

# Classical Theism (17): The Evidential Problem of Evil (1)



The argument against God based on the evidential problem of evil:

1. There is unnecessary suffering/evil in the world.
2. A good God would not allow unnecessary suffering/evil.
3. Therefore, such a God does not exist.

# Classical Theism (17): The Evidential Problem of Evil

## Bible Doctrines (The True-Good-Beautiful )

### T/G/B

Eschatology  
 Thanatology  
 Ecclesiology  
 Israelology  
 Dispensationalism  
 Doxology  
 Hodology  
 Soteriology  
 Hamartiology  
 Natural Law  
 Anthropology  
 Angelology  
 Pneumatology  
 Christology  
 Paterology  
 Trinitarianism  
 Cosmology  
 Theology Proper  
 Bibliology  
 Natural Theology

5: Hermeneutics

4: Language-98

3: Epistemology 32

- Existence 50
- History 50

2:Metaphysics 32

- Trans. 50

1: Reality

- Logic 32,
- Truth 32

P.R. - 32

**Opening passage: Psa 73:25; Matt. 22:37-39 as the foundation of our lives from which all actions flow.**

**Preparation for the Word of God:** the marvelous focus and promise of fellowship in 1 John 1:7.

**3 Parts to Bible Class to address 3 areas of anti-intellectualism in contemporary Christianity.**

Part I: Spiritual basics: 20 minutes to address anti-intellectualism in SL and nature of love (3).

Part II: Philosophical foundations: 10 minutes to address anti-intellectualism in hermeneutics (Heidegger).

Part III: Doctrinal development: 45 minutes to address anti-intellectualism (e.g., clichés) in POE.

**Part I: The biblical, spiritual, and metaphysical nature of love and the spiritual life (4).**

1. The foundation and life spring of the spiritual life is love, 1 Cor. 13.
2. There is an affinity between natural love and supernatural love. Why this is important!
3. Supernatural love for God is a 2<sup>nd</sup> person love relationship that requires continual private prayer for development, 1 Thess. 5:17; Jude 1:20.
4. Love is about the will. Thus, no believer can grow in a rich relationship with God with apathy or self-will.
5. The human will depends on the intellect, which provides the only range of options.
6. To love anyone properly, including self, requires virtue in the will and the mind—good inclination and good knowledge. Without virtue the believer thinks badly and has bad inclinations.
7. A bad will is a weak will due to lack of virtue and thus remains in bondage to bad appetites.
8. Without a good will, the believer will live a fragmented, enslaved life.
9. A fragmented, enslaved will does not possess the basic freedom to love God wholeheartedly.
10. Every believer should examine the contents of his daily thoughts (mind) and desires (will) and eagerly seek to develop good thoughts and good desires, Philip 4:4-8.
11. Focus on 1 John 1:9 and sin is not the biblical standard. The focus is on the light, 1 Jn 1:7.
12. Our norms, standards, and consciences of our intellect with all of their judgments cannot be separated from our will as if we can just pack in norms and standards as data that will then cause us to think rightly and wish rightly.
13. The quality of our minds and wills will determine the quality of our lives and success or failure in the God's plan. We are not free from our thoughts or inclinations.
14. Love is the fountain of all human action
15. Our lives are run by our loves. The only question is the nature of that love that is a result of the interplay between mind and will.

## Part 2: Philosophy of Language (98)

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### Outline

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ What is philosophy of language?
- ✓ Theories of meaning
- ✓ Plato's *Cratylus*
  - Hermogenes
  - Cratylus
  - Socrates
- ✓ Aristotle (384-322 BC)
- ✓ Transition to modern philosophy of language
- ✓ Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)
- ✓ Gottlob Frege (1848-1925)
- ✓ Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

**Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).**

W. V. O. Quine (1908-2000).

Noam Chomsky (1928-)

Realist view of meaning.

Foundation of meaning.

Communication of meaning.

Elements of language.

Function of language

Meaningful God-talk.

Analytic Philosophy

Conclusion.

Analogy.

Metaphysical analogy.



1. Martin Heidegger was a German philosopher. He grew up as a Roman Catholic and studied to be a priest. However, he changed his mind and became a philosopher.
2. Martin Heidegger attempted to get back to metaphysics and the ultimate reality of being. However, due to Kantian epistemology, his project failed to be able to give an account for ultimate reality—objective reality between the knower and known.
3. His greatest influence is in the area of hermeneutics in general & for biblical exegesis specifically in bible and exegetical movements (TDNT).
4. He gives us hermeneutics of phenomenology—POL goes from making concepts and language the direct object of reality to making experience the object of reality.
5. History of hermeneutics.
  - a. Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*.
  - b. Talmudic Studies
  - c. Middle Ages and the Roman Church.
  - d. The Reformation.
  - e. Post-Reformation.
  - f. Democracy and civic law.

## Classical Theism (17): The Evidential Problem of Evil (1)



The evidential problem of evil argument against the existence of God:

1. There is unnecessary suffering/evil in the world.
2. A good God would not allow unnecessary suffering/evil.
3. Therefore, such a God does not exist.

While most theists accept Leibniz's view and deny P1, I deny P2 with certain qualifications.

To think that Earth is not the best possible world does not impugn the character of God unless He is obligated to make such a world.

## Part 3: Classical Theism (17): The Evidential Problem of Evil

A few words about my goals as we move into the evidential problem of evil.

1. As your pastor-teacher, I am dedicated to teach you Total Truth, Whole Truth no matter what—even though it may cause confusion and discomfort at times. Eventually, you will see God and reality like Job did. Moreover, my *chief* interest is enabling you to see the true nature of God and reality, not teaching you the various strategies against atheists.
2. Total Truth is much more difficult and uncomfortable than clichés, partial truths, and superficial views of reality that may make us feel better but are manifestly false. We cannot afford to entertain false views of reality and God (like the idea that God created man to resolve the angelic conflict). Understanding the various issues in POE is critical in times of testing.

### **Part 3: Classical Theism (17): The Evidential Problem of Evil**

3. One of cancers on the church today is an anti-intellectualism that sees no need to understand our Christian heritage or enter the great conversations over the centuries on key theological and biblical issues. This Bible-onlyism is dangerous and cultish. Pope are bad in the RCC as well as in a local church. Believers need to be able to think through these things for themselves.
4. My goal in engaging you with the atheists is to flesh out false views on God and reality. This limited first-hand engagement with the literature will enrich your intellectual understanding of theology of God in a way that is otherwise unattainable.
5. The bottom line on all that I do is to help you understand the nature of God, the Bible, and reality as such for the telos of loving God.

6. Biblical reflections on evil (before we move into the evidential POE).
  - a. Could God have stopped Adam and Eve? See Gen 20:6.
  - b. Romans 8:18-22. The natural evil in creation is all about disorder and disordered relationships between beings. All things that exist are good in that they exist, the evil in the Fall comes as from improper relations (E. Coli, lion eating lamb). In short, evil as such has no *esse*.
  - c. Genesis 4:1-16.
    - 1) The story of Cain and Abel is an instance of evil that one could find in almost any newspaper or atheistic literature.
    - 2) The fact that Cain is angry and jealous indicates that he is double-minded. In compatibilism, he has freedom to be otherwise.
    - 3) God is well-aware of Cain's intention to kill Able and urges him to "do well" instead of doing evil.
    - 4) Cain is obstinate in his evil. This evil is from his free will.
    - 5) God does not protect Abel. Abel, a righteous person, suffers a violent and untimely death. Some of the pain/suffering was not absolutely necessary. Also, any moral person standing by would have stopped it.
    - 6) Cain is the one who is in real danger due to his evil and so God continues to pursue him in grace.

7. Background of the friendly atheist, William Rowe, and the nature of his infamous evidential (inductive) problem of evil. The bottom line is why might God tolerate an evil or suffering that could have been avoided. Why is there so much suffering?
8. Rowe starts out by saying that enduring evil is good if it helps to achieve a greater good.
  - ✓ For example, we endure some evil/suffering like work, diet, stay up late to get the greater good of a salary, lose weight and feel better, and complete an important project.
9. Rowe also notes that enduring evil is good if it prevents a greater evil.
  - ✓ For example, if one does not get a root canal it could lead to advanced infection in your jaw, which if untreated could lead to death.

10. So, William Rowe, acknowledges up front that there are good justifications for evil as a necessary means to a greater good or to avoid a greater evil.
  - ✓ He notes that an omnipotent, good God might refrain from stopping an instance of suffering if stopping it would bring about the loss of some good.
  - ✓ Or God might refrain from preventing some evil if doing so would bring about some worse evil.

11. But Rowe then asks, What about the evil of suffering that does not fall into either category?

**P1- There exists instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.**

His example is of a fawn burned in a forest fire in some remote, obscure region. The fire was started by a lightning strike, and there was no one around to develop virtue, and so the fawn dies a very slow and painful death. This is not an opportunity to build virtue, and the fawn does not learn anything. His point is that there are some pointless suffering/evil.



**P2 – An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.**

The point here is that if you are good, you try to eliminate pointless suffering. Surely, if you walk upon someone suffering you would do something about it. Isn't this the epitome of being a good person? Would you not have warned Abel?

**P3- Therefore there does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.**

12. Shorter version of the argument:

1. There are instances of suffering that are absolutely unnecessary.
2. If there were an omni-God, then there would be no instances unnecessary suffering.
3. Therefore, there is no omni-God.

13. So, which of the premises which you would reject? He says that the only premise that people can attack is #1. Neo-theists would agree. I disagree. Much effort in Christianity is in attempting to show that #1 is not true with all kinds of “means to an end” arguments from the Free Will Defense, greater good theodicy, to the soul-building of John Hick.

14. The G.E. Moore Shift.

P1 – There are cases of preventable suffering.

P2 – If there were a God, then there would be no cases of preventable suffering.

P3 – Therefore, there is no God.

15. Modern theistic (Leibnizian) approach #1: Leibnizian response.

P1 – There is a God.

P2 – If there was a God, then there would be no cases of preventable suffering.

P3– Therefore, there are no cases of preventable suffering (best of possible worlds).

16. Rowe does not think that we should accept Leibniz's argument because his P1 is more obvious than their P3. I agree with Rowe. The result is that Christians spend all of their time and energy attempting finding reasons, even for the fawn, or simply defaulting to mystery up frong. While it is true that we do not always see reasons, it is false that God is obligated to remove any pain.

17. The skeptical theist, Cornea-Stephen Wykstra, suspends judgment on P1 (there are cases of preventable suffering).
- a. I look around the room and see no elephants, so I conclude that there are no elephants in the room. But what if you are in a huge room with very large boxes?
  - b. If I look around my living room and see no microbes, can I conclude that there are no microbes in the room. Are they the sorts of things that if you look you would see them if they were there. If they were present would they be manifest?
  - c. So in b above Wykstra says that microbes are like the fawn in the forest fire. Just because we do not see a point to the fawn does not mean there is not one. Wykstra says you cannot just look from your finite perspective. You cannot leap to say that there is no point. Your perspective is too small. This is the skeptical theist and they attack by #1: that there are cases of preventable suffering.
  - d. So, his argument is that sometimes when we don't see x, it is because x is not the sort of thing we can see.
  - e. A distinction need to be made between a reason behind all suffering and a specific point for every bit of suffering.

18. Rowe answers Wykstra with his “Parent Analogy.”

“When children are ill and confined to a hospital, the loving parents by any means possible seek to comfort their child, giving special assurances of their love while he is separated from them and suffering for a reason he does not understand. No loving parents use their child’s stay in the hospital as an occasion to take a holiday, saying to themselves that the doctors and nurses will surely look after little Johnny while they are away. But many human beings have endured horrendous suffering without any awareness of God’s assurances of his love and concern during their period of suffering . . .

My own inclination is to think that given the horrendous evils in our world, the absence of the God who supposedly walked with Adam and Eve in the garden is evidence that there is no God. For surely, if there were a God he would wish to provide us with strong reasons to think that he exists, given that the horrendous evils in our world, both natural and moral, seem to provide us with reason to doubt his existence.

19. His point is that if it is as Wykstra (and others) say, namely to build character why is God hiding. Even if they were necessary evils, it seems like God would provide us with evidence of His existence, more at least. Why leave them in the dark? You cannot say that God is loving, so he argues.

20. Second response to the Skeptical Theism who says we are not in a position to grasp God.

- a. The skeptical theist is accused of special pleading. How can you be skeptical about reasons and not be skeptical about God? How can you be confident about one and not the other? If you are agnostic about reason for suffering, then why not God?
- b. In other words, if the skeptical theist is not in an epistemic position to know God's reasons, how can it be reasonable to insist that God is real?
- c. The skeptical theist is accused of being selective (special pleading, motivated reasoning).
- d. The skeptical theist is inconsistent in his skepticism.

## 21. Review of the inductive/evidential argument?

- a. P1 – There are evils that are not necessary.  
P2 – If there were a God, then there would be no evil that were not necessary.  
P3 – Therefore, there is no God.
- b. Objection by Wykstra: The point of suffering from the divine perspective wouldn't be apparent to us because we are finite.
- c. #1 Atheist response: A loving and good God would not force us to suffer through necessary evils without making every effort to comfort, inform, assure, and support us.
- d. #2 Atheist response: Inconsistency of skeptical theism should cut both ways. If we should be skeptical about pointless evils, we should be skeptical about theism too.

22. Reflection on more evil and free will in the Bible: Isa. 45:6-7; John 9:39; 16:7-15; Rom. 3:10-20; 7:15-25; 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1-3, 4:17-20; Philip 2:12-13; Col. 1:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:8; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:17.

DIVINE CONCURRENCE AND HUMAN FREE WILL  
TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S ACTIVITY IN ALL THINGS

1. In every act there is both primary (infinite) and secondary (finite) causality.
2. While the two causes can be cognitively distinguished, they are inextricable and would not exist apart from each other.
3. Man's free will is given its existential act by God. No act can exist apart from God—none! No such thing as an autonomous free will.
4. God sustains the free will and all of its acts every instant as the primary cause.
5. However, man is the secondary cause and gives *form* to the act in his secondary causality.

6. So, God is the efficient cause of all things that be, but man gives the formal cause of free will acts.
7. The form finds its source in man's intentionality.
8. For example, when a rapist rapes a woman, both God and man are involved in the existence of all that exists.
9. God is the efficient causality in giving existence to the rapist and the rapee along with all of their activities.

10. But God is not the formal cause of the act, namely rape.
11. The form is what makes things be what they are. In this case, what makes rape rape is in the finite agent, not God.
12. God is the infinite cause and man is the finite cause of all activities.
13. Everything that is in being in the rape is caused to be by God, but what makes rape rape in the moral order comes from its form from man.

14. Again, it is the finite agent who is the principle cause of the form of the act or the effect.
15. Neither the infinite agent nor the finite agent brings about activities alone. The former leads to determinism the later to libertarianism.
16. There is a certain mystery in concurrence that can be compared to a chemical reaction in which one no longer sees the separate chemicals.

17. Libertarianism violates the basic principle of divine concurrence.
  - a. It violates the principles of *Esse* and the metaphysics of act and potential. A thing cannot actualize itself.
  - b. In libertarianism the action of the will is up to the agent's power. So, a free act is never the effect of God's power.
  - c. In libertarianism antecedent factors are not an issue.
  - d. In libertarianism there is no divine concurrence moving the will from potential to actual.
  - e. Libertarianism is a result of anthropomorphizing God. If one paints God in anthropomorphic terms, not only will the arguments from the atheists take on more weight, the believer will be disoriented and his faith will be shaken when he runs into a crisis and "his" God does not seem to be there—one who is well behaved, good, and moral like one would expect from a man-like God.

18. In making everything be, God's causality extends to everything that exists, and free choices are as real as anything else in the world.
19. There is no such thing as a creaturely reality, which is not produced or creatively made to be by God.
20. From a Realist perspective, then, the Free Will Defense is worthless as a piece of theistic apologetic because it misrepresents God. Some call the Defense positively idolatrous.
21. God is the ultimate activator of all particular agency. However, this is easy to misunderstand and confuse with determinacy.