such a relationship will experience the greatest good.<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, gratuitous goods found in the world, whether found in nature, the arts, or in personal interactions with others, on a theistic view serve a purpose which is fulfilled in the desires of one's heart. The purpose can be articulated in a story of a scientist, Stacey O'Brian who found a barn owl in which she named Wesley. In her book *Wesley the Owl*, O'Brian who admits to being trained to exclude thoughts about the spiritual realm, could not help but to see something transcendent beyond what she understood. After staring into the owl's eyes for some nineteen years she found there to be something that she describes as "an old soul that reflected something bigger, ineffable, eternal."<sup>88</sup> O'Brian further concludes after the thought of suicide from some debilitating illness in which she contemplated taking her own life after the life of Wesley, she found that she could not do it. She explains that while looking "into the eyes of the owl, [she] found the way of God there, and decided to live."<sup>89</sup> O'Brian found purpose in a good that she did not quite understand, there was something deeper that could not be accounted for after being trained to exclude thoughts outside of what can be found in a naturalistic worldview. Eleonore Stump finds what was experienced in this story is what should be expected when "any

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<sup>86</sup> Adams, 12.

Adams, 52–53.

<sup>88</sup> Stacey O'Brian, *Wesley the Owl* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 177.

<sup>89</sup> O'Brian, 211.

created good loved for the real goodness in it will lead eventually to an awareness of the creator of that good and to a love for God, if only the love for the good in that created thing is allowed to deepen.”<sup>90</sup> When understood correctly then, gratuitous goods are not purposeless on the theistic view. However, this has been the repeated theme of this thesis, the atheist has a problem in which goods of the examples expressed here are truly gratuitous and therefore need to be answered for.

### **Conclusion**

It was argued in this chapter gratuitous goods do exist and serve a purpose. Gratuitous goods, on an atheistic worldview seem purposeless. There seems to be no rational reasoning they would exist on such a view. To claim them as a brute fact, or to say, “that is just the way things are” hardly satisfy the deep yearning for more in a purpose for their existence. Some examples were provided to establish not only the existence of gratuitous goods, but to bring to light the fact they exist in abundance. The types of gratuitous goods used in this chapter, such as the sunrise and sunset are not meant to be exhaustive but to show just a couple of examples that are readily available experiences both the atheist and theist alike can appreciate.

After providing examples of gratuitous goods, it was argued such goods do have a purpose on the theistic worldview that atheists can understand, even if they deny God. Showing examples of gratuitous goods, such as those of the aesthetic sort, can bring one to pursue the desires of one’s heart that is found in the creator God. While some may complain of subjective arguments, it was defended that even so the complaint does not do justice in answering for a deeper connection to gratuitous goods, though the types of goods may be subjective. The desire of one’s heart was fleshed out with an example from one scientist who was trained to ignore

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<sup>90</sup> Stump, *Wandering In Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 442.

things of spirituality but found that there was something more that demanded something more on a deeper understanding of the world.

It was also argued in this chapter if gratuitous evils exist, as many atheists use to establish the irrationality of God's existence, then per the chapter on the byproduct of evil, necessarily, gratuitous goods exist. To deny this premise would be to give up the argument from evil that is based on the existence of such gratuitous evils. The point here is not to deny evils or to show they are balanced off in a type of greater good defense (though as alluded to in this chapter the argument here may be used for such an argument), rather to establish the fact such great purposeless goods exist. If they do exist, as this chapter argues, then it causes a problem for the atheist to account for such goods beyond a "brute fact" of nature.

Ultimately then, this chapter paves the way for what will be the subject matter of the next chapter. By showing gratuitous goods exist, but also serve a purpose, it can now be shown both gratuitous goods and evils alike serve as navigational tools to bring one closer to God. As was argued in the purpose section of this chapter, goods point to God. The next chapter will argue not only do goods point to God, but also evils can and often do (contrary to what is popular argument from evil) point to God.

## CHAPTER V

### **The Compass Effect**

The main argument of this thesis has been developed around the central claim that the atheist has their own problem to answer for. The atheistic problem of good claims the burden of proof squarely rests on the atheist, to provide on a naturalistic worldview an answer for why goods exist, including those of the gratuitous types. The previous chapters provided the groundwork for what will be argued in this chapter. The compass effect will advance the argument further in favor of theism, which will in turn further engender the need for the atheist to answer for their problem of good. Making the case that both goods and evils (gratuitous included) point to the need for God, will help accomplish this. Both good and evil act like a compass, pointing the agent experiencing such goods or evils to the need of God. Just as a compass always points north regardless of geographical location, both good and evil, no matter which is experienced, will point to God (true north).

The beauty or goods of the world that are on display, both on a grand scale and small, from the awe-inspiring wonders of the cosmos to the simple touch of a loved one, display the need of something more. It may be argued that these types of goods can balance off horrendous evils, it can seem naïve for both the atheist and theist to hold such a position regardless of its success. Though they can offset or even be seen as a greater good, it seems that is not their intention at least for the purposes of this thesis. They are used to show a natural intuition or bent towards something more than what is found in the naturalistic world. In the same way, death camps and suffering fawns by no means necessarily show there is no God. Rather, horrendous evils as such show that something is off, an intuition of something not quite right which puts humanity on a search for some answers, some reason for such evils. In this search for something



more, a desire for good can be found. The compass effect seeks to show this; even bad things point to something beyond what is found in nature. The compass effect will argue that that something worth such serious consideration is found in the Divine, more specifically the God of Christianity.

The dichotomy between good and evil are not meant to balance each other off. Rather their respective purposes are to point to something transcendent in this world. Understanding goods and evils in this respect should cause a paradigm shift in the philosophical debate examining the existence of God, by allowing the theist to take an offensive approach and ask the atheist to answer for their problem of good. The compass effect will be developed in a bit more detail for both goods and evils respectively by showing how both act as a geological position and like a compass point to God.

#### Goods Point to God

The last chapter was dedicated to gratuitous goods, with the help of some examples, these types of goods can be understood in a great number. It was also argued that such goods can often be realized in everyday life. The fact many of these goods are taken for granted does not mitigate their being gratuitous, especially on an atheistic worldview (the argument in this thesis has been that given atheism goods of the gratuitous type really have no purpose). These goods as argued are not just brute facts of the world, rather they serve a purpose in which they point to something more. On the theistic worldview, their purpose is found in the creator God. Goods as described and understood in this thesis present themselves as navigational tools that will bring one to one's heart's desires if followed out.

The good that exists in the world require humanity to look and seek out the answers to why such things exist. As mentioned in the last chapter, the sheer beauty of the sunset on a

naturalistic world view is purposeless. It could have been brown or blue or purple for that matter if it did its job. The same could be said for love, it is not necessary for reproduction and continuation of life on the planet, it is possible otherwise it could potentially harm survival by not reproducing with every possible mate. Naturally, this does not seem right. Stump examining the nature of love, borrowing from Aquinas, shows there is an internal integration that is necessary for the good of a person which results in union with God.<sup>91</sup> The internal integration is speaking to the love of self. One must have a concept of love internally to be effective externally. Love of self then, understood in this way, is one good which can be seen as pointing to something transcendent something beyond what is found in naturalism. Thus, the finality of love finds its ultimate purpose, “that is the ultimate thing toward which love is directed-is union with God.”<sup>92</sup> Love then on Stump’s understanding and as presented here, is a good that finds its pinnacle in union with God. Of course, this does not mean a person’s directed love is always right, it is only right in which it points to that of what has been argued here as goods. For example, to love torturing little children for fun would not qualify as a type of love or good as argued in this thesis.

When experiencing beauty found in love or in nature, something more than a claim of “the world is the way it is” type of answer is needed, there is something desired in such beauty found in the world and cosmos. That something then seems best understood as God drawing the people of the world closer to Himself. Andreas J. Köstenberger seems to capture the essence of this desire when speaking of God revealing His word to us, which gives an account of the way the world is. He states, “the Bible does not merely aim to impart the knowledge of God and His

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<sup>91</sup> Stump, 101.

<sup>92</sup> Stump, 91.

ways; it also seeks to draw us into a deep personal engagement with God and others.”<sup>93</sup> Though this is speaking from a theological perspective, the essence of its meaning captures the effect the good in the world has on agents, which can be understood as the compass effect. Evans argues goods in the world such as moral obligations are natural signs that point to God. These natural signs in the world may not provide irrefutable proof of God, “However, when interpreted properly they point to the reality they are a sign of, and can provide reasonable belief and even knowledge in a direct, non-inferential manner.”<sup>94</sup> These types of goods found in the world as natural signs have a type magnetic pull on the human intellect that work like a compass pointing to a knowledge that is difficult to express in a worldview that would have people suppress their intuitions about the purpose for the goods in the world. Support comes from the understanding of God’s omnipresence, in which He is connected to both causally and cognitively to everything in creation. Though He is omnipresent this does not mean the relationship should be understood as one sided, the good in the world helps bring as Stump argues a “mutual awareness” between God and human agents, “whether or not it is awareness through a particular sensory modality.”<sup>95</sup> Therefore the compass effect argues goods point the agent to a relationship with God. Stump it seems would agree, she expresses “unless a person takes God as her deepest heart’s desire, her heart will always have at its deepest core a yearning that is both inchoate and unsatisfied.”<sup>96</sup> It becomes obvious then instead of suppressing those intuitions such as O’Brian did for so many years, it seems rather natural for human agents to explore those intuitions. Such natural signs and

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<sup>93</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell, *Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2023), 1.

<sup>94</sup> Evans, *God & Moral Obligation*, 115.

<sup>95</sup> Stump, *Wandering In Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 118.

<sup>96</sup> Stump, 440.

internal intuitions are all helpful in pointing one to the desires of their heart which is only satisfied in union with God. Augustine understood in this way in which he thought all of life could be made sense of by a process of wander and return.<sup>97</sup> He famously stated in the opening paragraph in *Confessions*, “Thou awakes us to delight in They praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee.”<sup>98</sup> It is in this understanding good points to God, but for the compass effect to work evil must point to God as well.

### Evil Points to God

It has been pointed previously if evils exist, then necessarily its byproduct does as well. The same applies to the compass effect. If as argued above goods point to God, then *mutatis mutandis*, evils. Before expressing how evils point to God, it must be noted the argument here is not that God created evils to use them, rather God uses them because they are available. Augustine would agree in this regard, he states, “But God as He is the supremely good Creator of good natures, so is He of evil wills the most just Ruler; so that, while they make an ill use of good natures, He makes a good use even of evil wills.”<sup>99</sup> In other words, evils in this sense point to God. In the previous section, the wonder of the world which includes what is found in nature and goods such as love point to something more, something beyond this world, something divine. In the same way but from the opposite end of the spectrum evils have a way of instinctively informing human agents something is off.

Augustine understands this instinct to be God using such evils to bring people back into a relationship with Him, which of course as the last section argued is the ultimate good. The idea

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<sup>97</sup> Gould, Dickinson, and Loftin, *Stand Firm: Apologetics and the Brilliance of the Gospel*, 11.

<sup>98</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, 309.

of this ultimate good will be developed here, by borrowing in part from John Hick's soul making theodicy. Though the author of this work does not accept the whole of the argument, there is enough shared metaphysically that it will prove useful for demonstrating the compass effect. Hick understands for moral development to occur, humanity must deal with or live with the penalty of pain or even death.<sup>100</sup> What Hick's wants to argue is pain and suffering that are found in the world are not gratuitous, rather they stand as tools used by God to bring about moral growth and development. The result will bring about a relationship with God. However, for purposes here it must be noted this is an area of disagreement. As argued in the section above on goods that point to God, it is not apparent that evils will necessarily point an agent to God. A person that is wrongheaded or doubleminded might not be in a position comprehend such evils or may at least be oblivious to their purposes. These are the type of peoples who think the world is not off by the evil around them.

Hick's soul making theodicy provides beneficial to the compass effect because it encapsulates the idea evils serve a purpose, and that purpose is to bring people to a relationship with God. In this respect, evil on the compass effect points to God. The main difference between the two is the compass effect does not attempt to guarantee such a relationship. Rather the compass effect only states evil points to the need of God. The quote from C. S. Lewis used in chapter two can be seen in its full force. "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."<sup>101</sup> Pain then can help bring one to a moral regeneration. Of course, this type of regeneration can be realized and in fact often is the result of some evil that an agent experiences

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<sup>100</sup> John Hick, "A Soul Making Theodicy," in *Christian Apologetics: An Anthology of Primary Sources*, ed. Khaldoun A. Sweis and Chad V. Meister (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 439.

<sup>101</sup> Lewis, *The C. S. Lewis Signature Classics*, 604.

either firsthand or from a distance. The killing of children in a school shooting for example has the tendency to stir up an inner desire to find a solution. Often that solution is a call or demand for change. Stump expresses, “The very beginning of moral regeneration, however, is the point at which the will first forms the global higher-order desire for a will that wills the good.”<sup>102</sup> In fact, Stump works tirelessly providing examples of how suffering in some sense points to God.

One way to understand how evil points to God, is to see something tragic trigger a desire in a person to will something good. In the school shooting example above, it may very well be the cause of a person to cry out to God even if they are not at that moment believers. In other words, there is a vulnerability involved. In this sense, if God is to be close to people, those people will need to have a vulnerability about them that would point them to God.<sup>103</sup> At this point some may object of the idea evils in the form of pain and suffering could be used by an omnibenevolent God to achieve His purpose in bringing people close to Him. Typically, this is due to an *a priori* belief that there is no after life or eternity.

Again, Stump realizes this assumption as well by pointing out people will cringe at the idea of suffering in the here and now for the benefit of everlasting glory. Not because they do not think it would be worth it, but because they presuppose eternity in glory is not possible.<sup>104</sup> It then may be asked why not just tell the world suffering exists to bring people into a relationship with God. If that were the case, the suffering would lose its effect. If a child knew beforehand their parent allowing them to witness their dead goldfish when they got home from school was to build character, the character building would not be successful, they may just avoid getting the

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<sup>102</sup> Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, 165.

<sup>103</sup> Stump, 122.

<sup>104</sup> Stump, 402.

fish. In a similar but different way, God then could not explain the reasons for such suffering beforehand without losing them.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, evils would lose their effect on pointing the agent towards God.

Hick would likely agree here with the reason for God not revealing the outcome in such a way. On his view, epistemic distance on such sufferings is necessary for soul making. He is worth quoting at length:

finite persons are created at an epistemic distance from God, in order that they may gradually become children of God through their own moral and spiritual choices, requires that their environment, instead of being a pain-free and stress-free paradise, be broadly the kind of world of which we find ourselves to be a part, a world that provokes the theological problem of evil.<sup>106</sup>

Here it is evident that on Hick's view to live in a utopian world would not be beneficial to the agents of such a world. Their understanding of things would not entail anything bad or evil, thus no soul building. While it is not the belief of this author, it is enough to make the case that evil is able to point one to God. It is in such a world that has pain and suffering, Hick's believes people come to know God. He is clear, as well as should be, here in the compass effect God does not send misfortune, maiming, starvation, ruin, or even death for purposes of soul making.<sup>107</sup> Rather, God allows such calamities in the world to elicit in people a desired relationship towards Him, "in which there is a growing awareness of God as well as a growing awareness of the moral claim that God's presence makes upon the way in which we live."<sup>108</sup> So it is by understanding John Hick's soul making theodicy that evil does indeed point to God. While not everything of his

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<sup>105</sup> Stump, 410.

<sup>106</sup> Hick, "A Soul Making Theodicy," 439.

<sup>107</sup> Hick, 441.

<sup>108</sup> Hick, 442.

theodicy is accepted in this thesis, the basis of it was enough to articulate how evil on the compass effect points to God. The compass effect in turn takes both good and evil and sees them as directing human agents towards God. Doing so further engenders a problem for the atheist, a problem this entire thesis is based on. However, it only seems responsible to note that because there is a theodicy at play here that shifts the problem of evil to the problem of good, it should not be taken or understood as a downplay on horrendous evils that exists. Marilyn McCord Adams expresses defenses and theodicies do not do anything for the evils in the world. Evils are still evils.<sup>109</sup> The hope is that the compass effect will seek not to lessen evils but provide a solution in which evil has the potential to bring out the good, not to seek evil out per se, but to understand the best solution is found in God!

### **A Paradigm Shift**

#### An Abductive Argument

C. S. Lewis then seems correct in understanding that all people throughout the world have this curious idea; there is a good and evil a right and wrong.<sup>110</sup> One could hardly deny this “curious idea” is universal in that all (normal functioning agents) have a basic understanding of what is in Lewis’s terms right and wrong. Evans tends to agree these “curious ideas” which he calls objective morals are universal in at least two ways. First, all human agents deal with the notion of morality. Furthermore, there are no free passes, all are held in some moral standing. No one gets to claim special treatment that allows them to ignore such claims. Secondly, he states,

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<sup>109</sup> Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 185.

<sup>110</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 8.



“some of our moral obligations extend at least to all human persons.”<sup>111</sup> Both good and evil evident in the world is captured by theist and atheist alike. Both would agree for example, torturing children for fun is wrong and evil and the sunset on a cool summer night is something of awe and wonder. It should be noticed (for all normally thinking beings), these types of goods and evils are intrinsically known to all agents; this much can be agreed upon and is presupposed in the compass effect. The basis of the compass effect at this capacity can be understood as an abductive argument in which it is not making a claim in a deductive manner. Although the compass effect could be formulated as such or at least lead to such an argument, the purpose here is towards the abductive type. To understand the compass effect abductively allows the atheist and the theist to take a new approach to both the problem of evil and the problem of good.

The argument here then assumes both atheist and theist can differentiate the difference between good and evil because in every person an intrinsic value system exists. The difference is theism understands such a value system is from a Divine being. The Divine Command Theory (DCT) presented this earlier. DCT shows that moral obligations or what is good are known because God has revealed/commanded them to His creation. Therefore, being commanded by God affixes such understanding to ultimate reality. It seems this idea is what Baggett and Walls are attempting to articulate when they say, “Ultimate reality underwrites moral obligation so thoroughly that there is an unbreakable connection between morality and the personal well-being of all moral agents, individually as well as collectively”.<sup>112</sup> In other words, there is something intrinsic that moral agents simply know. However, a personal being better explains this reality. It seems then theism offers the best explanation of such intrinsic knowledge of good (or morality)

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<sup>111</sup> Evans, *God & Moral Obligation*, 30.

<sup>112</sup> Baggett and Walls, *God & Cosmos: Moral Truth and Human Meaning*, 268.

and evil. If theism as this thesis has shown throughout is in a better position to explain the purposes good and evil, then the atheist is again left to answer for their problem of good.

#### Atheistic Problem of Good

It is obvious by now good and evil both exist; this can be taken as fact. The initial problem of evil, while affecting both atheist and theist, was used against theism. However, as this thesis has been attempting to show, the result of their initial claim causes a new one to arise. The problem is now that goods, especially those of the gratuitous type that have been argued for, the atheist now carries the burden of proof to answer for the problem of good. It seems on a naturalistic worldview, answering for goods does not hold much weight. There are too many problems as Plantinga, Craig, Baggett and others have pointed out in their respective works and has been alluded to herein. Trying to hold to a naturalistic worldview on the problem of good is analogous to holding water in a cloth bucket in which the water holds superficially, but eventually it seeps through. Naturalism then can no more answer for their problem of good than a cloth bucket can successfully hold water. It is the opinion of this author the best solution can only be found in theism.

The problem for the atheistic worldview is they must attempt to account for goods that exist on their playing field, a task that seems to be too burdensome. Not because of goods per se but because of goods of the gratuitous types. The burden of proof for some time required the theist to answer for their problem of evil. Adams makes a good point; the atheist *a priori* places the burden on theologians.<sup>113</sup> Why should such a thing be taken *prima facie*? Interestingly, the atheist never questioned the theist for their basis for good except in the Euthyphro Dilemma, in

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<sup>113</sup> Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*, 9.

which an answer has been given. The problem for the atheist comes in here. The atheist focuses on charging the theist with evil, which has left them open on the front of good. Adams sees this as parochialism in which the focus is too narrow.<sup>114</sup> It certainly seems so, and by returning the question to the atheist by examining goods seems to open the playing field.

Philosophers such as N. T. Wright allude to the problem of good, in which they are hoping to broaden the discussion. In assessing the problem of evil, he writes, “Even if you’re an atheist you face the problem the other way around: is this world a sick joke, which contains some things that make us think it’s a wonderful place and other things which make us think it’s an awful place, or what?”<sup>115</sup> He makes a valid point here. There is for the sake of philosophical argument, a dichotomy between good and evil. They are both related and has been argued above, one cannot be divorced from the other. Wright agrees with at least the main argument here; the atheist faces the problem of good. He continues, “You could of course refer to this as the problem of good rather than the problem of evil: if the world is the chance assembly of accidental phenomena, why is there so much that we want to praise and celebrate? Why is there beauty, love and laughter?”<sup>116</sup> Wright is correct, and it has been the hope of this thesis to bring about such a conversation to bring light to a problem that has been begging to be answered in the minds of such thinkers.

### **Conclusion**

A new solution has been put forth in which both evil and good act as a compass, pointing to the monotheistic God of theism, the compass effect. The compass effect asks to imagine you

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<sup>114</sup> Adams, 179.

<sup>115</sup> Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, 19.

<sup>116</sup> Wright, 19.

are in a thick jungle, lost, cold, scared with no sense of direction allow this thick jungle to be evil. Furthermore, imagine being stranded on a beach somewhere in the Bahamas warm, pleasant, and beautiful, allow this beautiful beach to be the good in the world. Now suppose you need to get home. From either place you are not sure how you got there; therefore, you do not know how to get home. You recognize the evils of the world, the broken state in the thick of the jungle, but you also recognize the beautiful waves crashing along the shore on the beautiful beach. For what purpose, how do you get home? The compass effect provides a solution, from both places the compass points to north, in which north represents God. Therefore, no matter what situation one finds themselves in the thick of the jungle, or on a beautiful beach the compass always points true north. The difficult part is the agent, the one in the jungle or the beach, will need to know how to read and comprehend the compass. This reading and comprehension of the compass in part was the argument laid out in this chapter. The argument was expressed abductively to show that the compass effect can provide a better solution for both the evils in the world and the goods. The compass effect then states goods point to God because of the sheer beauty and wonder that is found in the world. Likewise, evils point to God because they demand an answer and solution to the problems humanity finds in this world. If not accepted, the atheist then will need to provide a better answer than the theist for the atheistic problem of good.

## CHAPTER VI

### **Conclusion**

The thesis has sought to argue for what was developed into the atheistic problem of good. What has been argued here began with a problem and ended with a problem. What began as the theistic problem of evil, can be now argued as the atheistic problem of good. The problem shows while the theist has answered successfully for their problem of evil, the atheist is left to answer for their problem of good. The main thesis worked out, is if the atheist admits evil exists, it necessarily states that good exists. Therefore, if goods exist, then the burden of proof to answer for their existence is left to the atheist. The point is, the burden no longer lies with the theist, because the problem of evil has been answered for. While horrendous evils will still exist and should not be ignored, their logical, evidential, and emotional problems have been successfully answered to be consistent with an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God. Goods, as understood in this thesis, also can be found consistent with an omnibenevolent, omnipotent God; a problem atheism will need to answer for.

The hope is a new approach may be taken when examining the problem of evil in that it allows the theist to shift the problem to the atheist. Doing so will allow the conversation for the existence of God to be more fruitful. Theists have assumed the burden of proof for quite some time, the shift will allow the burden to be the responsibility of the atheist. While this may seem initially as a red herring, it is not intended. As argued in this thesis, the conversation only shifts due to the nature of the argument in which the G. E Moore shift is deployed. Doing so is not an attempt to deflect the problem of evil, as this thesis has shown it has already been answered for. Rather, it only asks the atheist to provide an answer in the same respect as the theist has done for centuries. Furthermore, this shift can be defeated by the atheist only (it seems) if they are willing

to abandon the problem of evil, something unlikely given the success of their argument even if it has been answered for.

Moving towards the atheistic problem of good was accomplished by first showing the three main arguments for the problem of evil: logical, evidential, and emotional, respectively. In each section the problem was laid out with some of the most successful and well-known solutions to each problem. These answers are not proving that God exists, but rather show the problem of evil is not a defeater for the theistic worldview. Providing such solutions helped build the case for the problem of good. The point is to show if evils exist then necessarily goods exist. The byproduct of evil helped to formulate this, in which it was argued evil can only exist if its opposite does in the same way that fear can only exist if there is a such thing as courage. Therefore, it was argued because it is accepted that evils exist then goods should also be understood and accepted *mutatis mutandis*. Goods were then defined with examples due to the basic nature of the term which also cover a broad range of understandings. Etymologically speaking good is difficult to define in a way that covers all understanding. It was concluded that goods should be understood as the desire of one's heart. Goods were then argued for by using morality, as generally understood, thus allowing for a foundation for such goods to be articulated. Giving a cursory look at the argument of objective morality, a view both the atheist and theist understand to be true, helps this to be understood. However, it was argued theism is in a better position to argue for such objective goods.

Establishing goods and their foundation allowed the argument to move forward by showing like evil, there are goods of the gratuitous types. Examples were given to show this. One such example was of the sunset or sunrise in which the sheer beauty of it is truly gratuitous given atheism. The sun does not necessarily need to be beautiful or awe inspiring to function

properly. Attention was then brought to the fact such goods have no bearing on reproduction necessary for survival. These examples were not limited to what is found in nature, but also what can be understood in goods such as love or other desires of the heart. Life itself at least in the amount in this world is in fact gratuitous. It was argued that such goods on the atheistic worldview are truly gratuitous at least until they provide reasons to the contrary. Therefore, these types of goods would be gratuitous on the naturalistic worldview, conversely their purpose can be established within a theistic worldview. Goods of this sort, and for that matter all goods, as was concluded are purposed in fulfilling the desires of one's heart which is found in relationship. Such relationships, however, never satisfy the ultimate desire which as expressed here is only found in a relationship with God.

Understanding the relationship and purpose of such goods supports what was referred to in this thesis as the compass effect in which it was established both goods and evils are useful to bring attention to the need and wonder of God. Evils of all sorts point to the need of a God to correct what is wrong within this world. Even the atheist can see there is something off in this world, but willingly chooses to not accept God as their solution. Using the compass effect, we can express this as being lost and not following the direction in which the compass points. In this case true north (God). The compass effect also provides a reason for such wonder and beauty (goods) found in the world. Goods then point to God by the same intuition all people have, in which it is understood something more is needed to explain such wonder in the world. Though something new can be understood with the compass effect, it refers to something all people share in that there is this understanding of something inherent to all peoples that there is something else that demands humanities attention. That something more is best understood as God.

In turn, this notion of good for the atheist becomes the foundation for the atheistic problem of good. Admittedly what is contained herein this thesis is meant to further the discussion. A new approach has been offered in the philosophical debate for the existence of God. Within this thesis, it sets forth to contribute to the apologetic mission and further the discussion in hopes to shed a new light on something that has been alluded to since the beginning of time. Why is there so much good in the world? What has been laid out in this thesis should serve to strengthen the theistic worldview. What has been argued for in the preceding paragraphs are not exhaustive to be sure, no one could cover the differing views contained within in a simple volume. There are countless volumes dedicated to just one horn of the problem of evil. Surely, the problem of good consists of at least as many horns as evil and can be developed further, a project that may better be fleshed out in a dissertation.

For now, the previous pages should elicit a curiosity that has already been on the hearts and minds of philosophers for some time now. From Augustine to Stump and many philosophers in between when examining the problem of evil share one thing in common that remains constant. There is an overwhelming understanding goods exist in the world and with them awe and wonder are found. Whether these goods are seen to balance off evil or they override evils with a greater good approach one thing is for sure, goods exist. The curiosity with goods that appear in philosophical prose should no longer be after thoughts in discussion laying forth evil. Goods should be understood at the forefront of such discussions, demanding the attention of both the theist and atheist alike. No longer lurking in the background wandering in darkness but brought to light to show the unending goodness that is found within the hearts and minds of all people.



The atheistic problem of good then has the potential to cause a paradigm shift in the debate of God's existence. To embrace and focus on the evil without considering the good has been a mistake on the part of the atheist in which understood properly leaves the non-believer with one of two options abandon the problem of evil or accept the problem of good. The problem of evil as shown above no longer holds power over theists. It is our turn to present a problem, how then on an atheistic worldview does the atheist answer for abundant goods of the gratuitous type? Let the theist continue then defending the faith and the hope, which is found in Jesus Christ, by exposing the atheistic problem of good!

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