

Welcome to Ratio Christi

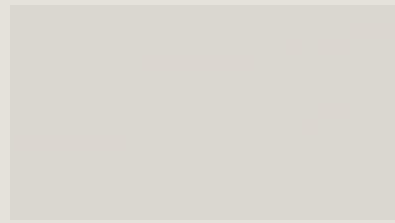


at Texas A&M



**THINK
THEISM**

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Think Theism lectures are supported by Ratio Christi @ Texas A&M, but the opinions represented herein do not necessarily reflect the beliefs or values of Ratio Christi. This content is presented to encourage discussion and critical thought about challenging questions.




RATIO
CHRISTI

The background features a dark space filled with small white stars. A large, glowing yellow arc is positioned in the upper half of the frame. At the bottom, there is a jagged, purple line-art landscape that resembles a mountain range or a complex terrain. The text is centered within the yellow arc.

Does evil prove that God does not exist?

The Problem of Evil

The background features a dark space filled with small white stars. A bright yellow arc, resembling a horizon or a celestial body, spans across the upper half of the image. Below the arc, a jagged, purple line-art landscape of mountains or hills stretches across the bottom. The text is centered within the yellow arc.

Does evil suggest that God does not exist?

The Problem of Evil

	General Theism	Christian Specific
Positive (i.e. making the case)	Reasons why God exists	Reasons why Christianity is true
Defensive (i.e. responding to objections)	Responses to arguments for atheism	Responses to arguments against Christianity

	General Theism	Christian Specific
Positive (i.e. making the case)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments for God's Existence • Cosmological • Teleological • Moral Argument • Ontological Argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Testament Textual Transmission • Historical Argument for the Resurrection • Reliability of the Bible • Uniqueness of Jesus • Undesigned Coincidences
Defensive (i.e. responding to objections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probabilistic Problem of Evil • Divine Hiddenness • Incoherence of theism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probabilistic Problem of Evil • Science vs Faith (e.g. Evolution) • Historical Errors in the Bible • Scientific Errors in the Bible • Contradictions in the Bible • Moral Objections to Biblical Stories • Religious Pluralism vs Particularism

The Structure of Classical Apologetics



Roadmap

1

History of the Problem of Evil

The Problem of Evil has a very interesting historical development.

2

History II: The Story Continued

Does the history of the problem of evil give us some window into the deeper issues?

3

History III: The Chronicles

How did all of us come to be here tonight - a detailed examination of the last 48 hours of everyone present.



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Roadmap

1

The New Formulation

The Free Will Defense is widely regarded as having succeeded and so a new Problem of Evil is required.

2

Skeptical Theism

How do we evaluate the amount and types of evil in the world?

3

The Project of Theodicy

The project of providing reasons of evil consistent with Theism and Christianity.



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Alvin's New Objection

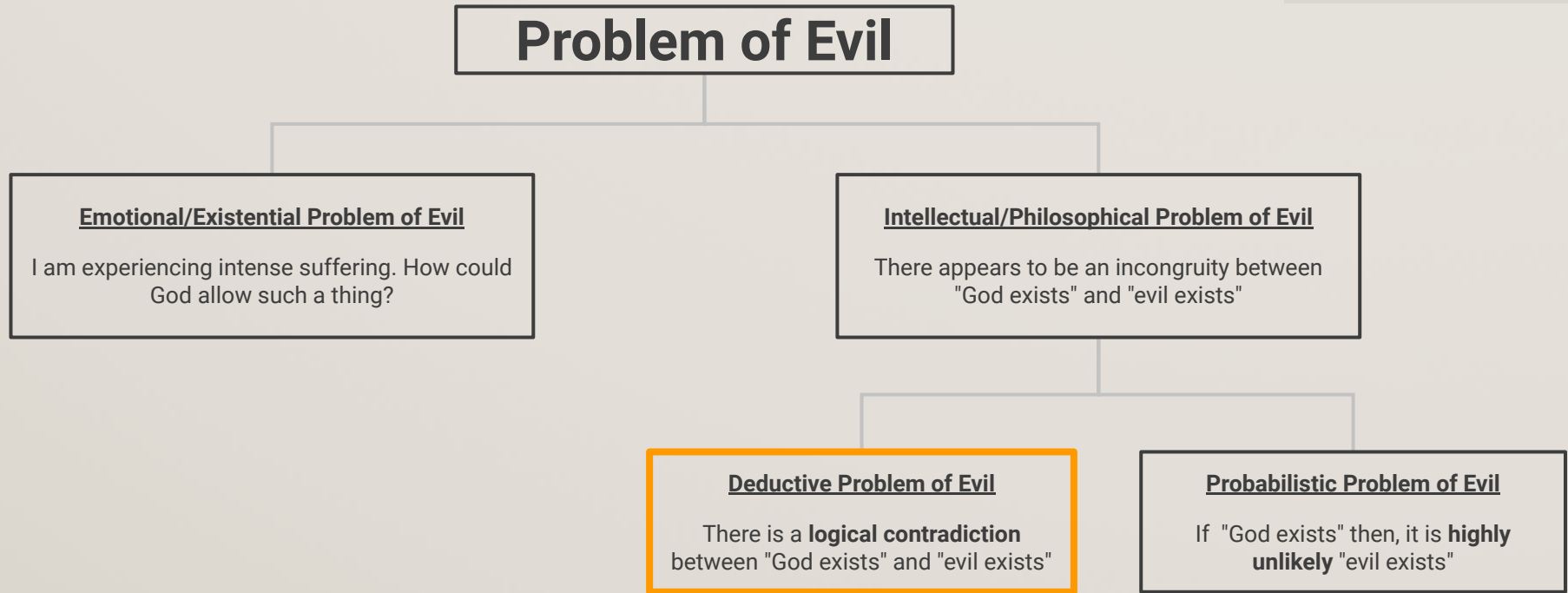
A good God could not possibly allow the amount and types of evil we see in the world. Consider a fawn being trapped by a forest fire and burnt alive, babies who die of horrible diseases, and The Holocaust.

I am sorry you are experiencing what evil in your life you are facing right now, but if you have faith in Christ then he will be your comfort and aid.

Alvin the Atheist

Carol the Christian

Important Distinctions



Alvin's New Objection

A good God would probably not allow the amount and types of evil we see in the world. Consider a fawn being trapped by a forest fire and burnt alive, babies who die of horrible diseases, and the Holocaust.

?????

Alvin the Atheist

Carol the Christian

David Hume (1711-1776 CE)

Hume “quoting” Epicurus (341-270 BCE), famously saying:

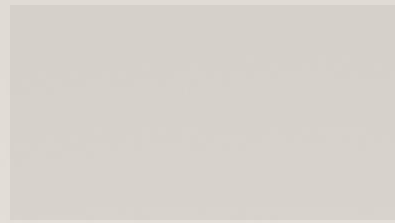
"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able?

Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

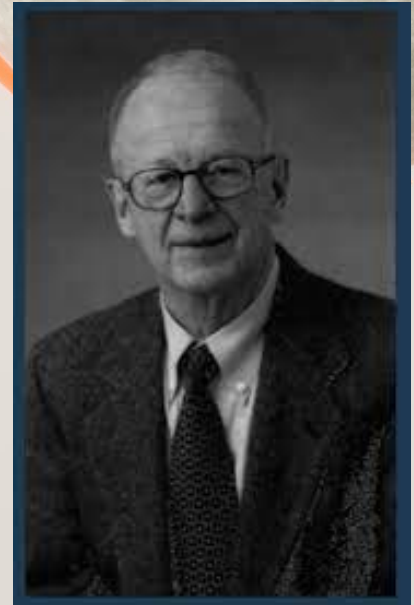
Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing?

Then from whence comes **[the magnitude and varieties of observed] evil?**"



William Rowe (1931-2015)

1. There exist instances of intense suffering that God could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good.
2. God would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering He could, unless He could not do so without thereby losing some greater good.
3. So, God does not exist.



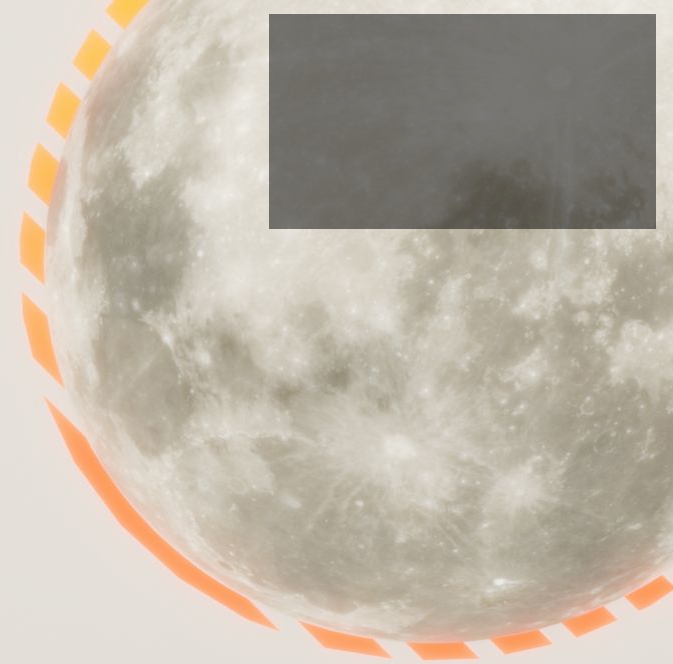
Paul Draper (born 1957)

H1: Theism

H2: Neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of benevolent or malevolent actions performed by non-human persons - The Indifference Hypothesis

E: The facts regarding the suffering and flourishing of sentient creatures.

B: The biological origin and function of pleasure and pain.



How Probable is the Evidence given Theory & Background?



A diagram consisting of four arrows pointing from the question above to the corresponding parts of the probability formula below. A black arrow points from 'How Probable' to 'P'. A blue arrow points from 'Evidence' to 'E'. A red arrow points from 'Theory' to 'T'. An orange arrow points from 'Background' to 'B'.

$$P(E | T \& B) = \%$$

Thought experiment: what is the probability that your grandmother has a child?

THE
Evidential Argument
FROM
Evil



Edited by Daniel Howard-Snyder

Resource #1

The Evidential Argument From Evil

(1996), Daniel Howard-Snyder

This is a collection of some of the most influential essays and papers written on the Evidential Problem of Evil and contains the writings of William Rowe, Paul Draper, Richard Swinburne, Eleonore Stump, and Alvin Plantinga to name a few.

The Book of Job

Job 13:23–24

"Make me know my transgression and my sin.
Why dost thou hide thy face, and count me as thy
enemy?"

Job is seeking an explanation for the suffering he is
undergoing and the answer is not related to his
suffering



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The Project of Theodicy

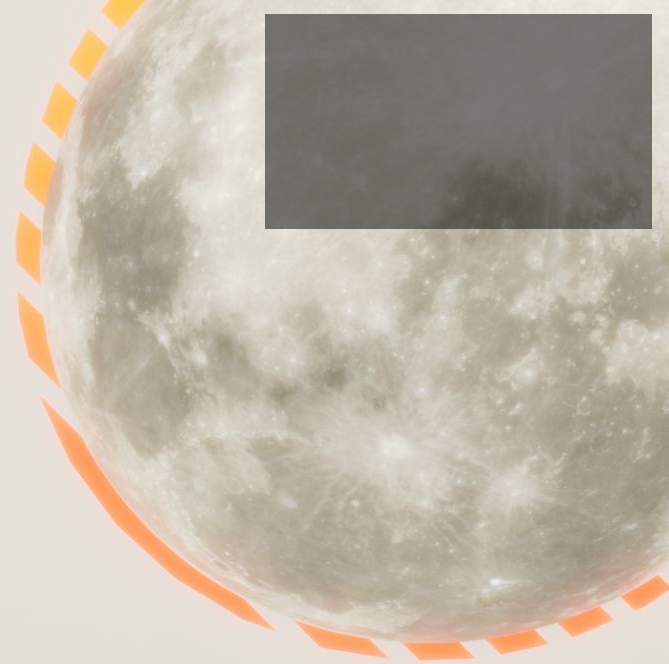
The project of providing reasons of evil consistent with Theism and Christianity.



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Evidential Value of Evil

The theist could grant simply that evil is good evidence against theism, but it is simply outweighed by all of the other evidence.



Epistemic Position

A pointless evil might be defined as one with no outweighing good which corresponds to it. Rowe asserts there are such evils

“To maintain this position here, the sort of theologian we are considering would have to hold that it is just apparent that there is no such outweighing good” - Plantinga (Epistemic Probability and Evil)



Skeptical Theism

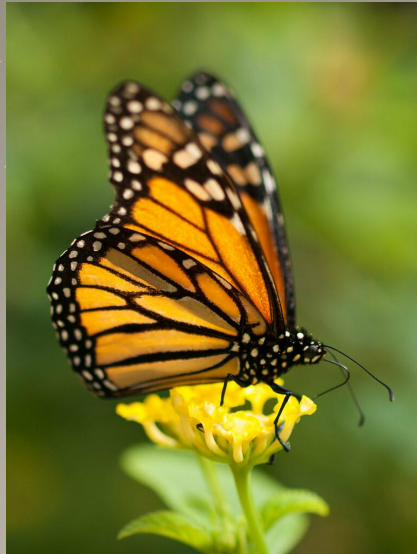
“The central thesis of skeptical theism is that it would not be surprising for an infinitely intelligent and knowledgeable being's reasons for permitting evils to be beyond human comprehension.”

If we can't properly evaluate God's reasons, then we can't determine whether given evils are unlikely or pointless.



Gratuitous or Pointless Evils

The idea of evaluating whether a given evil has no purpose or justifying/counterbalancing good is dubious given even something like the butterfly effect.



Biblically Based Skepticism

16 “Have you entered into the springs of the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the deep?

17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

18 Have you comprehended the expanse of the
earth?

Declare, if you know all this.

Job 38: 16-18



Roadmap

1

Development of the Problem

Charting the development and varied formulations of the Problem of Evil.

2

The Deductive Argument

Is there a contradiction in the coexistence of God and Evil or Suffering?

3

The Probabilistic Argument

Is the existence of Evil good evidence for atheism?

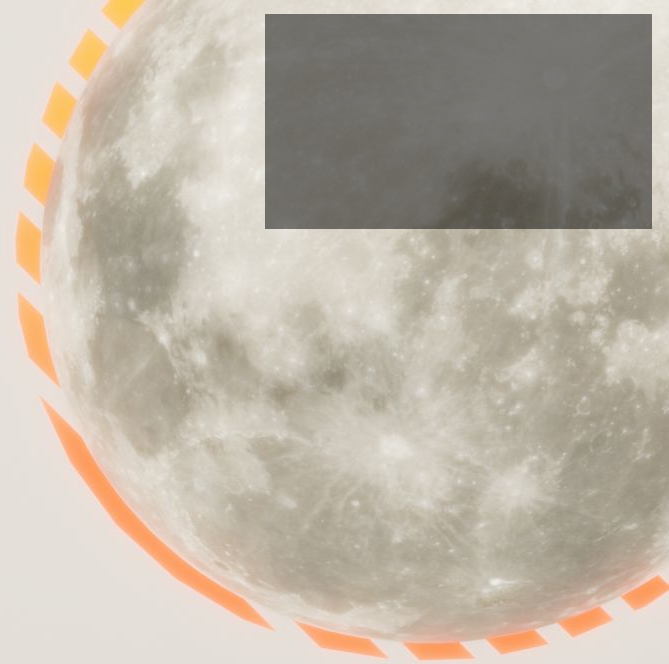


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Defense versus a Theodicy

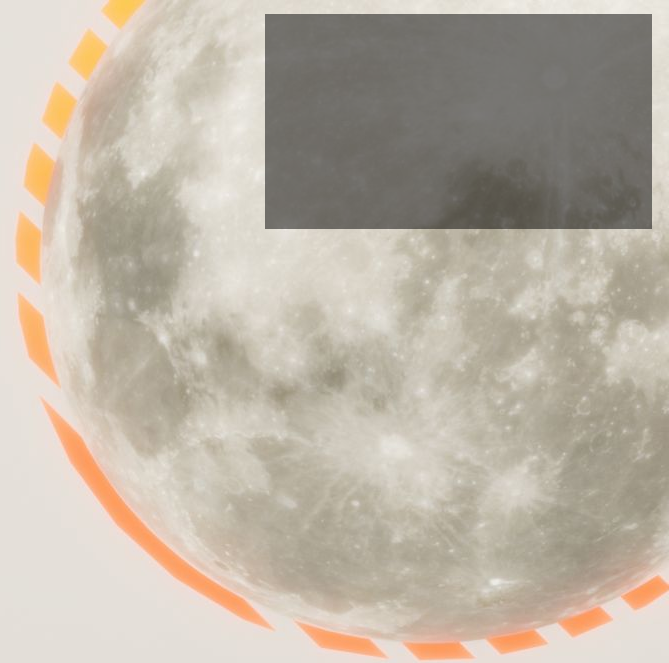
A Defense is simply concerned with the argument itself - the logical structure, the premises, and whether or not there is a contradiction.

A Theodicy is tasked with explaining how things actually are and is a more ambitious project overall with greater constraints.



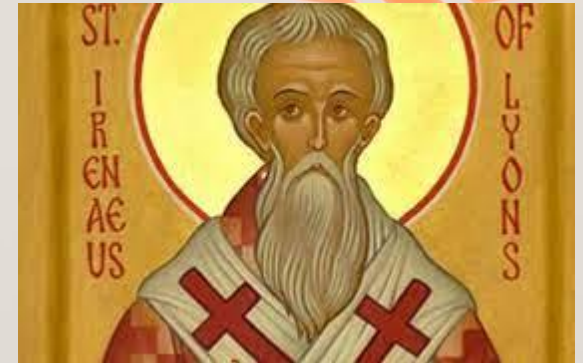
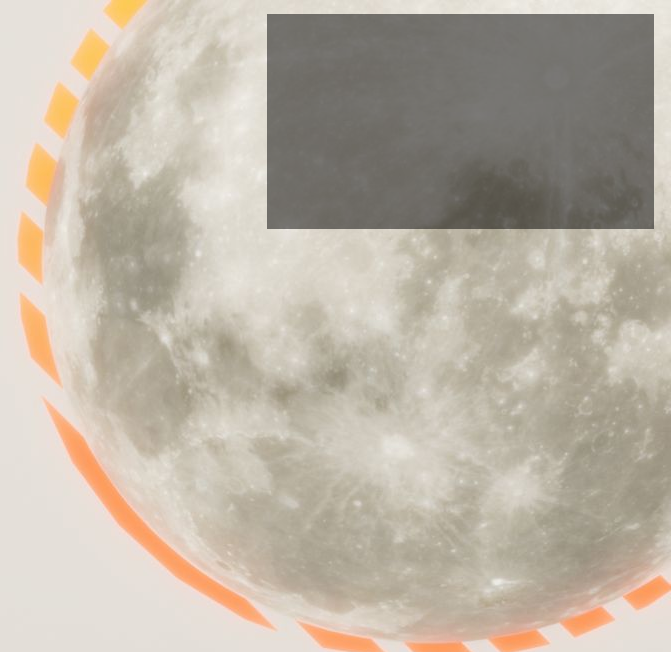
The Free Will Theodicy

- Free will is an incredible good to have in this world.
- Worlds with free creatures who always choose the good either do not exist or are undesirable for some other reason (too few occupants for instance).
- How far does this Theodicy go?
 - Punishment
 - Consequences
 - Discipline
 - Natural Evil??
 - Incredible Evils??



Soul-Making Theodicy

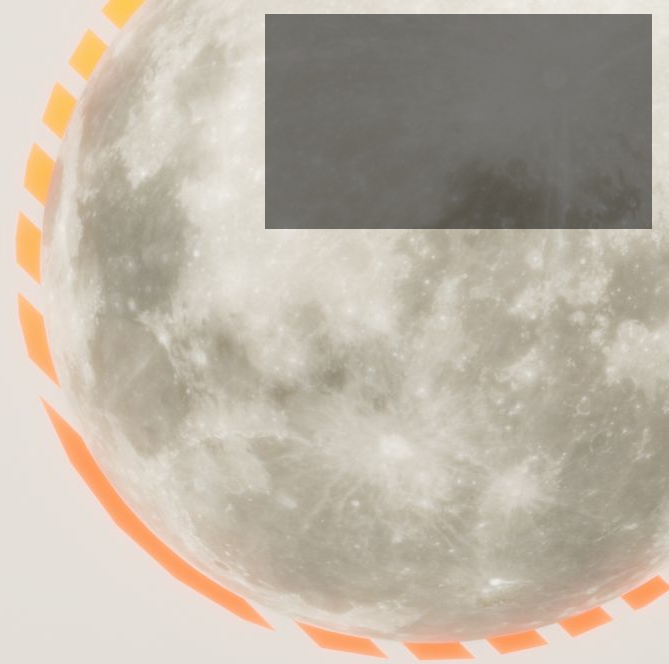
This Theodicy comes courtesy of John Hick who states follows the Irenaean approach of saying we live in an evolutionary, natural world which allows us to grow in spirit and mind in the best way to have fellowship with God. This includes a religiously ambiguous world according to Hick and even Bonhoeffer.



Connection Building Theodicy

“The basic idea behind this theodicy is that virtuous responses to evil allow for certain types of ongoing, intrinsically valuable connections of appreciation, contribution, and what I call “intimacy” between personal agents. Because of their ongoing character, arguably the value of these connections will eventually outweigh the disvalue of the evils that God must allow in order for them to exist.” (Robin Collins 2012)

- This theodicy is supplementary and recent.



The Good of Living in a Regular World

“This is the price God had to pay for a regular world.” The values which originate from living in a regular world include those entailed in the Soul Making Theodicy by John Hick and the values of Scientific Discoverability. This Theodicy is put forward by Peter Van Inwagen.



Felix Culpa

One main question:

How valuable are the events of the incarnation and atonement?



God's Relation to Evil is Inscrutable

We were not there when God made this world nor can we fully understand His reasons.



God enters into his Creatures Sufferings

The incarnation and death of Christ show that God is not indifferent to human suffering.

We grow from Suffering

We become the sort of beings who can be in relation with God and others.

God allows Freedom

We are accountable for our own freedom and we must love God and others freely.

Bringing it all together and Felix Culpa

Many of these Theodicies overlap with the Felix Culpa Theodicy and where they don't, they allow us to consider the varied reasons for God tolerating evil and suffering for some time. Many other Theodicies can be conceived of and for every amount of Turps they account for, they further the overall project.

Conclusions

1. *The Probabilistic Problem of Evil is impactful, but ultimately unpersuasive.*
2. *The Project of Theodicy is an ongoing one and with the variety of mutually supportive arguments, it can help Theists find some answers to this Problem.*
3. *We can appreciate our own suffering when we view it as a shared redemptive project with Christ.*