Skeptical Theism and Morriston's Humean Argument from Evil[1]
Timothy Perrine
Sophia, DIO: 10.1007%2Fs11841-018-0656-7

Abstract: There's a growing sense among philosophers of religion that (i) Humean arguments from evil are some of the most formidable arguments against theism, and (ii) skeptical theism fails to undermine those arguments because they fail to make the inferences skeptical theists criticize. In line with this trend, Wes Morriston has recently formulated a Humean argument from evil, and his chief defense of it is that skeptical theism is irrelevant to it. Here I argue that skeptical theism *is* relevant to Humean arguments. To do this, I reveal the common structure of skeptical theism's critiques. Seeing the common structure reveals why some versions of skeptical theism are irrelevant to Humean arguments from evil. It also points the way forward to forming a relevant version. By combining skeptical theism with a plausible principle concerning reasonable belief, I formulate a version of skeptical theism that undermines Morriston's argument that is also immune from his objections.

There is not a single argument from evil but many coming in different shapes and sizes. Consequently, philosophers of religion group these arguments into families.[2] One of the most important families are *Humean arguments from evil*. One of their distinctive feature is that their premises incorporate claims not just about evil but as Hume put it the "strange mixture of good and ill, which appears in life" (1779 [2007]: part XI §14). In this way, they differ from other arguments from evil that only appeal to certain features (purported or otherwise) of evil.[3]

In a recent paper, Wes Morriston defends a Humean argument from evil. Morriston's defense is not a full defense. He does not offer arguments for each premise. Rather, his more modest goal is to show that his argument for his central premise is immune to objections from skeptical theists (2014: 235). Though modest, Morriston's goal is not trivial. Many—both defenders and critics of theism—have found that skeptical theism undermines several arguments from evil, including important arguments from Mackie and Rowe. If Morriston's argument is immune to skeptical theistic considerations, then there is an important limitation to skeptical theism's role in rebuffing arguments from evil.

The chief aim of this paper is to formulate a version of skeptical theism that *is* relevant to Morriston's argument that is also immune from his objections. I will thus be contesting the growing sense that skeptical theistic considerations are irrelevant to Humean arguments from evil. A secondary aim of the paper is to gain a better understanding of the general structure of skeptical theism's critiques. As we'll see below, Morriston is correct that some versions of

---

[2] For a nice overview, see Draper (2009).

[3] Another distinctive feature is that they frequently compare theism to some other hypothesis, using a hypothesis that is more specific than just the denial of theism.

skeptical theism are irrelevant to his argument. By understanding *why* they are irrelevant, we'll be able to see how to formulate a version that is relevant.[4]

In section I, I explain Morriston's argument. Section II considers two versions of skeptical theism, reveals the common structure of skeptical theistic critiques, and discusses why those versions are not obviously relevant to Morriston's argument. In section III, I formulate an epistemological principle that, in conjunction with Timothy Perrine and Stephen Wykstra's version of skeptical theism, is relevant to Morriston's argument. In section IV, I consider Morriston's objections to skeptical theism—including what I call the "offsetting objection"—and show why my critique is immune from his objections.

I.   Morriston's Humean Argument

For his Humean argument, Morriston considers three inconsistent hypotheses. Each shares a common, supernaturalist core—there is "a single creator and ruler of the universe, and that it has the maximum possible degree of knowledge, intelligence, and power" who also "gives high priority to certain aesthetic values." The hypotheses differ on the moral character of this creator.[5] The first is theism—or 'T' for short—which holds that this creator is perfectly benevolent. The second is demonism—or 'D' for short—which holds that this creator is perfectly malicious. The third, the indifferent creator hypothesis—or 'I' for short—holds that the creator is completely indifferent to the welfare of creation. (Notice that each of these hypotheses implies *supernaturalism*—there is a supernatural mind that is responsible for the creation of the world—and are inconsistent with naturalism, understood here as the denial of supernaturalism.)

Humean arguments use as their data both good and bad features of the world. Morriston himself never specifies exactly what features he has in mind. He occasionally gives examples—"heart-melting sunsets, [and] babies' smiles" (2014: 225) but usually just writes things like "…the mixture of good and ill, of beauty and ugliness, of benefit and harm that characterizes life in our world" (2014: 221). For purposes here, I'll treat the data as a set of statements about the mixture of good and evil some particular average person has observed. I'll use 'M' to refer to this statement. Though I will not specify any of the contents of M, I assume that they could be specified and specified at an appropriate level of abstraction.[6] Understood this way, M is fairly specific, about a particular individual's observation of good and evil. Nonetheless, this does not make Morriston's argument uninteresting in virtue of being specific. For we can assume that our evaluation of Morriston's argument would remain the same if we were to exchange M for statements about good and evil that other people observe. This assumption is fair to Morriston. After all, given that Morriston spends so little time describing the particular data making up M, he must be assuming that the relative particularities of the statements making up M do not matter very much.

Finally, let 'B' stand for our background information, which includes (2014: 224):

> …the "uniformity and steadiness of general laws," as well as the fact that the
> universe contains sentient creatures who can experience pleasure and pain and are

---

[4] For other skirmishes on the relevance of skeptical theism to Humean arguments, see Dougherty (2014), Draper (1996, 2013, 2014), Howard-Snyder (2015), Perrine and Wykstra (2014), and van Inwagen (1996).

[5] I hereby set aside the issue of whether *any* supernatural being sufficiently like God must be morally good. See Swinburne (1993) for a version of that view.

[6] Suppose M contains statements like 'at 805AM, on Tuesday November 6th, a dog weighing 38lbs experienced great pain caused by a 12 year old boy with sandy blonde hair.' In virtue of being so specific, this statement and by extension M will be very improbable given either T or I. But clearly this will not generate an epistemic problem for either T or I because *any* statement as specific at that one will be incredibly improbable given either T or I. I assume that the statements in M are formulated as to be sufficiently general to avoid this problem.

capable of being benefited or harmed in many other ways, and that some of these creatures are rational animals, who can form social bonds and can make and carry out long-term plans. *Explicitly excluded* from background information is the mixture of goods and ills actually experienced by these creatures, the degree to which they flourish or flounder, and the distribution of pleasure and pain in their lives.

With these definitions in hand, we can formulate Morriston's argument as follows (2014: 226-7):

P1. The epistemic probability of M, given I and B, is significantly higher than that of M given T and B (more formally: $Pr(M|I \& B) >> Pr(M|T \& B)$[7]).
P2. The epistemic probability of I given B is not lower than that of T given B, (more formally: $Pr(I|B) \geq PR(T|B)$).
P3. If P1 and P2 are both true, then M makes it unreasonable to accept T.
C1. So, M makes it unreasonable to accept T.

(By 'epistemic probability,' Morriston has in mind "the degree of credence that should be given by a rational person" (2014: 227).) Morriston's key premise is the first, hereafter *Key Premise*. As Morriston spends little time defending or discussing the other two premises, I'll ignore them.

Morriston defends *Key Premise* with what I'll call the "No Difference" argument. The argument appears in a brief thought experiment (2014: 225-6). In it, a visitor of roughly human ability pays "a visit to our world" (2014: 225). The visitor is given all of the background information (i.e. B) but not told the creator's moral character. After viewing M, Morriston thinks the visitor will reason as follow. First, given the background information, if theism were true, the visitor would expect a much better mixture of good and evil than M reports. For a benevolent creator prefers good to evil for its creation. Thus, the creator being benevolent would make a difference to the world, specifically, it would ensure that things would go better for its creation than they do. Second, and by contrast, given the background information, if the indifferent creator hypothesis were true, that would make "no difference to what we should expect just on background information" (2014: 226). For an indifferent creator is, well, *indifferent* to the moral well-being of its creation. Consequently, given the background information, if the creator were indifferent, the visitor would not expect either a better or worse mixture of good and evil that we do observe. These claims, together, support *Key Premise*.

Morriston's though experiment is under described. He spends no time describing who exactly this visitor is, who exactly is informing it, or how it receives the information that makes up M. Consequently, there might be ways for his argument to go awry lurking in the details.[8] But as his chief concern is not to fully defend *Key Premise*, but to takedown a skeptical theist response, I'll ignore these worries.

II.   The (Ir)relevance of Skeptical Theism?

Just as the problem of evil is a family of arguments, so too skeptical theism is a family of critiques of arguments. Unifying this family is an emphasis on our inability to discern God's reason for permitting evils. In this way, skeptical theistic critiques may differ from *defenses*—

---

[7] I'll let '>>' mean "significantly higher than" and 'Pr' stand for "the epistemic probability of."
[8] See, (e.g.), the discussion of a similar thought experiment in Perrine and Wykstra (2014), Draper (2014), and Buchak (2014).

which purport to identify possible reasons God has for permitting evils—and *theodicies*—which purport to identify God's actual reasons for permitting evils.

Morriston claims that his Humean argument is immune from skeptical theistic critiques. Morriston has in mind two particular versions of skeptical theism. In this section, I sketch those versions. Though this material is well-known, I cover it for two reasons. First, it will allow us to identify the truth in Morriston's claim that they are irrelevant to his argument. Second, it will allow us to identify a common structure to skeptical theistic critiques, on which they have at least two parts: general principles of epistemology concerning reasonable belief, inference, or the like, and some claims in what we might best describe as our epistemic access to considerations relevant to divine deliberating.[9] Recognizing this common structure will be useful for developing a skeptical theistic critique of Morriston's argument.

A.   Wykstra's Skeptical Theism

Setting aside subtle issues of exegesis, William Rowe's initial argument from evil utilized a "noseeum inference" (1979 [1996]). Noseeum inferences are inference of the following form: so far as I can tell, I cannot see an X; therefore, there is no X. Where 'E' was a particular evil, Rowe's argument was this:

R1: Even after sustained reflection, I cannot see any God-justifying reason for E.
R2: So, (probably) there is no God-justifying reason for E.
R3: If God exists, every evil has a God-justifying reason.
R4: So, (probably) there is no God. (1979 [1996]: 2-3).

Wykstra objected to Rowe's noseeum inference from R1 to R2. Wykstra's criticism had two parts. The first part was his general epistemological principle "CORNEA." There is some dispute as to how best formulate CORNEA (see, e.g., McBrayer (2009) and Wykstra and Perrine (2012)). A crude version suffices here: a person is reasonable in inferring "I cannot see (or detect) an Φ" to "so, probably, there is no Φ" only if it is reasonable for that person to believe that, were there an Φ, it is likely that she'd see or otherwise detect it.

Wykstra's CORNEA principle is a general epistemological principle that can be applied to many inferences beyond those in philosophy of religion. CORNEA implies that Rowe's inference R1 to R2 is reasonable only if it is reasonable for him to believe that, *were* there a God-justifying reason for E, he'd likely detect it. The second part of Wykstra's skeptical theism was that was *not* reasonable. He argued that even if God were to exist, it is unlikely that we should detect the goods that God purposes for evils like E (1984: 87ff; 1996: 139ff.). But combining these two parts undermines Rowe's inference from R1 to R2.

The first part of Wykstra's skeptical theism—CORNEA—is irrelevant to Morriston's Humean argument because he does not use a noseeum inference. Insofar as the second part is relevant, it must be utilized in some other way than by combining it with CORNEA.

B.   Alston/Bergmann Skeptical Theism

A second skeptical theistic position emerged as Rowe shifted his argument in light of Wykstra's criticism. Rowe's new argument avoided a noseeum inference instead using a straightforward *inductive* inference. Again, setting exegetical subtleties aside, Rowe's (1996) revised argument was this:

R1*: No good we know of justifies God in permitting E.
R2* So, (probably) there is no good that justifies God in permitting E.

---

[9] It is not clear that an omniscient being like God deliberates, in which case talk of "divine deliberation" should be understood more metaphorically or analogically.

R3*: If God existed, every evil has a God-justifying reason.
R4*: So, (probably) there is no God.

Rowe's thought was that just as the inference from "no Styrofoam we know of conducts heat well" to "so, probably, no Styrofoam conducts heat well" is inductively strong, so too is his inference from R1* to R2*.

Skeptical theists like William Alston (1991 [1996], 1996) and Michael Bergmann (2001) objected to that inference. They pointed out that it is reasonable to generalize a property from a sample of a group to the entire group only if it is reasonable to believe that the sample is representation of that property for that group. This is a plausible, general epistemological principle. That principle implies, regarding Rowe's argument, that Rowe's inference from R1* to R2* is reasonable only if it is reasonable for him to believe that the sample of goods, evils, and their relations that we are familiar with are representative of *all* goods, evils, and their relations concerning the property of being a God-justifying reason. Alston and Bergmann then argued that it was *not* reasonable to believe that.

Thus, Alston/Bergmann's version of skeptical theism has two parts, just as Wykstra's version of skeptical theism does. And just like Wykstra's, the first part is a general epistemological principle that can be applied to many inferences outside philosophy of religion. The second part is a claim belonging to our epistemic access to considerations relevant to divine deliberating. It is by combing them that their version of skeptical theism undermines Rowe's inference from R1* to R2*.

The first part of Alston/Bergmann's version of skeptical theism—the epistemological principle— is irrelevant to Morriston's Humean argument because it does not use an inference from a sample of a group to an entire group. Insofar as the second part is relevant, it must be utilized in some other way than by combining it with this epistemological principle.

At this point, we can identify a general structure to skeptical theistic critiques. First, each critique contains a general epistemological principle that usually specifies a necessary condition for some inference or claim to be reasonable to believe. Second, each critique contains some claims about our epistemic access to considerations relevant to divine deliberating. By combining the two, a skeptical theistic critique aims to undermine an argument from evil.

Understanding this structure is important for a couple of reasons. First, it helps us sort criticisms of skeptical theism. Using Wykstra's version of skeptical theism as an example, we can distinguish between those who object to his epistemological principle CORNEA (cf. McBrayer (2009), Graham and Maitzen (2007)), those who object to his claims about our access to divine deliberating (cf. Rowe (2006), Dougherty (2008), Rutledge (forthcoming)), and those who object to combining the two.[10]

Second, understanding this structure is relevant for understanding exactly *why* the versions of skeptical theism of Wykstra and Alston/Bergmann aren't relevant to Morriston's Humean argument. They are not relevant because their epistemological principles place constraints on the reasonableness of certain inferences, and Morriston's argument for *Key Premise* does not use those kinds of inferences.

III.   A Skeptical Theistic Critique of Morriston's Humean Argument

The points in the previous section indicate how to provide a skeptical theistic critique of Morriston's argument. First, one must craft a general epistemic principle that is relevant to his

---

[10] As I've argued elsewhere, Russell's objection (1996, 2017) that some skeptical theists are committed to skepticism regarding the age of the earth is this kind of objection.

argument. Second, one must articulate some claims about our access to divine deliberation. Finally, one must argue that together they undermine the Humean argument. This is what I do here.

A. An Epistemological Principle

Suppose Patricia is touring a local widget factory, when she is separated from the group and finds herself in a large room. She knows from the tour that the factory produces different kinds of widgets—red and white—in different rooms but little else about the factory. Far below, she sees what seems to be red widgets coming out of the wall on a conveyer belt. She believes it is much more likely that she would have the visual experience she does, given that she is in a room producing red widgets than a room producing white widgets. Consequently, she comes to believe that she is in a red widget producing room. As she looks around, she sees an old speaker with an intercom button. She pushes the button and says "Hello? I'm lost and in a room that produces red widgets." A second later, a static ridden response comes back:

> I'm sorry you're lost; we'll [static] looking for you. You say you are in a room that produces red widgets? Take note: while this facility produces only red and white widgets, it produces them in a [static] ratio of white-to-red. Further, among the rooms that produce white widgets, [static] percent of them are immediately irradiated with a bright red light making them indistinguishable from red widgets at anything but a very close distance.

Upon hearing this response, she considers the possibility that most of the rooms that produce white widgets are ones where the widgets are irradiated with red light. She cannot reasonably rule out this possibility. (She has no prior reason for thinking it very unlikely nor any strong, positive evidence that it is false. After all, she knows little about the production of widgets.) Nevertheless, she persists in believing that it is much more likely that she would have the visual experience she does, given that she is in a red widget producing room than a white widget producing room.

In this scenario, Patricia believes:

(1) It is much more likely that I have this visual experience, given I'm in a red widget producing room than a white widget producing room.

Intuitively, this belief was initially reasonable. However, after hearing the static ridden response, and considering certain possibilities, that belief is no longer reasonable. Why does her belief become unreasonable?

First, she considers a certain possibility, namely, that most of the white widget rooms are ones with irradiated red light. She cannot reasonably rule out this possibility. She simply has no idea what the majority of white widget rooms are like. Because she cannot reasonably rule this possibility out, she cannot reasonably believe:

(2) The probability that I am in a white widget room with irradiated red light, given that I am in a white widget room, is quite high.

Second, given what else Patricia reasonably believes, (2) cannot be true if (1) is. For one thing that Patricia reasonably believes, given the intercom testimony, is that:

(3) The probability of her having the visual experience she does, given she is in a red widget room, is (more or less) the same as the probability of having that experience, given she is in a white widget room with irradiated red light.

But if (2) and (3) are true, then (1) cannot be true. For if (3) is true, then her visual experience would not discriminate between being in a red widget room and a white widget room with irradiated red light. And if (2) is also true, then its very likely that she'd have the visual experience of being in a white widget room with irradiated red light were she in a white widget room. Thus, if both (2) and (3) are true, then her visual experience would *not* be much more likely given that she is in a red widget room than a white widget room, which is just to say that (1) is false. Thus, for it to be reasonable for Patricia to continue believing (1) it needs to be reasonable for her to believe that either (2) or (3) is false. But it's not. For (3) is reasonable for her to believe, and she simply has no idea whether (2) is true or false.

There is a general, plausible principle at work here, roughly:

> If a person reasonably believe that P is true only if Q is true (e.g. that P implies Q), and it is unreasonable for that person to believe that Q is true, then it is unreasonable for that person to believe P.

In this case, Patricia reasonably believes that (1) is true only if either (~2) or (~3) is true, and it is unreasonable for her to believe that either (~2) or (~3) is true. Applying this principle to this case we get the result that, therefore, it is unreasonable for her to believe (1).

Lacking a better name, I'll call this principle *Principle*. *Principle* is plausible. It gains additional plausibility from its handling of our widget case. Three clarificatory remarks. First, *Principle* is related to "closure" principles in epistemology. Closure principles are about whether some epistemic property is "closed" under entailment. Usually closure principles concern whether knowledge is closed under entailment (cf. Dretske (2005), Hawthorne (2005)). But I'm not here concerned with knowledge but reasonable belief. Further, *Principle* is different from a closure principle for reasonable belief. A closure principle for reasonable belief would specify sufficient conditions for "reasonability" to be closed under entailment. But *Principle* doesn't do that; it merely specifies a sufficient condition for it to be unreasonable to believe something.[11]

Second, *Principle* may need some chisholming to avoid all possible counterexamples. Nevertheless, I think the basic idea is fundamentally correct and such chisholming, while perhaps interesting and important, won't matter for the application here.

Third, the epistemological principles of Wykstra and Alston/Bergmann placed constraints on when certain kinds of inferences are reasonable. *Principle* does not place any constraints on inferences. Rather, *Principle* states a sufficient condition for something to be unreasonable to believe. Consequently, one cannot blunt the application of *Principle* to Patricia's case by pointing out that she never used certain inferences, e.g., an inductive generalization. It does not matter what inferences one used (if any) to generate the original reasonable belief. *Principle* simply states sufficient conditions under which one's belief is unreasonable, no matter what inferences one initially used. This point will be important below.

B. Skeptical Theism

Turning to the other part of the skeptical theistic challenge, consider the following position articulated by Timothy Perrine and Stephen Wykstra:

(4) We should be very confident in our ability to discern some of the Goods that God values…Similarly, we should be very confident that God disvalues certain evils.

---

[11] As one reader of the paper put it, a closure principle would capture the plausibility of *modus ponens*; *Principle* captures the plausibility of *modus tollens*.

(5) We should have middling to low confidence in our ability to discern the connections between the Goods we discern God as valuing, and his acts of allowing specific instances of suffering or evil.

(6) We should be maximally uncertain that we can discern all the Goods that God values, and the relative weights of those we can discern and those we can't.

(7) We should be maximally uncertain that we can discern all the connections holding between all the Goods God value and all God's allowing of actual suffering. (2014: 159-60)

As skeptical theistic positions in general are well-known, I make only three points about this particular version. First, this version of skeptical theism makes claims about both our inability to discerns goods that exist and to discern connections between goods and evils. Second, this version explicitly claims that we should be confident in our ability to discern some goods that God values. Thus, it is not a *fully* skeptical position, urging total skepticism about all things axiological and theistic. Third, one difference between this version of skeptical theism and Alston/Bergmann's is that this version does not directly appeal to issues of being "representative." Nonetheless, these two versions go hand in hand. If we do not know that the goods we are familiar with are representative of all the goods relevant to divine deliberating, then we should be quite uncertain that we can discern all the goods God values. Likewise, if we are quite uncertain that we can discern all the goods God values then we are presumably not in a position to claim that the goods we are familiar with are representative of all the goods relevant to divine deliberating.[12] (Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, I'll use 'ST' to refer to this particular version of skeptical theism, as distinct from other versions as well as the family of critiques.)

C. Against Key Premise

Recall Morriston's *Key Premise*:

> *Key Premise*: The epistemic probability of M, given I and B, is significantly higher than that of M given T and B (i.e.: $Pr(M|I \& B) >> Pr(M|T \& B)$).

My argument against *Key Premise* will have two parts. First, I'll argue that it is reasonable to believe that *Key Premise* is true only if the following claim concerning ST is true:

> *Key Corollary*: The epistemic probability of the mixture of good and evil, given both the indifferent creator hypothesis and the background information, is much greater than the conditional probability of that mixture given theism and ST. (That is: $Pr(M|I\&B) >> Pr(M|ST\&T\&B)$.)

Second, I'll argue that it is not reasonable to believe that claim is true. By our early *Principle* it follows that it is not reasonable to believe *Key Premise*.

First, *Key Premise* is true only if *Key Corollary* is true. The argument for this claim has two steps. First, it is plausible that the conditional probability of ST, given theism, is very high. Intuitively, ST is very probable given theism. But there are arguments for thinking this as well. Here I will sketch one argument from expertise.

Suppose someone is an expert or authority on some subject matter. What attitudes would it be reasonable for you to have concerning your epistemic access to the considerations that expert deems important when deliberating on that subject matter? It depends upon your own expertise with that subject matter. If you are also an expert or authority on that subject matter, it would be

---

[12] Despite their close connection, I prefer to work with Perrine/Wykstra's version instead of Alston/Bergmann's. For the latter is more likely to give the misleading impression that skeptical theism is irrelevant to Morriston's argument.

reasonable for you to be confident that you could identify many of the considerations another expert deems relevant as well as the relative weights or degrees of importance the expert would give those things. By contrast, if you know nothing about the subject matter, it would be reasonable for you to be quite uncertain that you could identify even some of the basic considerations the expert deems important. But suppose that you have some familiarity with the subject matter, but not as much as the relevant expert. Here a collection of attitudes between those two outliers is reasonable. On the one hand, because you have some familiarity with the subject matter, it would be reasonable for you to be confident that you can identify some considerations the expert deems important. On the other hand, recognizing the disparity between the expert and yourself, it would be reasonable for you to be quite unsure that you can identify all the considerations the expert would deem important. Indeed, it would be reasonable for you to be quite unsure that you could identify all of the connections between possible considerations that the expert deems relevant even if it is reasonable for you to confident that you could identify some such connections.

If God exists, then God would be an expert on all goods, evils, and their connections, including the connections that are relevant for the permission of evil.[13] What attitudes would it be reasonable for us to have concerning our epistemic access to the considerations God would deem relevant towards the permission of evils? First, it would be overly arrogant to think that our expertise is the same as God's. Human beings have collectively made moral progress on our identification of good and evil. But there is no reason to suppose our understanding is complete so that no future progress in our understanding of good, evil, and their connections is possible. Thus, we should recognize that God is likely familiar with some goods, evils, and their connections that we are not. Second, it would be overly skeptical to think that our expertise on such matters is non-existent. Indeed, if we have made moral progress and have correctly identified certain things as good or evil, then we can reasonably be quite confident that God values those things and sees them as relevant to God's permission of evil.

Thus, we are in a position where we have some familiarity with goods, evils, and their connections but not as much familiarity as God's. Furthermore, the exact extent of the discrepancy between our familiarity and God's is unclear. We cannot reasonably claim to identify the *particular* places where God's expertise outpaces our own. For instance, we could not reasonably claim some state of affairs, S, is one God recognizes as a good but we cannot. For if we are reasonable in believing that God recognizes S as good, then we could thereby reasonably identify S as good. (Similar points apply to states of affairs being evil, or purported connections between goods and evils.)

Keeping this in mind, what attitudes are reasonable for us to adopt towards our epistemic access to the kinds of considerations God would deem relevant to the permission of evil? Given that we have some familiarity with goods, evils, and their connections, it is reasonable for us to be quite confident that we can identify some goods that God values and some evils that God disvalues. But given that God is more of an expert on such things than us, it would be reasonable for us to be quite unsure that we can identify all of the possible goods and evils God values. As a corollary, it would be reasonable for us to be quite unsure that we can identify all the possible connections between goods and evils that are relevant to the permission of evil. But given our familiarity with some goods, evils, and their connections, it remains reasonable for us to be

---

[13] If God did not exist, things might be different. Perhaps there would be no good or evil or morality would just be a language game invented by us. But since neither of these views is remotely plausible, if theism is true, we can set them aside in this context.

confident that we can detect some, even if not most, of the connections God deems relevant to God's permission of evil. But these claims amount, more or less, to what I've abbreviated as 'ST.' Thus, we have reason for believing that ST is quite probable given theism.

Second, if ST is very probable given theism, then the degree to which theism *itself* makes probable the mixture of good and evil, M, will be heavily determined by the degree to which ST and theism *together* make probable M.[14] Now so long as theism does not *entail* ST there will be a way of articulating theism on which ST is false. But if ST is very probable given theism, then the overall effect of that way of articulating theism will have little effect on the overall conditional probability of the mixture of good and evil given theism.

If, as I claim, ST is very probable given theism and if, as Morriston's *Key Premise* claims, the mixture is much more likely given the indifferent creator hypothesis than theism, then that mixture is much more probably given the indifferent creator hypothesis than given theism and ST. But that is what *Key Corollary* says. Consequently, I conclude if *Key Premise* is true so is *Key Corollary*.

Now I'll argue that it is not reasonable to believe that *Key Corollary* is true. The main argument is this: it is reasonable to believe *Key Corollary* only if we have a sufficient grasp of its two conditional probabilities—Pr(M|I&B) and Pr(M|ST&T&B)— to assign precise enough values to meaningfully compare them as needed for Morriston's argument. But we lack a sufficient grasp to assign precise enough values. Thus, it is not reasonable to believe that *Key Corollary* is true. The controversial claim is that we lack a sufficient grasp of Pr(M|I&B) and Pr(M|T&ST&B). I'll offer two distinct arguments, one for each conditional probability. Those arguments are independent of each other. They support my thesis both individually and collectively.

However, it is important to avoid some possible misunderstandings. I am not just claiming that we are unable to assign an incredibly *precise* value—like, .2087—to either conditional probability. That is probably true, but I doubt Morriston's argument requires incredibly precise assignments. Nor am I claiming that we are *completely* in the dark about either. I am not claiming that we must permit that either conditional probability could have a value anywhere between 0 and 1. It is perfectly consistent with what I'll be claiming that we have a sufficient grasp of both Pr(M|I&B) and Pr(M|ST&T&B) to reasonably believe that (for instance) neither has a probability higher than .75. Rather, my claim is that we do not have a sufficient grasp of these conditional probabilities to assign a *precise enough* value for both. The "enough" here is set by Morriston's argument, specifically, his premise *Key Premise*. Morriston's *Key Premise* requires not just that we can meaningfully compare the two conditional probabilities or that Pr(M|I&B) is higher than Pr(M|ST&T&B) but that Pr(M|I&B) is *much* higher than Pr(M|ST&T&B). My contention is that we lack a sufficient grasp of these conditional probabilities to assign a value that is precise enough to underwrite claims like that.

Let's start with Pr(M|ST&T&B). Here is an argument for doubting that we have an adequate grasp of this probability. First, consider the following possibility:

> *Possibility ('P' for short)*: There exist justifying goods for all of the evils that
> make up M but those justifying goods are such that either (i) we are not currently

---

[14] This point is underwritten by the total probability theorem. According to it, the following equivalence holds:
$$Pr(M|T\&B) = Pr(M|ST\&T\&B)*Pr(ST|T\&B) + Pr(M|{\sim}ST\&T\&B)*Pr({\sim}ST|T\&B).$$
If Pr(ST|T&B) is very high, then the value of Pr(M|T&B) will be primarily determined by Pr(M|ST&T&B) not the second conjunction. This point is appreciated by both proponents and critics of skeptical theism; see, for instance, Draper (1989 [1996]: 19-22; 2014: 169-70) and Perrine and Wykstra (2014: 151-2, 160-2).

      aware of them, or (ii) we are aware of them but not their status as justifying the
      particular evils that they do.

P is formulated in terms of the evils reported in M. This makes P, like M, fairly specific. But we could always formulate P in terms of evils report by other statements than M.

     Second, it is not reasonable to believe that:

     (8) $Pr(M|I\&B) \gg Pr(M|P\&ST\&T\&B)$.

In fact, if anything, it is probably more reasonable to believe:

     (9) $Pr(M|I\&B) < Pr(M|P\&ST\&T\&B)$.[15]

To see this, notice that many of the statements in M make claims about various evils existing. However, P maintains that those evils have justifying goods. On most accounts, if *g* is justifying good for an evil *e*, then *g* exists only if *e* does, i.e., *g*'s existence implies *e*'s existence. But if X implies Y, then the probability of Y, given X, is 1. Thus, there is subset of M about existing evils has a probability of 1 given P. Thus, that subset has a probability of 1 given P&ST&T&B. By contrast, I&B does not imply that the subset of M about existing evils has a probability of 1. This gives us a reason for thinking that (8) is false and, if anything, (9) is true.

     To be sure, from the mere fact that the subset of M about existing evil has a probability of 1, given P&ST&T&B, but not given I&B, does not *prove* that (8) is false and that (9) is true. However, insofar as we have reason for thinking that (8) is true and (9) is false it is because we have reason for thinking that the evils mentioned in M are surprising given T but not I. However, this reason is defeated in this context, because we are not comparing just M to T but M to P&ST&T and P&T makes the evil reported in M completely unsurprising.

     Third, if *Key Corollary* is true and (8) is false, then the following must also be false:

     (10) $Pr(P|ST\&T\&B)$ is high.

After all, suppose (10) were true. Then the degree to which T&ST&B make likely M would be heavily determined by the degree to which P&ST&B makes M likely. But if (8) is false, it is not the case that M is much more likely given I&B than given ST&T&B. Thus, M would not be much more likely given I&B than given ST&T&B *contra* what *Key Corollary* says. Thus, if *Key Corollary* is true and (8) is false, then (10) would be false.[16]

     However, skeptical theism keeps it from being reasonable for us to believe that (10) is false. Given ST, we cannot reasonably rule out the possibility mentioned in P or even see it as one that is just as likely as not. To do that would require access to divine deliberation that is implausible given ST. Since to evaluate *Key Corollary* we would have to have enough grasp of the conditional probabilities in (10), and we do not, we are not in a position to reasonably believe *Key Corollary*. Or, to put the point differently, since it is reasonable to believe *Key Corollary* is true only if (10) is false, and it is not reasonable to believe that (10) is false, it follows from our earlier *Principle* that it is not reasonable to believe *Key Corollary*.

     It does not follow from what I've just argued that $Pr(M|ST\&T\&B)$ is very high. Though ST does not rule out P, it does not necessarily rule it in either. After all, ST does not state how God *would* orchestrate the world. Nor does it follow, as suggested by Rowe (2001), that ST entails that *any* distribution of good and evil would not disconfirm theism. ST does state that it is reasonable to have some confidence is expecting to see some of the reasons God has for

---

[15] I'm assuming, at least for now, that we have an adequate grasp of $Pr(M|I\&B)$. I'll question this assumption soon, but I do not intend my argument against our grasp of $Pr(M|ST\&T\&B)$ to turn on my argument against our grasp of $Pr(M|I\&B)$.

[16] Again, this point is underwritten by, and could be made more precise by, the total probability theorem.

permitting some evils. Thus, a distribution of good and evil on which *every* evil seems gratuitous would disconfirm theism.

To many it may be unsurprising that skeptical theism interferes with our ability to provide a precise enough value to Pr(M|ST&T&B). Perhaps more surprisingly, something similar holds for Pr(M|I&B)—or so I'll now argue. First, let's concede to Morriston that the indifferent creator hypothesis makes no difference to what we should expect just given the background information. A corollary of this concession is that the probability of the mixture given the background information is more or less equivalent with the probability of the mixture given the background information and the indifference hypothesis. (That is, Pr(M|I&B) ≈ Pr(M|B)). However, it does not necessarily follow that the indifferent creator hypothesis has a greater fit with the mixture of good and evil than theism (i.e. Pr(M|I&B) >> Pr(M|T&B)). It all depends on what is expectable given the background information alone.

However, we are more or less in the dark as to how probable the mixture is given the background information. To see this, consider the following. The background information is consistent with a wide range of different distributions of good and evil. It is consistent with distributions in which things go exceedingly well for creation, where nothing suffers, as well as distributions in which things go exceedingly poorly for creation, where everything suffers, as well as everything in between. Not only is the background information consistent with a wide range of distributions, it gives no reason for thinking any particular one of them is more likely than another. After all, explicitly excluded from the background information is the moral character of the creator.[17] Also excluded is any information about the actual distribution of pleasure and pain, flourishing and floundering, and the like. Further excluded is any information that would entail information about pleasure and pain (e.g. various facts about the evolutionary origins of species). Consequently, it is hard to see what information contained in the background information would give a reason for identifying some conceivable distribution of good and evil as more probable than another.

Given such a lack of relevant information, the only way we could arrive at a reasonable value is by what we might call "broadly statistically" means.[18] That is, by focusing on possible worlds where the background information comes out, we might look at the various different *proportions*. We might look at the proportion of worlds in which things go well for creation, things go poorly, and everything in between, keeping fixed our background information. We might then use that information to determine what proportions of worlds have distributions of good and evil like ours. We could then let the condition probability of the mixture, given the background information alone, be equal to *that* proportion.

This method seems to be the only way that we could arrive at a reasonable judgment for Pr(M|B). But obviously there's no way that we could use it. For we simply have no reasonable access to what the relevant proportions are in logical space. While our modal powers are well-suited for ordinary scenarios—such as what would happen if I were to drop this mug or such-

---

[17] Morriston does include in B that the creator has certain aesthetic preferences, but that is consistent with the points I'm making here.

[18] Some might reach for the Principle of Indifference here. But that is ill-advised for two reasons. First, there are well-known problems with using the Principle of Indifference in general (see Howson and Urbach (2006: 266ff.)); so we'd need a special reason for applying it here. Second, presumably, there are at least a countable infinite of different possible distributions of good and evil. (For any distribution of good and evil, it could also contain one *more* good or evil.) But there is no way to assign, via the Principle of Indifference, a common positive real number to each of those possibilities. Thus, at best, using the Principle of Indifference, Pr(M|B) would have a value of 0—bad news for Morriston's argument!

and-such candidate could have won that election—there is no reason for expecting our modal powers to extend to an issue such as this. Consequently, I conclude, we are simply in the dark as to what the conditional probability of the mixture is, given the background information alone.

The point I'm pressing is simiar to one van Inwagen has made (1991 [1996]; 1996; 1998; 2006). Though the particular claims under discussion differ for him and me, the basic point is the same: our grasp of the space and substance of possibility is not particularly good when it comes to issues removed from ordinary life. This is a kind of modal skepticism. But this modal skepticism is separate from issues involving theism; atheists and theist alike can agree with me. Additionally, this modal skepticism is consistent with robust modal knowledge concerning ordinary life. There is nothing contradictory in saying that we are out of our depth when it comes to reasonably judging porportions of possible worlds concerning conceivable distributions of good and evil while simultaneously claiming that we know various modal truths important to ordinary life.[19]

Thus, if what I've argued up to now is correct, our grasp of Pr(M|T&ST&B) as well as our grasp of Pr(M|I&B) are not particularly good. Thus, it should be unsurprising that our grasp of them is not sufficiently precise to effectively compare them. But that in turn means it is not reasonable for us to believe that *Key Corrolary* is true. But, I argued, its reasonable to think Morriston's *Key Premise* is true only if *Key Corrolary* is also true. By our earlier *Principle*, it follows that it is not reasonable to believe *Key Premise*.

This skeptical theistic challenge shares the same general structure as earlier skeptical theistic challenges in that it utilizes a general epistemological principle and some claims concerning our epistemic access to considerations relevant to divine deliberating, namely, ST. It is by combining them that Morrison's argument is undermined. In the next section, I'll consider Morriston's objections to skeptical theism. I take Morriston's objections to be most relevant to claims like ST, not *Principle*, and so will not treat objections to *Principle*. Lastly, I should note that Morriston's response only touches my criticisms that turn on ST. They are irrelevant to my argument that our grasp of P(M|I&B) is not particularly good. Thus, at best, Morriston's objections would only undermine half of my argument.

IV.   Morriston's Response to Skeptical Theism

Morriston argues that a skeptical theistic critique will not undermine his argument for *Key Premise*. His argument utilizes an analogy with "skeptical demonism." Just as one can construct a Humean argument against theism, one could construct a parallel argument against demonism. However, I do not see what advantage bringing in demonism and skeptical demonism has. Consequently, I'll simply address Morriston's response as if it were given to a skeptical theistic critique directly and not by analogy.

The first objection Morriston considers is that the skeptical theist will claim that in order to show Pr(M|T&B) is low one must first show that the probability that there is a God-justifying reason for M is low. But it is not easy to see how to do that without using the inferences Wykstra and Alston/Bergmann objected to. In response, Morriston writes,

> …the Humean argument compares a pair of conditional *epistemic* probabilities. To what degree, it asks, should [theism] lead a rational person to expect a mixture of good and ill like the one we find in our world? And how does that compare with the degree to which one should expect such a mixture given the indifference hypothesis? To answer these questions, we do *not* need to assess the "objective probability" of a [God] satisfying reason within some large and uncharted space

---

[19] For further discussion, see Geirsson (2005) Hawke (2011)

> of logically possible goods and evils and entailments. We can find significant
> support for [*Key Premise*] without attempting anything as ambitious as that.
> (2014: 232)

In short, Morriston claims that we can reasonably believe Pr(M|T&B) is low *without* having first used inferences skeptical theists like to object to. Consequently, a skeptical theistic critique could not get a foothold.

I am willing to concede that one could, initially, arrive at a reasonable belief without using the kinds of inferences that Wykstra and Alston/ Bergmann objected to. However, this concession does not affect my criticism. For, as pointed out above, *Principle* states sufficient conditions for a belief to be unreasonable. It does not matter how one initially arrived at one's belief. Thus pointing out that one did not use certain inferences cannot blunt the application of *Principle* and thus my criticism.

Morriston offers another more important response to the skeptical theist. He writes:

> The case I have made for [*Key Premise*] does not depend on a prior judgment
> about the probability of a [God] satisfying reason. The perfect [benevolence] of
> [God's] preference structure already gives us *a* reason for expecting a much
> [better] mixture of good and ill on [theism] than the one we've observed. There is
> room for disagreement about just *how* strong this reason is, but it doesn't cease to
> be *a* strong reason just because the skeptical [theist] reminded us that there *might*
> be an unknown something such that, if we knew of it, lead us to expect a mixture
> no [better] than the one we've actually found. There might, after all, be an
> unknown something such that, if we knew of it, would give us even more reason
> to expect a far [better] mixture. As far as I can see, these competing "unknowns"
> cancel one another out, leaving us exactly where we started with quite a strong—
> and as yet undefeated—reason for expecting to discover a much [better] mixture
> of good and ill.[20]

This objection—or something like it—is an objection to skeptical theism that one periodically encounters.[21] It is one I frequently encounter in person. It lacks a name. I'll call it the "offsetting objection."

Though powerful and seemingly intuitive, the offsetting objection ultimately fails. Seeing its failure is difficult, given the complexities of the dialectic. Consequently, I'll spend the remainder of the paper arguing first that there is something wrong with it before identifying what specifically is wrong with it. My hope is that seeing why the objection fails will lead to a better understanding of my skeptical theistic critique.

First, we can see that there is something wrong with the objection by noting that there are situations that parallel both the skeptical theist's reasoning and the offsetting objection but where the analogous offsetting objection is intuitively incorrect. Here are two such situations.

The first analogous situation is our widget case from earlier. Recall, in that case, Patricia believed that some data—her visual experience as of seeing red widgets coming out of the wall—is more much probable given one hypothesis—that she is in a red widget producing room—than another hypothesis—that she is in a white widget producing room. However, after hearing the intercom, she consider a possibility that she cannot reasonably rule out—most of the white widget rooms are ones where the widget is immediately irradiated with red light. After

---

[20] (2014: 233). I've harmlessly switched his phrasing from the "demon" case to the theistic case.

[21] For instance, something like this objection can be found in *inter alia* Draper (1996: 180-4), Hasker (2008: 183-4), Plantinga and Tooley (2008: 126-131), and Swinburne (1998: 27-9).

considering this possibility, it is no longer reasonable for her to believe that her data is much more likely given the red widget room hypothesis than the white widget room hypothesis. Now imagine someone lodges an analogous offsetting objection:

> But suppose she considers this possibility which she cannot reasonably rule out: for all she know, almost all of white widget producing ones are one without irradiating red light. This possibility "offsets" the other one. Therefore, it is now reasonable for her to once again believe that her initial visual data is much more likely were she is in a red widget room than a white widget room.

Intuitively, however, this objection fails: it doesn't become reasonable for her to believe what she initially did.

Here's a second analogous case that is more humdrum. Suppose your students have done particularly poorly on the last in-class quiz. You claim that this data—poor quiz grades—is more probable given one hypothesis—they are incompetent—than another hypothesis—they are competent. In response, I point out that a competent but otherwise lazy and uninterested student will do just as poorly on a quiz as an incompetent one. Suppose, further, that you cannot reasonably rule out the possibility that most of your competent students are lazy and uninterested (it is early in the semester, say). Intuitively, it no longer remains reasonable for you to believe that the poor quiz grades are much more likely given that your students are incompetent than competent. Now imagine someone lodges an analogous offsetting objection:

> But suppose you consider this possibility which you cannot reasonably rule out: for all you know, almost none of your competent students are lazy. This possibility "offsets" the other one. Therefore, it is now reasonable for you to once again believe that your initial data of poor quiz grades is much more likely given the hypothesis that they are incompetent than the hypothesis that they are competent.

Once again, though, this objection is intuitively unpersuasive.

So, the offsetting objection fails when applied to cases that are analogous to the case of skeptical theism. This indicates there is something wrong with it when applied to the case of skeptical theism. But it does not tell us *what* is wrong with it. The problem with the objection is that it misrepresents how skeptical theistic possibilities are being used. Specifically, the critic wielding the offsetting objection sees the dialectic between the skeptical theist and the evidential atheologian as follows:[22]

> *Stage 1*. The evidential atheologian gives an argument for the conclusion that some data strongly confirms a rival hypothesis over theism. This data would thereby strongly disconfirm theism.

> *Stage 2*. In response, the skeptical theist adduces some possibilities concerning (e.g.) inscrutable goods and argues that we cannot reasonably rule out that those possibilities obtain. The point of adducing these possibilities we cannot rule out is to provide a *pro tanto* or even *prima facie* reason for doubting the atheologian's conclusion that the data strongly disconfirms theism.

---

[22] Compare Morriston (2004: 93-4), where Morriston uses a metaphor involving a scale. A natural way of cashing out that metaphor is in terms of *pro tanto/prima facie* reasons.

Stage 3. In response to the skeptical theist, the evidential atheologian adduces some possibilities concerning (e.g.) inscrutable evils or possible relations between goods and evils and argues that we cannot reasonably rule them out either. The point of adducing these other possibilities we cannot rule out is to provide *pro tanto* or *prima facie* reasons that "offset" the skeptical theist's possibilities adduced at *Stage 2*. Consequently, we are left where we were at *Stage 1*: with data that strongly disconfirms theism.

(Though Morriston himself does not adduce such possibilities mirroring mine—understandably, as I'm writing after him—the thought is he could easily do so.)

This way of representing the skeptical theist's reasoning misrepresents my argument against it being reasonable to believe Pr(M|I&B) >> Pr(M|ST&T&B). The critic is right that my argument turns on our being unable to reasonably rule out or otherwise give a lower probability to a certain possibility, labelled P. The critic is wrong that such an inability were intended as generating *prima facie* or *pro tanto* considerations against it being reasonable to believe Pr(M|I&B) >> Pr(M|ST&T&B). Rather they were part of a larger *deductive* argument that it is unreasonable to believe Pr(M|I&B) >> Pr(M|ST&T&B). That deductive argument turned on *Principle*, the claim that it is reasonable to believe Pr(M|I&B) >> Pr(M|ST&T&B) is true only if it is reasonable to believe Pr(M|P&ST&T&B) is not high, and it is not reasonable to belief that Pr(M|P&ST&T&B) is not high.

Further, the critic's mistake here is important. For *prima facie/pro tanto* considerations are notoriously non-monotonic; by adducing additional considerations one might offset or outweigh them. By contrast, deductive arguments are monotonic. Consequently, the only way to respond to my argument against believing Pr(M|I&B) >> Pr(M|ST&T&B) is to challenge one of my premises. But obviously pointing out that there are certain *other* possibilities we cannot rule out does not challenge any of the premises of my argument. Consequently, I conclude, the offsetting objection fails against my skeptical theistic critique.

V.   Conclusion

There's a growing sense among philosophers of religion that Humean arguments from evil are immune from skeptical theistic considerations. In this paper, I've argued the contrary. By first explaining the general structure of skeptical theistic critiques, I showed how to formulation a version of skeptical theism that is relevant to Morriston's Humean argument from evil. I also showed how one popular objection to skeptical theism—the offsetting objection—fails against my criticism.

There's an interesting issue whether the arguments here could be generalized to *any* Humean argument that is represented in terms of epistemic probabilities. *Arguing* that is beyond the scope of the paper here. Further, there are important differences between different Humean arguments—some use rival hypotheses to theism that are not equivalent to Morriston's indifference hypothesis and there are different ways of defending the claim that some data is much more likely, given a rival hypothesis to theism than given theism. Such differences between arguments could matter in ways that are difficult to antecedently anticipate. Nonetheless, I'm cautiously optimistic that analogous versions of the criticism presented here would work against other Humean arguments. At the very least, it is a mistake to assume that merely because an argument from evil is a Humean one it follows that it is immune to skeptical theistic considerations.

Works Cited:

Alston, William. (1991 [1996]). "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Alston, William. (1996). "Some (Temporarily) Final Thoughts on Evidential Arguments from Evil." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Bergmann, Michael. (2001). "Skeptical Theism and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil." *Nous*. 35.2: 278-96.

Buchak, Lara. (2014). "Learning Not to be Naïve." In Dougherty and McBrayer (2014).

Dougherty, Trent. (2014). "Skeptical Theism." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Dougherty, Trent and Justin McBrayer, eds. (2014). *Skeptical Theism: New Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Draper, Paul. (1989). "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Draper, Paul. (1996). "The Skeptical Theist." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Draper, Paul. (2009). "The Problem of Evil." In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, eds. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Draper, Paul. (2013). "The Limitations of Pure Skeptical Theism." *Res Philosophica*. 90.1: 97-111.

Draper, Paul. (2014). "Meet the New Skeptical Theism, Same as the Old Skeptical Theism." In Dougherty and McBrayer (2014).

Dretske, Fred. (2005). "The Case Against Closure." In *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, eds. Matthias Steup and Ernest Sosa. Blackwell.

Gale, Richard. (1996). "Some Difficulties in Theistic Treatments of Evil." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Geirsson, H. (2005). "Conceivability and Defeasible Modal Justification." *Philosophical Studies*. 122.3: 279-304.

Graham, Andrew and Stephen Maitzen. (2007). "CORNEA and Closure." *Faith and Philosophy*. 24.1: 83-6.

Hasker, William. (2008). *The Triumph of God over Evil*. Intervarsity Press.

Hawke, Peter. (2011). "van Inwagen's Modal Skepticism." *Philosophical Studies*. 153.3: 351-364.

Hawthorne, John. (2005). "The Case for Closure." In *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, eds. Matthias Steup and Ernest Sosa. Blackwell.

Howson and Urbach. (2006). *Scientific Reasoning*, 3rd edition. Open Court Publishing.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel, ed. (1996). *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel. (2015). "How not to Render an Explanatory Version of the Evidential Argument from Evil Immune to Skeptical Theism." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. 78.3: 277-84.

Hume, David. (1779 [2007]) *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Ed. Dorothy Coleman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lauinger, William. (2014). "The Neutralization of Draper-Style Evidential Arguments from Evil." *Faith and Philosophy*. 31.3: 303-324.

McBrayer, Justin. (2009). "CORNEA and Inductive Evidence." *Faith and Philosophy*. 26.1: 77-83.

Morriston, Wes. (2004). "The Evidential Argument from Goodness." *Southern Journal of Philosophy*. 42: 87-101.

Morriston, Wes. (2014). "Skeptical Demonism: A Failed Response to a Humean Challenge." In Dougherty and McBrayer (2014).

Oppy, Graham. (2013). "Rowe's Evidential Arguments from Evil." In *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, eds. Justin McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder. Blackwell Publishing.

Perrine, Timothy and Stephen J. Wykstra. (2014). "Skeptical Theism, Abductive Atheology, and Theory Versioning." In Dougherty and McBrayer (2014).

Plantinga, Alvin and Michael Tooley. (2008). *Knowledge of God*. Blackwell Publishing.

Rowe, William. (1979 [1996]). "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Rowe, William. (1996). "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Rowe, William. (2001). "Skeptical Theism: A Response to Bergmann." *Nous*. 35.2:297-303.

Rowe, William. (2006). "Friendly Atheism, Skeptical Theism, and the Problem of Evil." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. 59.2: 79-92.

Russell, Bruce. (1996). "Defenseless." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Russell, Bruce. (2017). "The Problem of Evil: Excessive Unnecessary Suffering." In *Ethics and the Problem of Evil*, ed. James P. Sterba. Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press.

Rutledge, Jonathan Curtis. (Forthcoming). "The Parent Analogy: A Reassessment." *Internal Journal for Philosophy of Religion*.

Stump, Eleonore. (2010). *Wandering in Darkness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Swinburne, Richard. (1993). *The Coherence of Theism*, rev. edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Swinburne, Richard. (1998). *Providence and the Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Trakakis, Nick. (2007). *The God Beyond Belief*. Springer.

Van Inwagen, Peter. (1991 [1996]) "The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence." Reprinted in Howard-Snyder (1996).

Van Inwagen, Peter. (1996). "Reflections on the Chapters by Draper, Russell, and Gale." In Howard Snyder (1996).

Van Inwagen, Peter. (1998 [2001]). "Modal Epistemology." Reprinted in *Ontology, Identity, and Modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Inwagen, Peter. (2006). *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Wykstra, Stephen J. (1984). "The Humean Obstacle from Evil." *Internal Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*. 16.2: 73-93.

Wykstra, Stephen J. (1996). "Rowe's Noseeum Argument." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Wykstra, Stephen J. and Timothy Perrine. (2012). "The Foundations of Skeptical Theism." *Faith and Philosophy*. 29.4: 375-99.