

## ABSTRACT

Resistance: Its Nature, Virtues, and Application to Matters of Faith

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There are many cries to resist particular objects (e.g. inequality in the workplace) but very little is said concerning the *nature* of resistance. As such, this project begins by mapping the concept of resistance. Next, I develop several tools that allow us to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable instances of resistance. I then argue that many versions of “the problem of evil” are actually instances of resistance. As such, these versions of the problem of evil are subject to the tools of evaluation developed here. And, as it turns out, many instances of the problem of evil are instances of *unreasonable* resistance. I end the project by discussing the intersection between resistance and faith, arguing that faith (and the resistance it generates) can be perfectly rational while also providing a kind of response to the relevant problems of evil.



Resistance: Its Nature, Virtues, and Application to Matters of Faith

by

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A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Philosophy

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## DEDICATION

To my favorite stories of all: Bethany, Caia, Dez, and Dom

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

To introduce this project, I will begin by explaining the history of its development. This will, I hope, help the reader understand what motivated the various parts of the project as it developed. I will then provide an overview of the project and how all the pieces of it are meant to fit together (even though several of them *could* stand alone).

#### *1.1 The Development of this Project*

This project began, in part, as an attempt to provide a response to the problem of evil in the spirit of Hasker's (1981) argument.<sup>1</sup> The general goal of Hasker's argument was to show that there is something wrong with advancing the problem of evil while at the same time being "glad" for one's existence.<sup>2</sup> His argument went like this: "If I am glad on the whole about my own existence and that of those whom I love, then I must be glad that the history of the world, in its major aspects, has been as it has" (430). But "I cannot reasonably *complain* to someone that P, or *blame* or *reproach* someone for its being the case that P, unless I myself sincerely *regret* or *am sorry*, that P" (434). And to be clear, one cannot *regret* or *be sorry* that P if one is *glad* that P.

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<sup>1</sup> Much later in the process, I learned that Adams (1979) presented a similar argument. I shall have much more to say about Adams' argument later (see Chapter Seven, especially Section One).

<sup>2</sup> "Glad" being a technical term here, meaning, roughly, that one prefers the thing for which one is glad to its non-existence (426).

This puts the advocate of the problem of evil in the following conundrum: Suppose she is glad that she exists, and therefore, glad that history is as it has been. This makes her unable to reproach or blame anyone (including God) for the evils of history. So she cannot exhibit any kind of moral outrage or protest towards God for his allowing the evils of history to occur as they did. If she *does* express moral outrage towards God for allowing the evils of history, while at the same time being *glad* for them, then she is “rationally inconsistent” (428). And so, insofar as individuals tend to be glad for their own lives (that is, they tend to prefer their own existence to non-existence) they will be unable to *consistently* advance the problem of evil against God.

But I think that Hasker’s argument fails for a variety of reasons, many of which are described by Morrision (1982). For one thing, the idea that the major events of history are required for one’s existence relies upon a controversial view of personal identity. It also rejects “Cartesian dualism,” which links identity to souls (427). I would hope to remain neutral on such issues. Additionally, Hasker points out that it is *possible* for the events of history to have been different and for us to still exist, even though it is “extremely improbable.” But surely God is not daunted by such improbabilities. So why would He *not* bring about the relevant goods (like my existence) *without* allowing those horrific evils? It seems like that *possibility* is enough to allow an objector to advocate some version of the problem of evil (in a consistent manner).

Next, and more seriously, Hasker’s argument seems to prove way too much. If we follow Hasker’s reasoning, when I am glad for my existence, it follows that I cannot blame or reproach *anyone* for the evils of history (including the *perpetrators* of those

evils!).<sup>3</sup> But a principle that implies we cannot, for example, fault the Nazis for their actions is obviously mistaken. Additionally, if my existence (or the existence of my loved ones) requires the horrific events of the past (like those that occurred during WWII), then, as Morrision suggests, it seems incredibly “egocentric” for me to be “glad” that those events happened (405). Instead, the far more reasonable thing to do in this position is *give up one’s gladness for existing*. My existence simply is not “worth the cost” of those evils. And if I think it *is*, then something is wrong with me.

As yet another response, to describe oneself as “glad” for the events of WWII seems far too strong. As Morrision (1982) suggests, it is doubtful that *anyone* would want to say that they are *glad* for such things (407, n.3).<sup>4</sup> And lastly, Morrision suggests that by switching focus from arguments from evil to the *attitudes* of the arguer, Hasker merely advances an *ad hominem* attack against the atheologian (406). And, obviously enough, that is not a promising way to proceed.

Originally, I believed that Hasker’s account of gladness and regret *could* be saved against the critiques of Morrision (and those like it). But I later became convinced they could not. But I still found myself thinking that there is *something* to Hasker’s intuition (that there is something wrong with advancing the problem of evil while valuing one’s own existence in certain ways). As such, this project will contain an explanation *of* that wrongness (i.e. an account of *what it is*) as well as an explanation of *why* opposing God

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Morrision (1982: 404-6).

<sup>4</sup> *Some* of these objections may be avoidable given that being “glad” is a technical term. But a problem for Hasker is that as *gladness for* becomes increasingly technical, it becomes less intuitive that people are usually *glad for* their existence in *that* way (as opposed to a general feeling of happiness or thankfulness).

while being attached to one's existence *is* wrong. But, to accomplish this task, we must break from Hasker's language of gladness and regret.

At the same time that I was thinking about how to save Hasker's intuition, I had been working on a general account of *resistance*. This started because I had observed *so many* people saying we ought to *resist* or *protest* certain things (e.g. presidential candidates). But the more I thought about it, the more I wondered, "what does it mean *to resist*"? And I was startled to discover that philosophers seem to have been pretty much silent on the issue.<sup>5</sup> Maybe they were silent on the issue because it is plainly intuitive what resistance is, and so no in-depth account is needed. But it became clear to me that this was *not* the case. To illustrate, Hollander and Einwohner (2004) document dozens of ways the term *resistance* has been used *just in sociological literature*. In other words, there was good evidence that the term *resistance* has been used in professional academic circles in wildly equivocal ways.

Next, I thought that if we understand what resistance is, we can start thinking about what separates *good* instances of resistance from *bad* ones (in much the same way that Aristotle thought by understanding the *function* of a substance, we could start to figure out its *virtues*—traits that allow it to perform its function well).<sup>6</sup> This line of thought led to the production of the ideas in Chapters Two and Three: The *nature* of

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<sup>5</sup> Camus—the champion of a “philosophy of revolt” as Copleston (1994: 396-7) puts it—does have a fair amount to say about revolt and opposition. See Camus (1991a), (1991b), and (1991c). But, as I will argue in Chapter Two, Camus' comments on revolt do not include a general, systematic analysis of the concept of revolt (or resistance) in the way that concerns me. Nonetheless, in Chapter Two I show how my account of resistance and his comments on revolt can be brought together in interesting ways. I am indebted to C. Stephen Evans for drawing my attention to these connections.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *NE* 1097b.24-8.

resistance and its *virtues*, respectively. The account is designed to help us distinguish *reasonable* resistance from *unreasonable* resistance.

It then occurred to me that *if* the problem of evil—at least in the forms that Hasker was considering—is really just a kind of resistance, then the virtues of resistance (the tools that allow us to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable resistance) could be applied to test the reasonability of agents’ advocacy of the problem of evil. And this is all independent of their *attitudes* or *feelings* towards evil. This independence would allow us to bypass a consideration of “gladness” and “regret,” which Morrison found so problematic in Hasker’s essay. And, as I will argue later, it also allows me to avoid Morrison’s other criticisms of Hasker.<sup>7</sup> To that end, I began to work on describing the problem of evil (in various forms) *as* a kind of resistance and providing ways of engaging with that resistance (on the basis of the tools for evaluating resistance developed earlier). It then became apparent to me how I could save Hasker’s intuition.

Now, to be especially clear, it is important to emphasize that my accounts of *resistance*, *its virtues*, and *its logic* are motivated (and defended) *entirely independently* of considerations about God and the problem of evil. In fact, even my account of resistance can stand independently of what I say about its virtues and its logic. So *nothing* in my account of resistance or the tools I develop for assessing it turns on theistic commitments or one’s view of evil. For that reason, even should my discussion of evil be a total failure, that does not imply the account of resistance (or its virtues and logic) is also a failure.

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Seven, Section One for an explanation of why my account avoids those criticisms.

Additionally, it just so happened that the account of resistance and its virtues combines to *imply* something that comes close to Hasker's main intuition: It is *unreasonable* for an agent to resist God (or theism) on the basis of the evils of the past when that agent is attached to her own existence (and the existence of her loved ones) in certain ways. So, in short, I was motivated to repair Hasker's argument; to save his intuition. And in the course of working on resistance, I discovered a way to do exactly that. And along the way, I hope to provide some additional insight into debates concerning God, evil, and faith.

### *1.2 Overview*

The pieces of this project come together as follows: Chapter Two provides a foundational understanding of the concept of resistance (which, I mentioned above, is strangely absent in philosophical literature). Chapters Three and Four provide a variety of ways to distinguish between *reasonable* resistance and *unreasonable* resistance, which allows us to evaluate virtually *any* instance of resistance. This, by itself, constitutes a powerful way of engaging with the resistance we encounter (in our own lives or the lives of others), in the same sort of way that principles of logic allow us to engage arguments we encounter.

Chapter Five is the beginning of my *application* of the account of resistance developed in Chapters Two through Four. The fifth chapter provides an explanation of why the problem of evil—in its many and varied forms—often constitutes a kind of resistance (whether against God or against theism, or both). The language of resistance allows us to divide the problems into several categories, which is helpful from an organizational standpoint, but much more importantly, exposes why certain *responses* to

the problem of evil (e.g. theodicies) are ineffective in the face of certain versions of the problem of evil (e.g. the existential problem of evil). The language of resistance (from Chapter Two) makes it clear that different forms of resistance require correspondingly different types of responses. Failure to notice this fact, I argue, is like failing to notice that hammering a nail with the tip of a screwdriver is a bad idea. In both cases, the wrong tool is being applied to the task at hand.

My description of the problem of evil as *resistance* also reveals a mistake in the perception that certain versions of the problem of evil (e.g. “the pastoral problem”) are automatically “off limits” to philosophers. Philosophers do, it turns out, have plenty of insight to bring to bear on those versions of the problem. To defend these claims, Chapters Six and Seven provide an explanation of how my account of resistance and the ways of evaluating it provide a way to engage various problems of evil. Chapter Six centers on responses to specific cases of resistance towards God (or theism), which involve particular agents and the problems of evil they advance. Chapter Seven then presents a series of general responses that one might make to those who might resist God (or theism) on the basis of the evils of the past. Specifically, it shows common pitfalls that many agents who resist God (or theism) will fall into. As such, Chapter Seven—especially Section One—comes the closest to an explicit attempt to recover and defend Hasker’s intuition.

To end the project, in Chapter Eight I consider the connection between faith and resistance. While my comments on this connection apply to faith in both religious and non-religious contexts, my focus will be on religious faith. In particular, I argue that faith (whether it is a type of belief or not) generates a kind of resistance. This resistance allows

the faithful agent to maintain a commitment to the thing they have faith in, without (necessarily) violating any epistemic norms. In other words, I argue that faith (and the resistance it generates) can be perfectly rational. Lastly, while Chapters Six and Seven represent a kind of “negative” response to the problem of evil—explaining where various formulations go *wrong*—Chapter Eight will include a more “positive” response. This involves describing ways of reconstruing the evils of the world in ways that favor theism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Nature of Resistance

There are *many* people who argue over *what* we ought to resist (e.g. inequality in the workplace, the legal status of abortion, etc.). But there does not seem to be much of a conversation about the *nature* of resistance.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there much said about how to resist *well*. In this chapter, after considering several examples of resistance, I will develop a general account of it. I will then address two questions that Hollander and Einwohner (2004) claim are central to debates over the nature of resistance: (i) Must resistance be *intentional*? and (ii) Must resistance occur *in action*? Answering these questions will allow me to further develop the general account of resistance as well as draw a sharp contrast (in some cases) between my account and the accounts described by Hollander and Einwohner. By mapping out the concept of resistance in detail, I will lay the groundwork for the next chapter, which provides an analysis of the difference *reasonable* (or “excellent”) resistance and *unreasonable* resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Hollander and Einwohner (2004) come the closest to giving an account of resistance. But their goal is not so much to provide an account of resistance as it is to describe how resistance has been talked about in sociological literature (534-5). Specifically, they survey the literature, describe various ways authors have talked about “resistance,” and draw attention to what the varied accounts have in common and where they differ (537ff). My purpose is different. I aim to provide a conceptual analysis of resistance, rather than an analysis of how the term “resistance” has been used. But even supposing that our projects aim at the same goal—to provide a conceptual analysis of resistance—I will argue below that the account suggested by Hollander and Einwohner needs revision. Additionally, Camus (1991a), (1991b), and (1991c) talks at length about “revolt.” This is not the kind of account (of resistance or revolt) that I am hoping to construct. Nonetheless, it will be fruitful to engage with Camus’s comments (see Section Two, E, of this chapter).

## *2.1 Examples of Resistance*

To begin, consider a variety of examples:

1. **Abortion Clinic:** A man bombs a women's health clinic because the clinic provides abortions to women seeking them.
2. **Anti-Government March:** Several hundred people organize a march as a means of protesting some governmental policy, decision, or member.
3. **Civil Disobedience:** In Germany during WWII, a young couple hides several Jewish people from German authorities because the couple believes the authorities to be wrongly persecuting Jewish people.
4. **Looting:** A crowd of people loot several stores in a small town in response to unjust actions of local law enforcement.
5. **Hunger Strike:** Several people refuse to eat until a social policy is changed.
6. **Boycott:** A man refuses to buy products from a particular company because that company badly mistreats its employees.
7. **Pay Inequality:** Workers go on strike until their employers agree to pay equal wages to both males and females.
8. **Racist Hiring Committee:** A member of a hiring committee is unwilling to consider hiring non-white candidates (because they are not white).
9. **Fear of Flying:** A woman is too afraid of heights to board a plane – her fear renders her unable to walk onboard.
10. **Dating Troubles:** A man is opposed to the idea of dating a woman that he considers to be his best friend.
11. **Picky Eater:** A toddler refuses to eat vegetables because they taste bad.
12. **God and Evil:** A woman cannot accept that an all-powerful, all-knowing, loving God exists because she has learned about the evils perpetrated during the Holocaust.
13. **Continent Man:** A continent man is one who knows what the right thing to do is (in a particular situation) and does that thing, but doing so

requires overpowering his desires to do something contrary to the right thing.<sup>2</sup>

14. Virtuous Woman: A virtuous woman knows what the right thing to do is (in a particular situation) and does so without struggle (contrary to the Continent Man). In such a case, her character is formed in a way that renders her somewhat impervious towards doing (or desiring) what is wrong.<sup>3</sup>

It may seem that these “examples” are far too varied to fall into one category. In other words, it may seem that they do not actually have much in common. But, as I will now argue, there is a common thread throughout: they are all instances of *resistance* in one sense or another.

## 2.2 A General Account of Resistance

As I unpack a general account of resistance, it will be helpful to compare my account against how the word “resistance” is commonly used. This is not to say that common usage has the final word regarding what “resistance” means. Rather, following Aristotle’s example, if the account is a good one, then it will harmonize with the available data (*NE* 1098b.9-11). With that in mind, I take resistance (at a general level) to be this:

Resistance: A relation between an agent *S*, and an object, *Z*, where, if *S* bears this relation toward *Z*, then *S* opposes *Z* because *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Aristotle’s discussion of the continent agent: “the continent man, knowing that his appetites are bad, refuses on account of his rational principle to follow them” (*NE* 1145b.7-16).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Aristotle’s discussion of the virtuous agent in contrast to the continent agent: “both the continent man and the temperate [i.e. virtuous] man are such as to do nothing contrary to reason for the sake of bodily pleasures, but the former has and the latter has not bad appetites, and the latter is such as not to feel pleasure contrary to reason, while the former is such as to feel pleasure but not to be led by it” (*NE* 1151b.32-1152a.2).

In the remainder of this section (Section Two) I will unpack each component of this account (while referring to the examples presented in Section One of this chapter as a guide).<sup>4</sup>

### 2.2a Resistance as “Opposition”

First, that resistance is a kind of “opposition” should be unsurprising. Resistance as opposition (of a kind) is consistent with the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s definition of the word, which states (in part), that resistance is “opposing someone or something...”. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) also note that “a sense of *opposition*” is common to nearly all accounts of resistance available in sociological and anthropological literature (538). So, the “opposition” component of my account appears to harmonize with other accounts of resistance quite well.

To further illuminate the relevant kind of “opposition,” however, we can contrast it with what Robert Adams (2006) says about “being *for*” something. For Adams, moral virtue is defined as “excellence in *being for* the good” (14, emphasis added). When an individual is *for* something, Adams tells us, this may include her “loving it, liking it, respecting it, wanting it, wishing for it, appreciating it, thinking highly of it, speaking in favor of it and otherwise intentionally standing for it symbolically, acting to promote or protect it, and being disposed to do such things” (15-16). Additionally, he tells us, “*being*

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<sup>4</sup> Note, I take *resistance* to be basic whereas the following terms are not: *to resist*, *resister*, and *resistant*. Roughly, *to resist* some *Z* is to bear the relationship of resistance towards *Z*. To be a *resister* is to be an agent that resists some object. And to be *resistant* towards some *Z* means that one is disposed towards resisting *Z*. This tracks the same sort of distinction in discussions of forgiveness (as one example). To see why, suppose we develop an account of *forgiveness* following Volf (2005) or Govier and Verwoerd (2002). Once we understand what forgiveness is, we can then specify what it means *to forgive*, to be a *forgiver*, and to embody *forgivingness* (a disposition towards forgiving). See Roberts (1995) for an account of forgivingness.

*for x* must involve dispositions to favor *x* in action, desire, emotion, or feeling” (17). To contrast this with my account, the “opposition” component of resistance is a kind of mirror to Adams’ “being for.” This means that when *S* resists *Z*—insofar as *S* *opposes* *Z*—then *S* hates *Z*, dislikes it, wants it removed or revised, wishes it away, speaks against it or stands against it (symbolically or otherwise), etc. And, furthermore, *S*’s being resistant towards *Z* will dispose *S* to oppose *Z* in action, desire, emotion, or feeling.

It is important to note that even if Adams’ “being for” is the mirror to “opposition” as I have described it, the two are not mutually exhaustive. In other words, it is possible that *S* is neither *for Z* nor *opposed to Z*. In such cases, I will describe *S* as *neutral towards Z*. And, straightforwardly enough, when *S* is *neutral towards Z*, then *S* neither loves nor hates *Z*, neither likes nor dislikes *Z*, and so on. This may occur because *S* genuinely has no leaning one way or another, or may occur because *S* is entirely unaware of *Z*.<sup>5</sup> The key here is that if *S* is *neutral towards Z*, then *S* does not *oppose Z*. And if *S* fails to oppose *Z*, then *S* cannot be said to resist *Z*. Hence, *S* cannot be both resistant and disposed to neutrality towards an object (in the same way, at the same time, etc.).

It is also possible for an agent to *oppose* some object by being *for* another. For example, one might oppose one particular presidential candidate by actively campaigning *for* and supporting a competitor. What one *cannot* do is be *for* and *opposed to* the same

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<sup>5</sup> We must be careful here, because *S* may be *resistant* towards an object despite not being aware of its existence. In such a case, *S* must at least have a certain set of dispositions towards *Z*. But, on the other hand, there may be other things that *S* has no real dispositions towards because these things are entirely unfamiliar to *S*. My point is simply that *S*’s unawareness of *Z* may be an explanation for *S*’s being *neutral toward Z*—a total lack of awareness *can* render *S* neutral toward *Z* (even if it does not always have this effect).

object, at the same time, in the same way, etc. But this can become complicated. To illustrate, suppose an agent is *for* her own physical health. Imagine, however, that she suffers from an autoimmune disease in which her immune system attacks her body and she actively works to prevent it from doing that (by taking drugs that suppress it, for example).

Here, we might be tempted to think the agent is both *for* and *opposed to* the same object: her body. After all, she is trying to promote her body's well-being (she is *for* that) but is also suppressing her immune system, she is acting in *opposition* to what her body does naturally. But really, there are two objects in play here. The first is her physical well-being (the state of affairs in which she is healthy, functioning normally, etc.). The second is the dysfunction of her immune system. She is opposed to dysfunction. Her condition is the object of her opposition (not her body). And in so opposing it, she promotes the proper function of her body. So she is *for* one object—the proper functioning of her body—but *opposed to* a different object—its failure to function properly. And so, it should be clear that even though one cannot be both *for* and *opposed to* the same object, in the same way, at the same time, etc., one *can* oppose some *Z* by being *for* some *Y* (where *Z* and *Y* are non-identical objects).

Relatedly, nothing in the account requires that by opposing one object, the agent is automatically *for* some other object. One might, for example, simply work to undo, destroy, whatever object they come into contact with. Perhaps someone will object: Is not such an agent *for* the total destruction of all objects (or something like that)? In response, I do not think so. When *S* opposes *Z*, as I have understood it, then *S* hates *Z*, dislikes it, wants it removed or revised, wishes it away, speaks against it or stands against it

(symbolically or otherwise), and so on. Thus, if an agent is capable of hating *everything* (for example), then obviously she can be opposed to some object(s) without being *for* any others. And these claims are perfectly compatible with the suggestion that in *many* cases (or even *most* cases), when agents are opposed to some object they are *for* another. All I suggest here is that being *opposed* to some object, *Z*, does not guarantee that one is *for* some other object *Y* (where *Y* and *Z* are distinct).<sup>6</sup>

Another qualification regarding opposition: So far, there is nothing in the account that requires *S* to be *aware* of her resistance towards *Z*. As stated above, a resistant individual will be disposed to *oppose* the relevant object in certain ways. But he may resist something—he may act (or emote) in accordance with the relevant dispositions—while not *realizing* he is doing so. For example, consider the above example, Racist Hiring Committee. In that example, we saw that a member of a hiring committee was unwilling to hire non-white candidates because they were not white. But, in such cases, it would be easy to suppose that the member was unaware of his racial prejudice. He might claim to be fair-minded and open towards hiring members of other races (and he might even believe his own claims). In other words, he might be self-deluded about his own dispositions, all while his real dispositions (of which he is ignorant) are affecting his actions and emotions.

Lastly, when an agent resists something—insofar as she opposes it—it need not be the case that she opposes it in an unqualified manner. Some agents will resist a given object in all contexts and at all costs, while other agents will resist objects only in some

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<sup>6</sup> If someone wanted to respond and argue that it is impossible for an agent to oppose *everything* or, more specifically, to oppose some object *without* being *for* another, I would not press the point too hard. I do not think much ultimately hangs on the outcome of that debate.

contexts (and only given some, limited costs). Consider, for example, the Civil Disobedience case, described above. In that case, a young couple chose to hide several Jewish people from German authorities during WWII. In this way, they showed some level of opposition towards the German authorities. But simply because they did resist the German authorities, in this case, that does not imply that they would do so under *all* circumstances. The couple in question might be willing to resist so long as their actions remain covert, but might give up their opposition upon being discovered. Or they might give up their opposition upon being threatened in various ways. For example, the couple might resist Nazi authorities when the authorities threaten their wealth, happiness, or even their very lives. But the couple may find themselves unable to resist in the same way when the lives of their children are at stake. And if that were so, then the couple's resistance would be *conditional* in nature.

The point here is that opposition (and, therefore, resistance) need not be unconditional. It will often be affected by what is at stake for the resister, for one thing. Put differently, while some resistance will be unconditional, other instances of resistance will be conditional. The former occurs when an individual opposes a given object at all costs, in all contexts, etc., while the latter occurs when an individual opposes a given object given some (but not all) costs, in just some (but not all) contexts, etc.

It seems likely that the majority of resistance will be conditional. For example, if we consider the Hunger Strike case above, in which several people refuse to eat until a social policy is changed, suppose the circumstances changed as follows. The resisters come to believe that they are now faced with the following dilemma: Abandon their resistance of the relevant social policy or the entire universe will be destroyed. In such

cases, it seems fair to assume that the vast majority of resisters will abandon their resistance. And even though those conditions may seem entirely unbelievable or unrealistic, they are just meant to illustrate that most of the time, resistance does not occur in a truly *unconditional* way. That is, I assume, most actual resisters would likely give up their resistance should stakes rise to an absurdly high level (e.g. cases in which the resister comes to learn that the entire universe would be destroyed should they continue resisting). Lastly, to be especially clear, I will reserve the label “conditional resistance” for cases of *actual* resistance that would be abandoned under certain conditions. And similarly, “unconditional resistance” will apply only to cases of *actual* resistance in which the agent would *not* abandon his resistance under any conditions.

### 2.2b “Object(s)” of Resistance

As stated above, resistance (at a general level) is a relation between an agent *S*, and an *object*, *Z*. If *S* bears this relation toward *Z*, then *S* opposes *Z* because *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable. We have already discussed the “opposition” part of this relation. Now I will address questions over what is meant by “object.” The objects of resistance (i.e. what things can be opposed) come in many varieties. An agent might oppose an establishment, a policy, an action, a decision, a situation, a state of affairs, or even certain beliefs.<sup>7</sup> In the examples from Section One, we saw that people may oppose companies

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<sup>7</sup> Compare this to what Hollander and Einwohner (2004) say: “*Targets* of resistance also vary, from individuals...to groups and organizations...to institutions and social structures” (536). Here, there are two differences that should be pointed out between their account and mine. First, I use the term “object of resistance” rather than “target of resistance.” This allows me to remain neutral on the issue of whether or not resistance must be intentional, whereas it is less clear that Hollander and Einwohner can do the same. After all, according to them, if something is a “target,” then it is being aimed at intentionally (545). So, if all resistance aims at a target, then it would follow that

(establishments), laws enacted (social policies or governmental decisions), the current distribution of wealth (a state of affairs), and so forth. We saw also that individuals can be resistant towards certain beliefs (or propositions), as was the case in *God and Evil*, where a woman's knowledge of the evils perpetrated during the Holocaust created in her a resistance towards theism (that is, she found herself unable to believe that the claims made by theism are true).

To borrow from Adams' account of "being for" once again, he notes that "one can be for and against goods and evils that one cannot affect causally, such as those belonging to past history" (16). In other words, the objects of resistance need not be things that the resister has any power or control over. So an agent can oppose something that cannot be changed.<sup>8</sup> Someone might oppose, for example, the wicked acts of the Nazis during WWII, even though the past cannot be changed by the resister (or anyone else for that matter). Thus, agents may even resist things that are necessary. Whether or not this type of resistance is ever *reasonable* is a different question (and we will explore that question in the next chapter). All I claim up to this point is that an agent *can* resist such things (that which cannot be undone, that which is necessary, that which the resister cannot affect causally, and so forth).

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all resistance is intentional. Yet, as I will argue below, it is false that all resistance is intentional. Second, what might count as an object of resistance on my account is broader, as I include "states of affairs" and "beliefs" as possible objects of resistance (whereas Hollander and Einwohner do not).

<sup>8</sup> As we will see in Section Two, E (of this chapter), Camus's (1991a) call for agents to resist the meaninglessness of the universe is another instance in which resistance occurs but the object of resistance is not something the agent can hope to change.

Relatedly, agents can be *resistant* towards things that do not exist. All they need is the relevant sort of disposition: A disposition to resist that object. And that disposition can be present whether or not the object exists. But, perhaps more controversially, I hold that agents can also *resist* objects that do not exist. I, for example, might oppose the creation of a bomb that is one million times more powerful than any nuclear bomb developed thus far. Thankfully, the creation of such a weapon has not occurred and no such weapon exists. Nonetheless, I can resist there being such a bomb—I can oppose the creation of such a bomb. One might object that, in this case, what I am really opposed to is a certain *state of affairs* that has not been actualized. And if states of affairs (even non-actualized ones) are the sorts of things that exist in some real way<sup>9</sup>, then I have not shown that I can resist something that does not exist.

But suppose an agent *believes* a particular object exists (even though it does not). For example, consider this case:

The King of France: A woman comes to believe that the present King of France has recently decreed all male fetuses must be aborted. Upon gaining this belief, the woman becomes outraged and begins coordinating with a number of French politicians to undermine the king's ruling or reign (whichever is easier).

Here, the object of the woman's resistance—whether it be the present king of France or his decree—does not exist. There is no king of France, and therefore, there is no decree. Yet she is still opposing some object she deems to be unacceptable. And so, she is *resisting*.

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<sup>9</sup> That non-actual states of affairs “exist” in some real way *might* be akin to the way in which non-actual worlds exist according to the “modal realism” of David Lewis (1986).

Perhaps an objector will respond that the object, in this case, is not the king nor his decree, but, instead, what the king and/or his decree embody or represent. If that is so, then what the woman is opposing is a particular idea or set of propositions (e.g. the proposition, <male fetuses ought to be aborted simply because they are male> or something like that).<sup>10</sup> In response, recall that resistance involves an agent's opposition towards an object (the agent hates the object, dislikes it, stands against it, etc.) where the agent's opposition is driven by her deeming it to be unacceptable. All I am committed to, therefore, is something like the following conditional: If it is *possible* for an agent to hate, dislike, etc., something that does not exist, and it is *possible* for the agent to deem that thing to be unacceptable, then it is possible for the agent to resist something that does not exist.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2c "Deeming"

Moving on to the next component of resistance, recall that if *S* resists *Z*, then *S* opposes *Z* because *S* *deems* *Z* to be unacceptable. Deeming is the most important component of this account. As such, I will spend considerable time unpacking it.

There are three ways in which an agent might "deem" an object to be unacceptable. They are this:

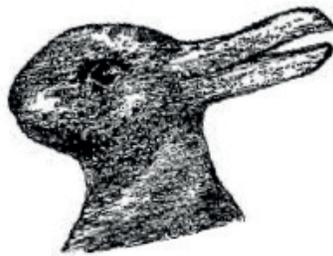
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<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, if the reader is unconvinced that the woman's "resistance" is real resistance, we might say that the woman in The King of France case performs *acts of resistance* (or *acts of opposition*) rather than actually being resistant towards the non-existent king of France. For more on the distinction between resistance, acts of resistance, and acts of opposition, see Section Four, where it is discussed in detail.

<sup>11</sup> This will potentially allow agents to resist fictional entities as well. Specifically, insofar as an agent can hate, dislike, etc., a fictional entity, and insofar as it is possible for the agent to deem that object to be unacceptable, it follows that it is possible for the agent resist that entity. So if it is possible for an agent to hate Sauron and deem him to be unacceptable (in some way), then it is possible for an agent to resist Sauron.

- (1) *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable only because *S* construes *Z* as unacceptable.
- (2) *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable only because *S* believes that *Z* is unacceptable.
- (3) *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable both because *S* construes that *Z* as unacceptable and believes *Z* is unacceptable.

I will now describe each in detail. To start, I will refer to the first type of resistance as “non-doxastic resistance.” When *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable in this way, it is only because *S* construes *Z* in a certain (negative) way. To understand the nature of construals, I will rely heavily on Robert Roberts’ (2003) and (2013) work on emotions as “concern-based construals.” For Roberts, “construal is *conceptual* perception, as distinguished from *sensory* perception” (2013: 45). To help draw this distinction, Roberts presents the well-known “duck-rabbit” drawing, pictured here:



Suppose two people look at this drawing and one sees a duck while the other sees a rabbit. Both people are looking at the same thing (the sensory data they receive is the same), but they “see” different things. In other words, the agents *construe* the sensory data differently; they organize the sensory data according to different concepts. And so, in Roberts’ words, “construal...is a kind of perception, an impression that results from a power of the mind to synthesize the diverse parts of something that ‘works’ as a whole into an impression of the whole that it works as” (2013: 50).

Additionally, following Roberts (2003), a being’s power to construe sensory data does not obviously require a high level of cognition. Roberts notes,

The rabbit jumps in fright at the sight of a snake, the dog wags its tail joyfully at its master's return, the she-bear angrily attacks people who come too close to her cubs. Animals seem to have a range of distinguishable emotions that parallel the main types of human emotions, while not having the kind of language necessary to formulate the material and defining propositions that elicit, express, and structure the human emotions. ... But since construals are not necessarily propositional, it leaves room for animal analogues of many human emotions. All that is needed for emotion, on this account, is a power of perception that is not merely sense perception, but some organization of sense perception that can impinge on and incorporate some concern (perhaps instinctual, perhaps learned) of the animal. (115-16)

In short, non-human animals that lack higher levels of cognition (as found in humans) can nonetheless construe sensory data in the relevant way. This opens up the possibility for animals to have emotions *analogous* to the emotions of human beings. And since I am following Roberts' account of construals, we should expect that non-human animals will be able to *resist* objects in ways analogous to the way human beings resist. The key here is that the power to construe that is relevant to my account of resistance does not require that the one doing the construing has a high-level of cognitive power (akin to a properly functioning, adult human being, for example).

Returning to resistance, we might say that when *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable in the relevant way, *S* conceptualizes *Z* in a negative way, leading to *S*'s impression that *Z* is "unacceptable." In such cases, *S* "sees" *Z* as worthy of opposition. For example, return to the Fear of Flying example, in which a woman is too afraid of heights to board a plane (and her fear renders her unable to walk onboard). In this case, the woman may believe that flying is entirely safe. She has no doubt that it is safe. And yet, she might still *feel* fear simply because she cannot help but *see* it as a threat to her safety.<sup>12</sup> So here, the

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<sup>12</sup> See Roberts (2010) for the original example and analysis, which differs little from mine (36). And to be clear, there are other ways in which fear of air travel may manifest. Agents may fear their own fear of air travel, for example, in which case they

agent would be resistant towards a certain object (namely, the state of affairs involving her flying on a plane) and this resistance occurs on the basis of her non-doxastic construal of the object.

Importantly, an agent may be resistant in this way whether he is aware of his construal or not. Recall again the Racist Hiring Committee case, where a member of a hiring committee refused to hire non-white candidates (because they were not white) and did so while being ignorant of his own prejudices. Here, the committee member might have construed all non-white candidates as unacceptable hires because they were not white, even though he did not realize this was occurring. His racist tendencies might be so deeply rooted that he fails to recognize the role they play in how he sees and interacts with others.

Additionally, consider another example:

False Allegations: A man is charged with child molestation, but the charges are later discovered to have been entirely false. Yet, even though members of the community *believe* him to be totally innocent, they cannot help but *see* him as guilty or as a threat to their safety.

This case illustrates several things. First, individuals can resist a given object given their construal of it (and entirely independent of their *beliefs* about the object). Second, resisters need not be *aware* of their construal of the object (even if they are aware of how they *feel* about the object).<sup>13</sup> Regarding the second point, some members of the community might simply feel uneasy around the man in question, or might

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might construe the feelings they expect to experience (e.g. nervousness, sweating, etc.) as a kind of threat to something they are concerned to protect (e.g. their personal comfort). As such, the present example is meant to illustrate just *one way* an agent may fear air travel.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the claim that individuals cannot be unaware of their feelings, see Roberts (2010: 116).

(subconsciously) avoid interacting with him. And, again, this may occur even if they *believe* that he is innocent.

In sum, so far, both the Fear of Flying case and the False Allegations case illustrate how resistance can be grounded in one's construal of an object, rather than one's beliefs about it. In fact, in both cases, the resister believes something *contrary* to what their construals suggest. The woman in Fear of Flying believes that flying is safe, whereas her construal of it suggests just the opposite. And the community members in False Allegations believe the man in question to be innocent despite continuing to *see* him as guilty. Further, both the Racist Hiring Committee case and the False Allegations case illustrate that an agent may not be *aware* that he or she is construing an object in a particular way. In the Racist Hiring Committee case, an agent's deep racial prejudice warps the way he sees others (and he may be unaware that his vision is so warped).<sup>14</sup> In the False Allegations case, the community members may believe the exonerated man is innocent but may be unable to "shake" their construal of him as an offender. And this construal may affect their behavior towards him whether they are aware of it or not.<sup>15</sup>

Another important facet of non-doxastic resistance is this: Where two agents construe an object differently, it is possible for them to share the same beliefs and values, but one resists the object and the other does not. To elaborate, suppose we have two individuals,  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , and that  $S_1$  resists a given object, whereas  $S_2$  does not. This difference in resistance may have one of several explanations. First, perhaps  $S_1$  and  $S_2$

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<sup>14</sup> I make no claim that racism or racial prejudice always (or even generally) works in this way (namely, in terms of how an agent construes others).

<sup>15</sup> Again, they may be aware of their *behavior* towards the man without being aware of the way in which they are *construing* him.

believe different things about the object. Or perhaps there is some difference between the two agents' respective values that explains why one finds the object unacceptable whereas the other does not. But even holding beliefs and values fixed, it may still turn out that one agent resists the object and the other does not. To illustrate, consider:

Duck-Rabbit Distress: Steve and Gary both agree that images of ducks are evil, horrendous things, and that anyone who produces the image of a duck should be severely punished. Next, an artist shows the image of the duck-rabbit (illustrated above) to both Steve and Gary. Steve sees a duck, but Gary sees a rabbit.

In this case, Steve would plausibly take a stance of opposition towards the artist whereas Gary would not. From Gary's perspective, the artist has done nothing objectionable (there is nothing wrong with drawing rabbits). But from Steve's perspective, a terrible wrong has been committed. So even though Steve and Gary share the same values, one resists a particular object whereas the other does not, simply because they have construed the same object differently.

One problem for this example may be that even though the two agents share the same values, they do *not* share the same beliefs. After all, it might seem that Steve believes "this picture is of a duck" whereas Gary believes "this picture is of a rabbit." If that is correct, then I have not yet established that there can be a difference between two agents (in terms of their resistance towards and object) while holding fixed their values *and* beliefs. To address that concern, consider a slightly more complicated case:

Duck-Rabbit Distress 2.0: Both Steve and Gary share the same values concerning ducks and rabbits. Furthermore, both agents are disposed to respond with immense amounts of fear and violence immediately upon being presented with the image of a duck. Upon seeing the image, Steve begins screaming and thrashing about, whereas Gary does not.

Such a reaction does not require that Steve *believes* anything specific about the image—surely an agent can become fearful or lash out towards things in an impulsive manner

(that is, without forming beliefs about it). But if that is so, then resistance can occur in one individual but not another, simply due to a difference in construal, rather than a difference in belief, value, or both.

Moving on, I will call the second kind of resistance—in which *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable only because *S* believes that *Z* is unacceptable—“doxastic resistance.” Here, that *S* resists a given object is the result of *S*’s beliefs about *Z*. For example, *S* may resist *Z* because *S* believes that *Z* has committed (or embodies) some great injustice (and *S* is committed to opposing such injustices). Or *S* may resist *Z* because *S* believes that *Z* creates some serious inconvenience. Whatever the case, regarding doxastic resistance, it is the agent’s beliefs about the object (and *not* her construal of it) that explain why she resists it.

Similar to “non-doxastic” resistance, it is possible for two agents to take different stances towards an object (one resists it, the other does not) even if we hold fixed the agents’ respective values and construal of the object. A return to the Duck-Rabbit Distress case will help to illustrate this point:

Duck-Rabbit Distress 3.0: Steve and Gary both agree that images of ducks are evil, horrendous things, and that anyone who produces the image of a duck should be severely punished. Next, an artist shows the image of the duck-rabbit (illustrated above) to both Steve and Gary. Steve and Gary both see a rabbit. But they also overhear that others see a duck. Upon hearing this conversation, Steve continues to believe his own senses, but Gary comes to believe that his perception is mistaken. He starts to believe that what appears to him to be the image of a rabbit is actually the image of a duck (even though he still does not *see* the image of a duck). As such, Gary violently opposes the artist’s work.

In this case, Steve believes that his construal of the image is accurate, whereas Gary does not. And it is this difference in belief that drives Gary to become resistant towards the

artist (but prevents Steve from doing the same), all while they share the same construal of the image and the same values.

The third kind of resistance—in which *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable both because *S* *construes* that *Z* as unacceptable and *believes* *Z* is unacceptable—I will call “compound resistance.” It is “compound” in that it is a combination of both doxastic and non-doxastic resistance. I expect that this category will account for *most* actual instances of resistance. In other words, it seems that when actual people resist something, this will be due to their beliefs about the thing as well as how they are construing it. Nonetheless, compound resistance is not itself a unique category above and beyond the other two categories described above. For that reason, I will not discuss it at length here, as doing so would likely just repeat many of the points made above.

There are a few aspects of compound resistance that are worth discussing, however. For one, there may be a complex interrelation between a person’s construal of an object and their beliefs about it. A man who construes (or “sees”) a dog as a threat may come to believe that the dog *is* a threat (because of this construal). A woman who believes that flying on a commercial airliner is safe may eventually overcome her fear of flying (and so, her belief that she is safe may help her to reshape the way she “sees” flying). The point to take away here is that even when a person’s construal of an object and her beliefs about it do not align, they may influence one another. An agent’s construal of an object may transform her beliefs about it and vice versa.

This point may be made especially relevant when we consider one of the important differences between the Continent Man and the Virtuous Woman, as described in Section One. The continent individual is, very roughly, one who *knows* what the right

thing to do is, but struggles to bring themselves to do that thing.<sup>16</sup> For example, a continent individual might know which meal option is best (e.g. most healthy) but cannot help but see it as an unappealing choice (or they may find less healthy food to be more appealing). In this way, the agent's beliefs conflict with his construal. He believes that a certain meal option is best, but cannot help but *see* it as an inferior choice. As a contrast, the virtuous agent in this case would both believe that the relevant food is best *and* see it as best. In other words, her belief about the food and construal of it would align. Over time, of course, the continent agent might work to bring his construal of the object into alignment with his (accurate) beliefs about it. In this way, he would allow reason to reshape his perception and desires (cf. Aristotle *NE* 1139b.4-5). And so, this is one way in which the agent's beliefs about an object might come to affect his construal of it over time.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, regarding the continent agent, we know that his belief and construal go in different directions. He resists what is good given his construal of the relevant object, but not because of his beliefs about it. Thus, he exhibits non-doxastic resistance towards what is healthy.<sup>18</sup> The virtuous individual, however, resists what is unhealthy. And this occurs along *both* doxastic and non-doxastic lines. In other words, the virtuous individual exhibits *compound resistance* to what is unhealthy: She perceives it to be

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<sup>16</sup> See Aristotle (*NE* 1145b.7-16).

<sup>17</sup> The reverse may happen as well: a continent agent may continue to give into his faulty construal of an object until he finds himself *believing* that it is best (when it really is not).

<sup>18</sup> And this is true even though he manages to overpower his own resistance (given that he is continent). It is the *incontinent* individual that does not overpower his resistance towards what is healthy.

undesirable and also believes it to be undesirable. Her resistance is, therefore, a mix of the doxastic and non-doxastic varieties (i.e. compound).

A second aspect of compound resistance to note is that insofar as an agent's resistance is rooted in both their construal of an object and their beliefs about it, it need not be the case that his construal and beliefs are doing equal work in producing his resistance. In other words, an agent's resistance might be primarily due to the way he construes an object, while his beliefs are doing less to generate his resistance. For example:

False Allegations 2.0: A man is charged with child molestation, but the charges are later discovered to have been almost certainly false. There is some very minor evidence that the offenses occurred, but nowhere near enough for the charges to stick. Nonetheless, even though members of the community believe him to be innocent, they cannot help but *see* him as a threat.

In False Allegations 2.0, an agent who takes careful consideration of the evidence will admit that there is *some* reason to believe that the man in question is guilty. And such an agent may also struggle to “shake” his construal of the man as an offender. In this case, the agent might say “I know the evidence that he committed those crimes is very weak, but I cannot deny that it is there. And even with that evidence aside, I just cannot help but see him as an offender – I have to work hard to see him as innocent.” So here, it is plausible that the agent's beliefs about the alleged offender—his knowledge of the incriminating evidence—do contribute to his resistance. But the majority of the agent's resistance is due to his construal of the alleged offender. If the evidence were removed from the equation, the agent might resist the alleged offender a little bit less. But his resistance would remain for the most part, given his inability to *see* the alleged offender as innocent.

We might, therefore, describe compound resistance as being *grounded* in both doxastic and non-doxastic resistance. Once more, this means that it is not a new species of resistance, but is just an overlap of the two. And so, an agent's resistance may be grounded in his beliefs (which means he would exhibit doxastic resistance), an agent's resistance may be grounded in his construal of an object (which means he would exhibit non-doxastic resistance), or an agent's resistance may be grounded (at least in part) in *both* doxastic and non-doxastic resistance (and so, this agent's resistance would be *compound*).

### 2.2d Objects as "Unacceptable"

Returning to the general account of resistance one more time, I stated that when *S* resists *Z*, it follows that *S* opposes *Z* because *S* deems *Z* to be *unacceptable*. In this section, I will discuss what is meant by "unacceptable," the ways in which an object might be deemed to be unacceptable, and the reasons why a given object might be deemed unacceptable.

To start, that *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable is closely tied to *S*'s opposition to *Z*. Recall that when *S* opposes *Z* in the relevant way, it may be that *S* hates *Z*, dislikes it, wants it removed or revised, wishes it away, speaks against it or stands against it (symbolically or otherwise), etc. From this, we can gather that when *S* deems *Z* to be *unacceptable*, this may mean that *S* wants *Z* to be changed, undone, revised, reversed, destroyed, etc. From *S*'s perspective, *Z* constitutes, embodies, includes, or entails some kind of negative feature and that negative feature is sufficient (again, from *S*'s perspective) to make *Z* worthy of opposition. In other words, *S* either believes or

perceives *Z* to be a negative thing (or to have some negative feature) and this belief (or perception) gives rise to *S*'s opposition towards *Z*.

Drawing from the examples in Section One once more, in the Abortion Clinic case, a man bombed a clinic because it provided women with access to abortions. That the clinic participated in this practice is, in the bomber's mind, what makes the clinic's existence unacceptable. More specifically, he might oppose the practice of abortion on moral grounds, religious grounds, or might have some other reason for opposing the practice of abortion. But because this particular clinic offered that type of procedure, the bomber deemed the clinic as worthy of opposition.

Similar things can be said about the other examples from Section One of Chapter One. In the Looting case, several individuals looted stores as a response to the unjust actions of local law enforcement. Here, the object being resisted is local law enforcement (and its actions). And this object is opposed *because* (in the resisters' minds) it embodied (or was responsible for) some injustice. So (again, from the resisters' perspective), the unjust nature of the object (or, at least, the unjust nature of the object's actions) is what makes the object worthy of opposition. So, again, in each instance of resistance, there is some feature of the object being resisted that (from the resister's perspective) makes the object worthy of opposition (in one form or another).

As to the question of *why* an object might be deemed to be unacceptable, there are many answers. Frequently, agents resist objects on moral grounds. A particular object will be resisted on the grounds that it is *morally* unacceptable; it embodies (or committed) some moral wrong, falls short of the resister's moral standards, and so forth. We saw this kind of "moral-based resistance" in many of the examples from the first section.

But resistance does not always occur on moral grounds. That is, objects are not always deemed to be “unacceptable” because they violate or fall short of some moral standard. Rather, to give a non-exhaustive list, objects might be deemed to be unacceptable (in the resister’s mind) because they are inconvenient, costly, imprudent, irrational, unreasonable, or impolite. More specifically, we saw that in the Picky Eater case, the object being resisted was “unacceptable” given its bad taste. In the Dating Troubles case—where a man is opposed to dating his best friend—perhaps the object being resisted was “unacceptable” because the resister did not want to risk losing a friend (should his dating her turn sour). Hence, resistance may occur for a wide variety of reasons. Objects might be deemed to be morally unacceptable, socially unacceptable, economically unacceptable, practically unacceptable, epistemically unacceptable, and so on.

### *2.2e Resistance and Camus’s “Revolt”*

Having described each component of my account of resistance, I think it will be helpful to see how they all work together. The best way of doing this is by examining a specific example. Additionally, I mentioned earlier that Camus—the champion of a “philosophy of revolt”—can help shed light on my account of resistance. And so, in this section I aim to kill two birds with one stone: I will show that Camus’s “revolt” is a *specific instance* of resistance as I have understood it (as opposed to a competing account of the same phenomenon). And by walking through this particular instance of resistance, it will (hopefully) become clear how all the components of the account work together.

To start, the kind of “revolt” that Camus champions is an instance of *compound* resistance. This means that he calls for readers to oppose a particular object that they

deem to be unacceptable in both a doxastic and non-doxastic way. So, what is the *object* of revolt? Something like the following state of affairs: The universe is entirely devoid of meaning. As Copleston (1994) puts it, “in the end the world is revealed, to the clear-sighted man, as without any determinate purpose or meaning. The world is not rational” (392). Yet human beings have a “longing for happiness and reason” (Camus 1991a: 28). And so, there is a clash between their longing for meaning and the meaningless universe in which they live. This clash gives rise to “the absurd” which “is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” (28). And so, it is not *the absurd* that human beings are called to oppose, but rather, the absurd results from their opposition towards something else: The meaninglessness of the universe. The absurd, far from being something that Camus wants readers to oppose, is (in some sense) something he wants them to *embrace*.<sup>19</sup> And it is worth noting here too that the agent cannot hope to *change* the ultimate lack of meaning in the universe. But, as mentioned in 1.2b, there is nothing inherently unreasonable or wrong with resisting objects that one has no power to change, alter, destroy, etc.

So we have identified the object of resistance, but why must we resist it in a *compound* way? Doing so means deeming the object as unacceptable along doxastic and non-doxastic lines. If one resists the meaninglessness of the universe along doxastic lines, this means that they oppose it because they *believe* it to be unacceptable. That the universe is devoid of meaning is the end result of reason and “lucid” thought (1991a: 5-

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<sup>19</sup> For example, in contrast to those who “take the leap,” Camus writes: “The absurd man...recognizes the struggle, does not absolutely scorn reason, and admits the irrational. Thus he again embraces in a single glance all the data of experience and he is little inclined to leap before knowing. He knows simply that in that alert awareness there is no further place for hope” (37).

6). Those who fail to recognize that the universe is such a place are lost in “illusions” (6). And so, Camus invites the reader to follow reason to its end. It is only natural, thereafter, that the agent will believe this state to be unacceptable, given our shared desire for meaning; our “appetite for understanding” and “nostalgia for the absolute” (36). Thus, for anyone who follows reason to its end, they will be led to believe the universe is devoid of meaning *and* will come to believe that state of affairs to be unacceptable. And the *latter* belief is what (in part) constitutes one’s *doxastic* resistance.<sup>20</sup>

According to Camus, one way for agents to fail here is by rejecting the belief that the universe is ultimately devoid of meaning. This happens, for example, if they come to believe in some transcendent meaning-maker. Such agents may follow reason to its end—and so, gain a recognition of the lack of meaning in the universe—but then come to believe that the universe is *not* ultimately devoid of meaning (thanks to some “transcendent” reality beyond it). These are the philosophers who “take the leap” beyond the absurd, and thereby commit “philosophical suicide” (35ff). In short—and to oversimplify—those who “take the leap” are agents that endorse belief in some “transcendental” or “eternal” reality that, in a sense, does away with the absurd (or bypasses it, rather than confronting it).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Perhaps one will respond that it is not necessary that the agent who comes to believe that the universe is devoid of meaning will *also* (given their “nostalgia”) develop the belief that the meaninglessness of the universe is *unacceptable* in some way. Though I am not convinced, if that were so, it would simply mean that the resistance Camus advocates is *non-doxastic* in nature, rather than *compound*. And that does not affect my overall point here: Camus’s “revolt” is an *instance* of resistance (as I understand it).

<sup>21</sup> For example, when discussing Camus’s comments on Kierkegaard, Curtis (2007) writes, “I think what Camus had in mind was that in Kierkegaard’s leap of faith to accept God he was leaping over the absurd, thus avoiding it rather than engaging it, in spite of Kierkegaard’s claims to the contrary. According to the influential theologian

Recall that the absurd arises when a meaning-seeking agent recognizes the meaninglessness inherent in their “setting” (Camus 1991a: 6). If, during one’s encounter with the absurd, one suddenly leaps *beyond* the absurd—by forming some belief in a transcendental reality that bleeds meaning *back* into one’s setting (in some way or another)—then one has failed to grasp the true reality of one’s situation.<sup>22</sup> Such authors seem to think that “reason is useless but there is something beyond reason” (35). Yet, as Camus would have it, “to an absurd mind reason is useless and there is *nothing* beyond reason” (35, emphasis added). So one must retain belief in the absurd—that there is a “divorce” between agents and their world—and this belief is partly constitutive of one’s doxastic resistance (one’s *revolt*). That is, one must continue to *believe* that the universe is devoid of meaning.

I argued above that Camus’s revolt is an instance of *compound* resistance. Thus far I have described the doxastic component of it, but what of the non-doxastic component? The object of resistance remains fixed: A universe devoid of meaning. If one resists this in a non-doxastic manner, that means she construes the object as unacceptable; she *sees* it as such. That Camus thinks agents *should* perceive the universe in this way is supported, in part, by his claim that this is how the universe really is. To perceive it as a

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Rosemary Radford Ruether: ‘Camus insists that we face and take upon ourselves the burden of the dilemma of the absurd. The leap of faith both in a transcendent God and a heavenly future home evades the reality of the dilemma’” (117).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Camus (1991a): “The moment the notion transforms itself into eternity’s springboard, it ceases to be linked to human lucidity. The absurd is no longer that evidence that man ascertains without consenting to it. The struggle is eluded. Man integrates the absurd and in that communion causes to disappear its essential character, which is opposition, laceration, and divorce. This leap is an escape” (35).

setting in which there is some grand, ultimate meaning behind our actions would be to misperceive it.

Relatedly, I take it, to perceive the meaninglessness as somehow *acceptable* is to deny one's inherent desire for greater meaning (i.e. one's "nostalgia"). And so, these misperceptions are akin to "deceit" and represent "the mind's retreat before what the mind itself has brought to light" (50). As Copleston summarizes the matter, "Human pride and greatness are shown neither in surrender nor in the sort of escapism indulged in by the existential philosophers...but in *living in the consciousness of the absurd* yet revolting against it" (393, emphasis added). The absurd hero is conscious of the reality of her situation, she does not allow herself to be misled into seeing it as a place of ultimate meaning. And once again, to see the universe in this way will naturally lead to one's seeing it as unacceptable given one's "nostalgia"—a longing for ultimate meaning—*assuming* that one has not "taken the leap" by positing some transcendent reality (and meaning) beyond the absurd.

This covers the doxastic and non-doxastic components of Camus's revolt. In sum, given my account of resistance, resisters oppose some object because they deem it to be unacceptable. Regarding Camus's "revolt," I have identified the *object* of his resistance, as well as the ways in which he *deems* the object to be *unacceptable*. What remains, then, is the nature of *opposition* that Camus calls his reader to. And here is where the primary question of his (1991a) comes into play: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy" (3). In other words, there are two

forms of opposition to consider: suicide or something else. And Camus is clear that suicide “is not legitimate” as a form of opposition (1991a: Preface).

The kind of opposition, therefore, that Camus defends is “man’s committing himself and living in the fullest manner possible” (Copleston 1994: 393). Like Sisyphus who toils away endlessly at a meaningless task, the absurd man, “can only drain everything to the bitter end, and deplete himself” (1991a: 55). And later, Camus adds that the absurd man is

He who, without negating it, does nothing for the eternal. Not that nostalgia is foreign to him. But he prefers his courage and his reasoning. The first teaches him to live *without appeal* and to get along with what he has; the second informs him of his limits. Assured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future, and of his mortal consciousness, *he lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime. That is his field, that is his action, which he shields from any judgment but his own.* A greater life cannot mean for him another life. (66, emphasis added)

The opposition, therefore, is a kind of taking control of one’s own life—control over one’s “personal fate”—and commitment to the tasks one has set for oneself (123).

Copleston (1994) suggests that these tasks might be “a social or political cause in [one’s] historical situation” or a commitment to developing works of art (393).<sup>23</sup> But whatever the case, the absurd man commits himself so, all while fixated upon the ultimate meaninglessness of one’s actions (without obscuring that reality or ignoring it or taking solace in some transcendent “beyond”).<sup>24</sup> And it is in the struggle itself that the absurd

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<sup>23</sup> Copleston takes these examples from Camus himself, who discusses them at length (see his 1991a: 69ff).

<sup>24</sup> Another illustration of this phenomenon that Camus provides is in his (1991b) novel, *The Plague*. In short, several of the characters bind together to do everything in their power to oppose the spread of plague (and the death it brings), though they know their efforts are doomed to failure. As Dr. Rieux (the protagonist) puts it, the plague represents a kind of “never-ending defeat” (128). And yet, in the face of hopelessness and

man finds a kind of meaning and happiness. As Camus concludes, “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (123).

To close this section, whether or not we find Camus’s view to be plausible, I have shown how my project—my account of resistance—relates to Camus’s overarching project of “revolt.” They are not exactly the same, but Camus’s “revolt” can be described in the terms I have set forth (as an *instance* of compound resistance).

### 2.3 *Must Resistance be Intentional?*

Having provided a general explanation of my account of resistance, as well as illustrating how all the pieces work together (when considering Camus’s “revolt” as an example of resistance), in the remainder of this chapter, I will return to two questions that Hollander and Einwohner (2004) state are at the center of discussions about resistance: (i) Must resistance be intentional? and (ii) Must resistance occur in action? I will answer the first question in this section and the second in the next.

Regarding this first question, Hollander and Einwohner ask, “Must the actor be aware that she or he is resisting some exercise of power—and *intending to do so*—for an action to qualify as resistance?” (542, emphasis added). There are several responses that Hollander and Einwohner describe, two of which are worth noting (542-3)<sup>25</sup>:

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*full recognition* that they are fighting against death—which can never be overcome—Rieux and the others resolve to fight it in every way possible (132-3). And *that* is the kind of opposition that Camus endorses.

<sup>25</sup> For clarity, I have paraphrased these responses using my own terms (e.g., “object” instead of “target”).

Response 1: To count as true resistance, the agent must “consciously” oppose a given object (i.e. she must intend to resist the object and be aware of her resistance).

Response 2: Resistance may “occur ‘at a level beneath consciousness’” (i.e. an agent may resist a given object despite being neither aware of her resistance nor intending to resist it).

Hollander and Einwohner’s goal is to point out where the point of disagreement lies between various accounts of resistance, rather than argue for one particular view over the other (534-5).<sup>26</sup> The account of resistance I have developed, however, aligns most comfortably with Response 2.

To see why, it will help to unpack Response 2 a bit, especially in light of its apparently blurring the lines between “consciousness,” “intention,” and “awareness.” As such, we might ask a three-part question: To count as genuine resistance, must the resister be *conscious* of her resistance, must she *intend* to resist, and must she be *aware* of it? And it should be noted that how we understand each of the key terms in play—consciousness, intention, and awareness—will affect our answers to each part of this question.

That being said, suppose that we understand consciousness as *phenomenal* consciousness. As Dougherty (2014b) puts it, “an entity has phenomenal consciousness when it has experiences that exemplify phenomenal concepts” (66). Phenomenal concepts include things like “*red, sour, [and] shrill*” (66). So this kind of consciousness comes with a kind of “feel” or experience of the relevant sort of concepts. Now return to the question at hand. We might ask, to count as genuine resistance, must the agent be

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<sup>26</sup> Although, as mentioned above they clearly think that (i) resistance must have a “target” and (ii) that having a target means the resister intentionally “takes aim” at the thing being resisted (545). As such, Hollander and Einwohner seem to favor Response 1 over Response 2.

conscious of her *opposition* toward the object? And must she be conscious of her *deeming* the object as unacceptable? In response, it seems plausible to me that the resister will usually be conscious of her *opposition* to some degree. That is, there may well be a kind of *what-it-is-like* state when an agent *opposes* an object (and so, the agent would be conscious of her opposition).<sup>27</sup> But she need not be conscious of her *deeming* the object to be unacceptable.

In other words, it may be that sometimes, the resister does not experience a *what-it-is-like* state concerning her *deeming the object to be unacceptable*. After all, the relevant kind of *deeming* can be non-doxastic. And this includes cases where agents *construe* objects to be unacceptable in some way or another. But, following Roberts' (2003), "many of our emotions pass unfelt" because (in part) "countless construals that we undergo or perform during any day, in the course of our work or our social interactions, never rise to the level of consciousness" (79). The fact that *generally* construals can go unnoticed supports the idea that some construals will occur "at a level beneath consciousness." And so, at least given this account of consciousness, an agent need not be conscious of her resistance for it to be *genuine* resistance (even if she must be conscious of the *opposition* aspect of her resistance). So consciousness of the relevant sort will not always extend to *every* aspect of her resistance.

Next, I take *intention* to consist in "a combination of desire-belief states" where, as one example, "to say that someone intentionally turns on the air conditioner is just to explain her action by appealing to (e.g.) a desire to turn on the air conditioner and a belief

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<sup>27</sup> See Nagel (1974) for an account of consciousness like this, as well as Van Gulick (2017) for an overview of Nagel's account and its competitors.

that moving her hand in a certain way is a token of that type of act.”<sup>28</sup> Applied to resistance generally, we might say (roughly) that the agent who intentionally resists some object desires to affect the object in some way (characteristic of opposing it) and believes that her action (her opposition) will bring about that change (or aims to bring about that change). And so, we can ask: To count as genuine resistance, must the agent *intentionally* oppose (or resist) the object in this way? Here, I think the answer is clearly “no.”<sup>29</sup>

After all, even if agents who resist an object have a particular desire concerning that object (that it be altered, undone, changed, etc.), it is possible that they will fail to believe that their actions aim to bring about that change. That is, it is possible for the resister to fail to believe that she *is* resisting (or even to believe that she is *not* resisting). She might even be conscious of her opposition in the way described above, but mistakenly believe that she is not *acting* on it or allowing it to affect her relationship with the object that she in fact resists. So resistance need not be intentional given the present understanding of “intentional.”

Further, in terms of intention (or lack thereof), Hollander and Einwohner’s claims about resistance differ significantly from mine when it comes to *unintentional* resistance. According to Hollander and Einwohner, the only plausible way for an agent to unintentionally resist an object is if the object (or some observer in general) *recognizes* (or *identifies*) the agent as resisting the object (544-5). In other words, on Hollander and Einwohner’s account, for an agent to resist an object, she either does so intentionally or

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<sup>28</sup> Taken from Wilson and Shpall (2016: Section Four).

<sup>29</sup> Once more, I think my answer here sets my account apart from the one suggested by Hollander and Einwohner, given their claim that resistance “takes aim” at a particular “target.” Taking aim, in that sense, seems to be a kind of intentional act, as I argued above.

she is *recognized* to be resistant towards the object by some other party (whether that party be the object or an observer). And so, they write, “actions that are neither intended as resistance nor recognized as such by anyone...are not considered resistance” (545). Furthermore, they claim, “to identify as resistance an act that is neither intended as resistance nor seen as such by those whom the act may oppose requires a heavy burden of proof” (545-6).<sup>30</sup>

The account of resistance I have offered allows for the possibility that an agent may resist an object even in cases where the agent does not intend to resist the object *and* nobody recognizes (believes, observes, or identifies) that the agent is resistant. In other words, to be resistant, an agent need not *intend* his resistance, and an outside party need not identify the agent’s resistance as such. To illustrate, consider the following case:

Sexist Employee: A male employee believes that females should not be involved in his workplace. But this employee’s boss is female. The employee—despite believing that his boss should not have the job she has—believes that he is treating her with the same respect as if she were a male. Yet, he continues to construe the situation as unacceptable. Additionally, were his boss to leave her job and were a male to take her place, the employee would accomplish his daily tasks far more efficiently and quickly. His sexism, in this case, is affecting his ability to do his job well (though he does not realize it and would even deny it if asked). Additionally, his boss and coworkers fail to notice that he is underperforming in his duties—they believe that he is doing the best he can.

In the Sexist Employee case, the employee’s opposition to his having a female for a boss is causing him to underperform. He does not intend to underperform, nor does he intend to be resistant towards his boss. Again, he believes that he is being perfectly compliant

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<sup>30</sup> Hollander and Einwohner’s talk of “proof” in this context is a little bit puzzling. Their stated task is not to give a “correct” account of resistance, but is, rather, to describe how the term has been used, map common ground between differing accounts, and shed light on the main points of disagreement between accounts (534-5, 537). Perhaps by “proof” they mean something like this: Given that so many accounts of resistance agree that resistance must be either intentional or observed, if an account is to reject those claims, then it must give convincing reason for doing so.

with the situation.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, nobody recognizes or observes his actions to be acts of resistance (he denies that he is resistant, and his boss and coworkers do not notice his resistance). Nonetheless, despite a lack of intention and a lack of observers, his behavior is affected by his construal of the situation. He opposes the state of affairs he finds himself in and this opposition takes form in underperformance of his duties. Furthermore, his opposition is rooted in (at least) his non-doxastic construal of the situation as unacceptable. And as such, he is resistant to that state of affairs.

Given the “heavy burden of proof” that Hollander and Einwohner place upon my account, perhaps one more example is in order. As such, here is a modification of the Fear of Flying example from Section One:

Fear of Flying 2.0: A woman is too afraid of heights to board a plane – her fear renders her unable to walk onboard. She has no intention of being afraid (or being resistant towards air travel). In fact, she hates that she is so afraid and struggles against this fear. Additionally, she believes that air travel is perfectly safe (despite being unable to construe it as such). In light of her belief, she overpowers (but does not diminish) her fear of flying and boards a plane. None of her fellow passengers think she has any fear, as she can hide it well. So none of them take her to be afraid or resistant to being in this situation.

In Fear of Flying 2.0, a woman must overcome the resistance she bears towards air travel. The fact she overcomes it does not mean it is not resistance. More importantly, she has no intention of construing air travel as dangerous (and has no intention of refusing to fly). So she does not *want* (or intend) to be resistant, but she is resistant nonetheless. And no outside observer in the case sees her as being resistant towards air travel either. So here again, we have a real case of resistance, though it is neither intended nor observed.

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<sup>31</sup> Note: This suggests that an individual can be self-deceived regarding what he is resistant towards (or not resistant towards). Individuals may believe, “I am resistant towards Z” and be mistaken, and they may also believe, “I am not resistant towards Z” and be mistaken.

Hollander and Einwohner may object that there *is* an observer in Fear of Flying 2.0: The woman herself! But, in response, the fact that the woman can identify herself as resistant is irrelevant. Hollander and Einwohner's claim is that if *S* resists *Z*, then either *S* intends to resist *Z* or *S* is seen *by Z or some outside observer* to be resistant. And the woman in this case meets neither criteria: She does not intend to be resistant and no *outside* observer views her as resistant. In sum, an agent may resist an object whether she intends to resist it or not. And, furthermore, she might resist an object whether or not the object (or anyone else, for that matter) observes her to be resistant.

Lastly, we have the question: To count as genuine resistance, must the agent be *aware* of her resistance? Again, I think the answer is clearly, "no." I will suppose that awareness in this context involves a kind of recognition of the agent's internal states by the agent herself. The resister who is *aware* of her resistance knows that she is opposing a particular object and knows that she is opposing it because she deems it to be unacceptable in some particular way. We might add that she knows *why* she deems the object to be unacceptable. But surely a resister can fail to know or recognize any number of these things. As I argued in Section Two, C, an agent may oppose a given object (because that object has been deemed by the agent to be unacceptable) while not realizing that she is opposing the object in *this* particular way. This was the case in the Racist Hiring Committee case, where an individual failed to notice his own prejudices were causing him to resist the hire of non-white applicants. It was also the case in the False Allegations case, where some members of a community could not help but feel uneasy around a man that had been accused of child molestation (even though his name had been

cleared). And so, an agent may resist some object without being aware of his resistance (or his reasons for resisting it).

In sum, at times, Hollander and Einwohner seem to conflate *consciousness* with *intentionality* and *awareness*. Thus, when asking the question, “must resistance be *intentional*?” they are really asking (at least) three different questions. By distinguishing between those three questions, I have aimed to clarify how my account of resistance operates and differs from the one suggested by Hollander and Einwohner. To those ends, I have argued that there is some sense in which resisters must be conscious of their *opposition* (though not necessarily their *resistance*). But, contra Hollander and Einwohner, it is false that resisters must *intend* to resist. And, lastly, it is false that resisters must be *aware* of their resistance. Though once again, on different understandings of *consciousness*, *intention*, and *awareness* than the ones I suppose, we may end up with quite different results.

#### 2.4 Must Resistance Occur in Action?

Having addressed the question of whether or not resistance must be intentional, I turn to a final question that Hollander and Einwohner suggest arises commonly in debates about resistance: Must resistance occur *in action*? In response, Hollander and Einwohner write, “virtually all uses [of ‘resistance’] included a sense of *action*, broadly conceived. In other words, authors seem to agree that resistance is not a quality of an actor or a state of being, but involves some active behavior, whether verbal, cognitive, or physical” (538). They add later that “there is virtual consensus that resistance involves oppositional *action* of some kind” (544, emphasis added). Given such a heavy emphasis on action, it is unsurprising that the “most commonly studied *mode* of resistance is material or physical”

(535). For example, acts of resistance that have been studied include things like “marches, picketing, and the forming of organizations,” as well as acts of violence, “working slowly, feigning sickness, wearing particular types of clothing, or stealing from one’s employer” (535-6). So, Hollander and Einwohner—or at least the authors they survey—seem committed to the view that resistance must occur in action of some kind.

Yet, the account of resistance developed here states that resistance is a *relation*. It is not a set of actions, nor is it a type of action. And nothing in the account suggests that resistance must give rise to actions (at least, not externally observable actions like “marches, picketing,” etc.). Additionally, recall what Adams (2006) says about “being for” something: “*being for x* must involve dispositions to favor *x* in action, desire, emotion, or feeling” (17). If the opposition component of resistance is something like the mirror opposite, then resistance involves an agent opposing *x* in action, desire, emotion, or feeling. And surely an individual may oppose something on an emotional level without opposing it in action.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, resistance cannot be thought to have no effect whatsoever on an agent’s interaction with the world. As I have noted multiple times, if an agent resists an object, then she opposes it in action, desire, emotion, or feeling. And if she is *resistant* towards an object, then she is *disposed* to oppose it in action, desire, emotion, or feeling. In the latter case, she may not act on this disposition in all contexts, she may only oppose an object on an emotional level (or via feeling), and so forth. But her resistance towards the object will usually (if not always) affect her overall relationship with the object in *some* way. And this may occur whether the agent (or anyone else) realizes it. So, to be

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<sup>32</sup> That is, if “action” is thought to be some kind of “active behavior” or externally observable behavior, as Hollander and Einwohner suggest.

clear, an agent's resistance towards an object *may* lead him to act in opposition towards the object in an observable way, but it may not give rise to observable opposition (e.g. action) either.

To illustrate, consider the Fear of Flying 2.0 case, where a woman overcomes her resistance towards flying (but nobody notices her struggling with the decision). Here, there are no outside observers that would identify her as resistant towards air travel (or as resisting air travel). Her overt actions are entirely consistent with a non-resistant individual. And yet, on an emotional level (or, at least, in terms of her feelings), she is struggling with resistance towards the current state of affairs. One might argue that the action of “willingly boarding a plane without experiencing fear” is different from “willingly boarding a plane despite feeling fear.” If that is enough to distinguish between actions, then the woman in Fear of Flying 2.0 does indeed resist the relevant object *in action*. But given Hollander and Einwohner's emphasis on externally observable behavior, I suspect this is not what the kind of action they (or the authors they survey) have in mind.

Either way, to clear up the relationship between resistance and action, it will be helpful to distinguish between three different things: resistance, acts of resistance, and merely apparent acts of resistance. Resistance has already been described above in detail—it is a particular sort of relation between an agent and some object. An *act of resistance*, then, is this:

Act of Resistance: Some act of opposition, *A*, performed (directly or indirectly) towards an object, *Z*, by an agent *S*, where *A* is grounded in *S*'s resistance towards *Z*.

In other words, when performing an act of resistance, an agent is already resisting a particular object.<sup>33</sup> He deems that the object is unacceptable (in whatever way, for whatever reason) and his deeming it in this way leads him to oppose the object. Furthermore, the agent's perception of the object leads them to act in *opposition* towards the object (either directly or indirectly). To act in opposition just means to act in a way that undermines the relevant object, destroys it, defeats it, expresses hatred or dislike for it, removes it, or revises it.<sup>34</sup> So not all acts of opposition are acts of resistance. It is possible to oppose something in action without resisting that thing (or being resistant towards it). For example:

Chess Tutor: A parent is teaching his child how to play chess. The parent wants his child to win, but has no intention of *letting* his child win on purpose. As such, the parent plays to the best of his ability.<sup>35</sup>

In the Chess Tutor case, the parent's action (playing to the best of his ability) constitutes an act of opposition. Specifically, the parent is acting in opposition to his child's victory. But the parent is not *resistant* to his child's being victorious (nor does the parent resist his child's victory). He does not deem his child's victory to be "unacceptable" or anything of the sort. In fact, the parent would be quite *glad* if his child did win the game. In this way, we might use Adams' term ("being for") to say that the parent is *for* his child's victory, despite acting in opposition to it.

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<sup>33</sup> Where "already" picks out explanatory priority, not necessarily temporal priority.

<sup>34</sup> Once more, this list is not meant to be exhaustive.

<sup>35</sup> I am indebted to Alexander Pruss for suggesting this example as a way of distinguishing between acts of opposition and acts of resistance.

On the other hand, an agent may be resistant towards something while failing to act in opposition to it. To illustrate, imagine the following case:

Nazi Messenger: In Germany during WWII, there is a German woman who *hates* Nazism. One day, she is approached by an old friend, who—unbeknownst to this woman—is a loyal supporter of Nazism. The friend asks the woman to deliver a letter to some address and the woman gladly does so. But—also unbeknownst to the woman—the letter contains critical information that, upon delivery, will be used to help the Nazis advance their cause.

In this particular case, there is an agent who is resistant towards a particular object (and may even be resisting it when she can), but unknowingly performs an action that actually *supports* that object. But performing the action does nothing to weaken her opposition towards the Nazi regime, nor does it do anything to change the way she views it. She is still disposed towards opposing the object in action, desire, emotion, or feeling (even if, for whatever reason, she does not always act on this disposition). And so, it seems to make the most sense to say that even though she does not presently act in opposition to Nazism (in this case), that she is nonetheless resistant towards it.

Of course, one might respond that if she is to resist Nazism, then her resistance must take form in *other* acts of opposition (even if she does not *always* act in opposition towards it). But in response we can simply construct a case where every time she acts in ways that she thinks opposes Nazism, she ends up aiding the movement. Perhaps she is continually deceived by “friends” whom she does not realize are Nazi supporters. In such a scenario, it may be that she never *acts* in opposition towards Nazism, but that does not change her *disposition* to oppose it in action, desire, emotion, or feeling (nor does it change the fact that she is resisting it—opposing it because she deems it to be unacceptable). And so, resistance (in at least some cases) can occur even if the agent does not *act* in opposition to the object being resisted.

To summarize so far: we have seen that there is a difference between resistance and acts of resistance. The latter is a kind of action that is grounded in the former. And acts of resistance are all acts of opposition, even though not all acts of opposition are acts of resistance. As such, an agent may act in opposition to something without resisting it. Additionally, an agent may resist something while failing to act in opposition to it (where, following Hollander and Einwohner, “action” is understood as a kind of externally observable event). So it is false that resistance will always generate *acts* of opposition.

With all of this in mind, one last distinction is in order. This is the distinction between an act of resistance and a *merely apparent* act of resistance. As the former is already defined, the latter is this:

Merely Apparent Act of Resistance: Some act that an observer (whether the agent or someone else) mistakes for an act of resistance.

According to Hollander and Einwohner, merely apparent acts of resistance constitute *genuine resistance* (544). For example, when an agent is not resisting a particular object, but an observer takes him to be resisting, Hollander and Einwohner call this “externally-defined resistance” (544). The idea seems to be that if the agent is thought to be resisting, then he *is* resisting (at least from an “externally-defined” perspective). But, in my view, this definitely should not count as genuine resistance. Resistance, on the present account, occurs independently of whether or not it is ever observed or acknowledged. To say that an agent is resisting simply because an outsider believes him to be resisting makes no more sense than saying that an agent is being unfaithful to his spouse simply because an outsider believes that he is being unfaithful. So simply because an agent *appears* to be

resisting an object, this is insufficient grounds for us to conclude that he *is* resisting.<sup>36</sup>

This is clearly illustrated in cases like the following:

National Anthem: During a widely-televised sporting event in the United States, the national anthem begins to play. It is revealed to everyone (via camera) that one of the athletes has remained seated on his team's bench, rather than standing during the anthem.

Many people might view this athlete's behavior as an act of protest. In recent times, for example, a number of professional athletes have elected to sit (or take a knee) during the playing of the national anthem as a way to protest what they take to be unjust police action. In *those* cases, the agent deems something to be unacceptable (the way the law is enforced in the country) and so opposes it in some way. In this case, their opposition takes form in their remaining seated during a time at which it is expected that one stands up (as a sign of respect).

Returning to the National Anthem case, a great many people would *perceive* the athlete's sitting as being an act of resistance. And if Hollander and Einwohner are right, then the agent *would* be resisting.<sup>37</sup> But suppose we later learn that the only reason that athlete did not stand for the national anthem was because he was suffering from a complex seizure, which rendered him temporarily unable to move and temporarily unaware of his surroundings. In this case, we will suppose, he had no disposition to oppose anything pertaining to the national anthem, his country, law enforcement, or the actions of law enforcement. Nor did he deem his country, law enforcement, etc., to be unacceptable in any way (we will suppose). On my view (contrary to the views outlined

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<sup>36</sup> The same can be said for whether or not an agent is *resistant* towards an object. Whether or not an agent *is* resistant is independent of whether or not outside observers believe the agent is resistant.

<sup>37</sup> See Hollander and Einwohner (2004: 541).

by Hollander and Einwohner) it would follow that he is *not* resisting those objects (even though he was *perceived* to be resistant by a large audience).

In sum: Resistance is a particular relation between an agent and some object. Should an agent perform an “act of resistance” then this act is grounded in the agent’s resistance towards the object. All acts of resistance are acts of opposition, but the reverse is not true. And simply because some action is *believed* (or *perceived*) to be an act of resistance does not make it so. Also, that someone believes an agent is resisting a particular object does not imply that the agent *is* actually resisting.

### 2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I developed a general account of resistance. After unpacking the nature of resistance, I argued that resisters need not intend or even be aware that they are resisting. Furthermore, in some cases, an agent may resist an object even though nobody (the agent included) realizes that this is happening. Lastly, I have argued that resistance need not give rise to acts of resistance (or acts of opposition). Instead, if an agent is resistant towards something than this means he or she is disposed towards opposing the object in action, desire, emotion, or feeling. And so, when that disposition gives rise to resistance, it may not occur in action. With this account of resistance before us, therefore, we may now examine the difference between *reasonable* resistance and *unreasonable* resistance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Virtues of Resistance

In the previous chapter, I developed a general account of resistance. This account held that resistance is a relation between an agent *S*, and some object, *Z*, where, if *S* bears this relation toward *Z*, then *S* opposes *Z* because *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable. I will now provide an analysis of the difference between *reasonable* resistance and *unreasonable* resistance. Specifically, I will develop several general (and somewhat informal) principles that will allow us to distinguish reasonable resistance from unreasonable resistance.<sup>1</sup>

To this end, I will proceed as follows: first, I will briefly describe what is meant by “reasonable” and “unreasonable” when applied to resistance. Second, I will describe several “virtues” (or “excellences”) of resistance: *consistency*, *proportionality*, and *acceptance-readiness*. Very roughly speaking, the more that an agent’s resistance possesses and exemplifies these virtues, the more reasonable it will be. And the less it possesses and exemplifies these virtues, the more unreasonable it will be. I will then transition to a discussion of two quasi-virtues of resistance: *effectiveness* and *transparency*. I end the chapter with some suggestions about how to engage with those who resist in an unreasonable manner.

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<sup>1</sup> In the next chapter, however, I will attempt to develop a slightly more formal way of drawing the distinction between reasonable and unreasonable resistance.

### 3.1 “Reasonable” Resistance

As mentioned above, when an agent’s resistance is reasonable, it possesses or exemplifies certain virtues, whereas when it is unreasonable, it fails to possess or exemplify these virtues. As such, “reasonable” is derivative—we must understand it in terms of the virtues of resistance, which I will describe in a moment. But first, three general remarks about reasonable resistance are in order. First, reasonable (or “excellent”) resistance is not identical with “ethical” resistance. Second, the virtues of resistance allow us to evaluate an agent’s resistance independently of whether we think what they are claiming is true (or morally important). And third, reasonability is not binary in nature. Rather, it is measured along a spectrum.

To begin, resistance that is reasonable is not always ethical, nor is ethical resistance always reasonable resistance. I have already noted that resistance is reasonable when it embodies certain excellences or virtues. These excellences are characteristic of resistance in the way that sharpness is an excellent characteristic of a knife. So whether or not an agent’s resistance occurs in an *ethical* manner remains a separate issue (just like whether or not a knife is used ethically is a separate issue from whether or not the knife is a good—or “excellent”—knife). An excellent knife may be used unethically, but that does not make it less excellent as a knife. Excellent resistance may be unethical as well (or so I shall argue below). Thus, we must be careful to distinguish between *excellent* resistance and *ethical* resistance (and again, my focus is almost entirely on the former).

Second, the virtues of resistance provide us with a way of evaluating an agent’s resistance independently of whether we think what they are resisting is genuinely worthy of opposition or not. To elaborate, in assessing the reasonability of resistance, the virtues

I describe will work in a somewhat analogous way to certain principles of logic. Principles of logic allow us to evaluate the legitimacy (validity, strength, etc.) of arguments. Application of these principles does not typically require that we endorse or reject the truth of what is being argued. That is, logic allows us to evaluate arguments whether we agree with an arguer's claims or not. Analogously, the virtues of resistance provide us with principles that will allow us to test and evaluate the resistance itself (without making any judgment about whether or not the resister is fighting for a worthy cause). The virtues focus on the structure of the resistance (just as principles of logic often focus on the structure of arguments). And in this way, we can separate reasonable resistance from unreasonable resistance without making any judgments about the truth of a resister's claims (or the moral import of their resistance).<sup>2</sup>

Third, the reasonability of an agent's resistance is measured along a spectrum (it is not binary in nature). In other words, there is not a sharp cutoff between what is reasonable and what is unreasonable. There will be instances of resistance that are clearly reasonable, instances that are clearly unreasonable, and many cases in between (where the picture is far less clear). Regarding those cases that fall between, some may be "fairly

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<sup>2</sup> And, as I will mention throughout this chapter, there may be cases in which agents have overriding reasons to resist in ways that violate the virtues of resistance (just as there may be cases in which agents have overriding reasons to flout the laws of logic). For example, suppose the resistance of Camus's (1991a) hero, Sisyphus, fails my tests of "reasonable resistance" (and I am not *asserting* that he does). Sisyphus may nonetheless have an overriding reason to resist as he does: It is in so resisting that he gains any real semblance of meaning or happiness. As Camus argues, "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (123). But the presence of these overriding reasons in no way implies that Sisyphus's resistance is excellent *qua resistance*. To make this clear, we can describe parallel cases in which agents have overriding reasons to make use of invalid arguments (see the Invalid Argument case below). But the possibility of such overriding reasons in no way makes the arguments good ones *qua the laws of logic*. That such cases are possible no more undermines the importance of the laws of logic than the virtues of resistance.

reasonable,” others may be “borderline reasonable,” and so forth. To help get a sense of the spectrum of reasonability, compare the following three examples:

**Abortion Clinic Picketing:** A man believes that all innocent human life ought to be protected. He also believes that the practice of abortion involves the termination of innocent human life. As such, he deems the practice (and clinics that perform abortions) to be morally unacceptable. In opposition to one such clinic, the man stands outside of the clinic, urging potential patients of the clinic to reconsider their options.

**Abortion Clinic Bombing:** A man believes that all innocent human life ought to be protected. He also believes that the practice of abortion involves the termination of innocent human life. As such, he deems the practice (and clinics that perform abortions) to be morally unacceptable. In opposition to one such clinic, the man bombs it, killing more than a dozen innocent people and wounding many more in the process.

**Abortion Clinic Apocalypse:** A man believes that all innocent human life ought to be protected. He also believes that the practice of abortion involves the termination of innocent human life. As such, he deems the practice (and clinics that perform abortions) to be morally unacceptable. In opposition to one such clinic, the man detonates a weapon that destroys the earth and ends all life on the planet.

In my view, these examples are listed in decreasing order of reasonability. The first is most reasonable, the third is least reasonable.<sup>3</sup> The virtues of resistance will provide a principled explanation of why this is so. But in the meantime, all I hope to have established is that plausibly, these three examples range in reasonability in the way I have described.

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<sup>3</sup> It also seems fair to say that these examples are listed from “most ethical” to “least ethical” forms of resistance. That is, I take it, many will think that the Picketing example is the least objectionable (morally speaking), the Bombing example is more objectionable, and the Apocalypse example is the most objectionable. So while excellent resistance is not the same as ethical resistance, there will be plenty of cases in which what is most excellent is also least morally objectionable and what is least excellent will be most morally objectionable. But again, this will not *always* be the case.

Now turning to the virtues of resistance, I argue that there are at least three: *consistency*, *proportionality*, and *acceptance-readiness*.<sup>4</sup> I will discuss each of them in order, before turning to with a discussion of two quasi-virtues of resistance: *effectiveness* and *transparency*.

### 3.2 Consistency

There are two ways to think about the relationship between consistency and resistance. The first is to focus on consistent *resistance*. The second is to focus on consistent *resisters*. To describe *resistance* as consistent is to provide an evaluation of the resistance itself. To describe a *resister* as consistent, on the other hand, provides an evaluation of the agent who is doing the resisting. And so, when we talk of evaluating an agent's resistance as reasonable or unreasonable, it will be important to consider both varieties of consistency. As such, I will discuss each in turn.

#### 3.2a Consistent Resistance

To understand consistent resistance, recall the general account: resistance is a relation between an agent *S*, and some object, *Z*, where, if *S* bears this relation toward *Z*, then *S* opposes *Z* because *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable. Consistent resistance, then, is when the form that the resistance takes—the opposition that the agent engages in—does not conflict with the *reason(s)* that are driving the agent's resistance. In other words, when an agent resists an object, there is some aspect of the object that explains why the

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<sup>4</sup> I say “at least” given that there may be others. But the three I have listed here seem, to me at least, to be most central.

agent deems the object to be unacceptable. Whatever that aspect is, the agent's opposition must not embody or exemplify that same negative feature.<sup>5</sup>

To illustrate, recall the three examples developed in the previous section (the Abortion Clinic Picketing, Bombing, and Apocalypse cases). In all three cases, the resister's opposition to some abortion clinic is driven (in part) by his belief that these clinics are wrongfully ending the lives of innocent human beings. Yet, in the second and third cases (Bombing and Apocalypse), the form that his opposition takes embodies the same negative feature that is driving his opposition. That is, his opposition involves his wrongfully ending innocent lives (in both cases). He does the very same thing that led him to oppose the object in the first place.

Furthermore, even though both the Bombing and Apocalypse cases illustrate inconsistent resistance, the Apocalypse case represents a *greater* inconsistency than the Bombing case. This is because in the Apocalypse case, the agent embodies the negative feature that is driving his opposition on a far greater scale than in the Bombing case. Notice, however, that in the Picketing case, the agent does nothing to embody or perform acts that involve the wrongful ending of innocent human lives. As such, his resistance is consistent in that case.

To be especially clear, just as there are varying degrees of inconsistency (illustrated a moment ago), there are varying degrees of consistency as well.<sup>6</sup> To see this, consider:

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<sup>5</sup> For this reason, we might say that consistent resistance is a kind of non-hypocritical resistance.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that *logical* consistency is usually taken to be binary in a way the virtue of consistency is not. For two statements to be logically consistent, that means

Anti-Government Protest: An agent organizes a non-violent rally in order to educate the public about the government's transgressions concerning the wrongful killing of innocent civilians during an armed conflict.

Anti-Government Death Threat: An agent writes a series of death threats to many key government officials as a response to the government's transgressions concerning the wrongful killing of innocent civilians during an armed conflict. Some of these officials were involved in the government's transgressions, but some were not.

We will suppose that in each case, the resister in question is resisting the relevant government (and its actions) on the grounds that (from the agent's perspective) it is wrong to kill innocent civilians. Further, in neither case does the agent's opposition involve the killing of innocent civilians. Thus, it would seem that both forms of resistance are, technically, consistent. However, in the Death Threat case, the agent's opposition bears greater similarity to the negative feature that drives his resistance than his opposition in the Protest case. In the Protest case, the form of the agent's opposition is a far reach from anything involving the killing of innocent civilians. But in the Death Threat case, this act of opposition comes *relatively* closer to the killing of innocent civilians (insofar as it at least *threatens* to do the same).<sup>7</sup> So even though both instances

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something like "there is at least one possible world in which both statements are true." As such, there either *is* such a world or there is *not* such a world. There are no gray areas there. For this reason, since the virtue of consistency *is* something that can vary in degrees, it is important to separate it (conceptually) from logical consistency.

<sup>7</sup> Maybe the agent would argue that the difference is that his death threats are targeting *guilty* human beings (whereas his resistance towards the government is being driven by his commitment to the claim that it is wrong to kill *innocent* human beings). In response, the example includes the point that some of the threatened officials are innocent. So whether the agent realizes this or not, his resistance is (in some sense) approaching the same "transgression" that drives his resistance (namely, the killing of innocent people). Suppose we revise the example, however, and the agent writes death threats only to those individuals who *were* involved in the government's actions. In this case, the agent's resistance would be *more* consistent than in the Death Threat case. But, I would argue, his resistance would still be less consistent than the Protest case, given that

of resistance may technically be consistent, the Protest case seems to be *more* consistent than the Death Threat case.

There are at least three concerns here. First, in some cases, this account of consistency appears to label wicked acts “reasonable.” Second, labeling an agent’s resistance as “unreasonable” given that it is inconsistent may seem like an ad hominem attack. Third, and most seriously, whether or not resistance can be called “consistent” seems to depend entirely on how we describe the resisters’ opposition and reasons for resisting. The worry is that the same instance of resistance may be “consistent” under one description while being “inconsistent” under a different description. I will discuss each concern here.

Regarding the first concern, it seems that resistance that involves doing wicked things can be consistent (insofar as the reason behind the resistance is not in conflict with the wicked things being done). For example:

Sexist Serial Killer: A serial killer opposes the existence of women by killing as many women as he can and deems their existence to be unacceptable given his belief that women are not “worthy of existence.”

In this case, the agent’s resistance appears to be consistent. There is no conflict between the reason for his resistance and the form his resistance takes. And if that is so, do we really want to say that his resistance is *excellent* or *reasonable*?

In short, the answer is yes: Insofar as his resistance is consistent, it is excellent or reasonable *at least in that way*. That is, his resistance is excellent *with respect to consistency*. But that does not make it excellent resistance altogether. Nor does it mean

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it involves the threatened use of deadly force. This is especially true if agents’ innocence is presumed until they have been found guilty in court and if convicting individuals for crimes is something that is left to a legal authority, rather than private citizens.

that such resistance (or wicked ideologies) are excellent or reasonable in any general sense of the word. By comparison, suppose the serial killer reasons as follows: “If Tina is a woman, then Tina is unfit to live. Tina is a woman. Hence, Tina is unfit to live.” From a logical standpoint, this argument embodies the form, *modus ponens*, which means the argument is valid. In other words, the *form* (or structure) of the argument is excellent. But that in no way implies that the serial killer’s claims are true, ethical, reasonable, or excellent in any wider sense. And so, when assessing the excellence (or lack thereof) of an agent’s resistance, we must be careful to remember that we are examining the form it takes, rather than making judgments about the truth of the claims a resister may make or the morality of his actions, beliefs, etc. Additionally, that one’s resistance is excellent in *one particular way* (i.e. according to just one virtue of resistance) does not even imply that it is excellent resistance overall. Satisfying *just one* of the virtues of resistance is not sufficient for an agent’s resistance to count as reasonable (i.e. excellent) resistance.<sup>8</sup>

Now, as I have already noted, there is a distinction between resistance that is excellent and resistance that is ethical. In *Sexist Serial Killer*, there is no doubt that the agent’s actions are horribly unethical. But even if it turns out that unethical actions are always unreasonable actions (*all things considered*), then the serial killer’s actions will be unreasonable (*all things considered*). Yet this is perfectly compatible with his actions

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<sup>8</sup> By analogy, being sharp is not sufficient to make a knife an excellent knife. A sharp knife is excellent in *some* way, but we would need to learn more about it before we could call it an excellent knife overall. The same goes for resistance that satisfies one virtue. Sure, it is excellent in *that* way, but we need more information before we can say it is excellent as resistance overall. I am indebted to Allison Krile Thornton for pointing this out to me.

being excellent (or reasonable) in *some* way (i.e. with respect to a single virtue of resistance).

Regarding the second concern: It may seem like an *ad hominem* attack to argue that an agent's resistance is unreasonable simply because it is inconsistent. In response, to use the virtue of consistency as a means of evaluating an agent's resistance does not commit any *ad hominem*. In our evaluation of an agent's resistance, we need not dismiss the agent's *claim* that the object she is resisting deserves opposition.<sup>9</sup> We may agree that the object *does* deserve to be resisted. We may also agree with her that the object is unacceptable for the same reason(s) that drive her to resist.

But consistency raises questions about the agent's *method* of opposing the object. So rather than dismissing the agent's claims about the unacceptability of the object, in cases of inconsistency, we might respond to the resister, "yes, I agree, something must be done about this thing, but your way of trying to change it is all wrong. If you want to undo that thing, then we must avoid doing the same thing that makes it unacceptable." Or, put differently, we might invite the resister to heed the Nietzsche's (1997) aphorism that "He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster" (52).<sup>10</sup> That is, there seems to be something fundamentally wrong (or unreasonable) with embodying or adopting the same negative feature in one's resistance that drives one to resist in the first place. In doing so, the resister becomes (or risks becoming) the very object they purport to resist.

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<sup>9</sup> Where this "claim" may be explicit or simply implicit in the agent's resistance.

<sup>10</sup> Note that I am merely appropriating a surface-level reading of this aphorism for present purposes. It is a fitting illustration in that sense, even if I am using it in a way that conflicts with Nietzsche's original intent.

This is especially clear in the Abortion Clinic Bombing and Apocalypse cases, where an agent opposed a particular clinic on the grounds that it participated in a practice that ended the lives of innocent human beings. Yet, in both cases, the resister ended up performing the very same types of acts. Similarly, recall the Looting case from Chapter Two, Section One, where a crowd of people looted several stores in a small town as a response to the unjust actions of local law enforcement. There too, their resistance seems to be inconsistent. They resisted a particular object on the grounds that it was unjust, but their opposition took the form of looting, which involves the unjust plundering of others' property. In other words, if their resistance were fueled by a desire to oppose injustice, it would be inconsistent of them to oppose the relevant object in ways that are inherently unjust. And this is no attack on the resisters themselves. Nor is it an assessment of whether or not they were *justified* in resisting the relevant object (in some form). What is being labeled "inconsistent" and "unreasonable" is the *method* of opposition being adopted given the reasons driving the opposition. The resisters, their character, etc., are not the subject of this critique. As such, there is no ad hominem here.

The third and most serious concern that arises for consistency is this: How we describe an agent's reasons for resistance affects whether their resistance is judged to be consistent or inconsistent. For example, return to the Looting case and consider two variations:

Looting and Justice: A crowd of people loot several stores in a small town as a response to the unjust actions of local law enforcement. Their opposition is driven by their deeming *unjust actions* to be unacceptable.

Looting and Race: A crowd of people loot several stores in a small town as a response to the unjust actions of local law enforcement. Their opposition is driven by their deeming *unjust actions against minorities* to be unacceptable. And none of the shop owners are minorities.

In the first case, the resisters are driven by their general opposition to injustice. But they also perform unjust acts as a means of opposition. As such, it seems clear that their resistance is inconsistent and so, defective (at least in that way). But the same does not follow for Looting and Race. In that case, the resisters' opposition takes a form that does *not* seem to conflict with their reasons for resisting. Specifically, they are driven to resist given their view that unjust actions against members of minority groups are unacceptable. And in opposing the police force, they do not do anything unjust towards members of minority groups. So, it would seem, their resistance is consistent. But if that is so, then it would seem that for *any* case of resistance, all we need to do to make it consistent is *describe it in the right way*. And if consistency can be earned that easily, then perhaps it is not worth much.

There are multiple points that need to be articulated in response to this concern. First, agents (in most cases) are not free to simply *choose* their reasons for resisting something. That they deem something to be unacceptable will, often enough, be automatic or involuntary (this is, perhaps, especially true in the case of non-doxastic resistance and compound resistance, insofar as it is non-doxastic). In other words, when asked "why are you resisting this object?" resisters are not free to give whatever answer is convenient for them. There is a fact of the matter regarding *why* they resist what they resist, and *that* is what matters when assessing consistency.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Note: Agents need not be aware of their resistance or be able to articulate why they are resistant. All I am asserting is that when an agent *is* resistant, it will be for some particular reason (and this reason is not something they can warp as they see fit). So, for example, agents who are resistant in the Looting and Race case cannot claim to be resistant given their general commitment to fighting injustice. Rather, it is injustices against a select group of people that drives their resistance – that just *is* their reason for resisting, whether or not they realize it and whether or not they admit it when asked.

Next, the use of consistency as an evaluative tool invites us (and resisters) to consider exactly why resisters resist. While it may not always be possible for resisters to articulate exactly why they are resisting a particular object, reflection on the matter can be revealing in important ways. For instance, consider the Looting and Justice and Looting and Race cases described immediately above. In the first case, if we reflect on why the resisters are opposing their object, we would discover that it has to do with their finding unjust actions to be unacceptable. But in the Looting and Race case, we would soon discover that their resistance is driven by their view that unjust actions *against members of certain groups (but not others)* are unacceptable.<sup>12</sup> And the former drive—a general commitment to justice, a rejection of injustice—may be more defensible (or reasonable *all things considered*) than a *selective* commitment to justice (and a *selective* rejection of injustice).

Here is why this matters. We saw that in the Looting and Justice case, that the resistance in question was inconsistent. And yet, it involved opposition that was done out of a general commitment to combating injustice, which seems like a good thing. On the other hand, in the Looting and Race case, the resistance in question was perfectly consistent. Yet, it centered on opposition that was done out of a commitment to seeking justice in a limited number of cases (but not all cases). And *generally speaking*, that does not seem as defensible as a wider commitment to combating injustice. In other words, the resisters in Looting and Race might be able to preserve the consistency of their

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<sup>12</sup> We must include “but not others” here, because if we did not, it would be unclear what the difference is between the motivations of the resisters in Looting and Justice and Looting and Race.

resistance, but it comes at the cost of resisting on grounds that may not be as reasonable (or morally praiseworthy) *all things considered*.

This type of cost can be understood by analogy when we consider a related point about principles of logic and arguments. When an agent hears an argument, suppose he wants to assess whether or not the argument is valid. He reconstructs the argument in a way that makes its logical structure explicit. He then tests to see if it is a valid argument or not. There will be cases where, in order to make an argument valid, one must adjust the premises of the argument in ways that render them untrue.<sup>13</sup> Take, for example, the following:

1. If there is life on Mars, then there is water on Mars.
2. There is water on Mars.
3. So, there is life on Mars.

This argument is invalid (it commits the formal fallacy of “affirming the consequent”).

So, suppose we adjust the argument’s premises in a way that makes it valid. We might be left with something like this:

1. If there is water on Mars, then there is life on Mars.
2. There is water on Mars.
3. So, there is life on Mars.

Here, we have made the argument valid (it follows the logical form “modus ponens”).

But in rewriting the argument so that it is valid, we have committed the arguer to a false premise (namely, premise 1). In other words, we have gained validity, but at the expense of soundness (where an argument is “sound” when it is valid and has all true premises).

Returning to resistance and consistency, there is a similar phenomenon. Resisters may be able to explain their resistance in terms that make their resistance consistent. But

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<sup>13</sup> This general point comes from Howard-Snyder, Howard-Snyder, and Wasserman (2013).

doing so will sometimes commit them to resisting on grounds that are less reasonable or more subject to scrutiny overall. So, once again, resisters in Looting and Race may gain consistency when they distinguish the reason for their resistance from those in Looting and Justice. But (*arguably*) there is something less reasonable (or less laudable) about fighting for injustice in *only* select cases. And so, while a resister should always aim to resist in a consistent manner, consistency is not enough to make the resister's resistance reasonable in a wide sense (just like validity is not sufficient to make an argument sound). The trick will be to resist in a consistent way without building one's resistance on a fragile foundation.

### 3.2b Consistent Resisters

In addition to evaluating *resistance* for consistency—which involves identifying the manner in which agents oppose an object and comparing it against the reasons for their resistance—we can evaluate *resisters* for consistency. When evaluating a resister for consistency, it will be important to examine the manner in which an agent opposes a given object, her reasons for resisting, and her commitments in general. In short, when a resister adopts a form of opposition that does not conflict with her own commitments, she is consistent. When there *is* a conflict between those things, she is inconsistent. To illustrate each (consistency and inconsistency), consider:

Vegan Protester: A woman is committed to the view that it is morally wrong to use (or destroy) animal products. Yet, she chooses to protest a politician's election to office because she believes that he is corrupt. And she protests his appointment (in part) by hurling eggs at his car as it drives past.

In the Vegan Protester case, the agent is adopting a form of opposition that conflicts with her own commitments. She is committed to the view that it is wrong to destroy or waste

particular animal products.<sup>14</sup> But the form her opposition takes involves doing exactly that: destroying animal products. Thus, she is an inconsistent resister.<sup>15</sup>

There does not seem to be anything inconsistent about the Vegan Protester's *resistance*, however. After all, the form that the protester's opposition takes (hurling eggs at the politician's car) does not conflict with her reason for protesting (namely, that she deems his appointment to be unacceptable given her belief that he is corrupt). And so, examining resistance for consistency is separate from examining resisters for consistency. Since these forms of consistency come apart, therefore, there are four categories relevant to consistency:

1. Consistent resistance and Consistent resister
2. Inconsistent resistance and Consistent resister
3. Consistent resistance and Inconsistent resister
4. Inconsistent resister and Inconsistent resistance

To paint a better picture of both types of consistency, it will be worth exploring each of these categories in some detail.

Regarding the first category—in which we have an instance of a consistent resister who resists in a consistent manner—we have the following:

Boycotting Shoes: A man refuses to buy products from a particular shoe company given that the shoe company exploits child labor (and the man firmly believes that doing so is unacceptable).

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<sup>14</sup> I say “particular” because I do not suppose that vegans are generally committed to the view that it is wrong to destroy *all* animal products. For example, burning cow dung might count as a non-objectionable instance of destroying an animal product.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, maybe there are times in which it would make sense to act in such an inconsistent way. If, for example, the vegan protester believed that her actions would result in the removal of this politician from office (or some other great good would come about), then maybe she would be willing to sacrifice her own commitments for the sake of a greater purpose. I will deal more with these considerations when I discuss the “quasi-virtue” of *effectiveness* (Chapter Three, Section Five).

In this case, the agent's resistance is consistent given that there is no conflict between the form his opposition takes (boycotting a company) and the reasons driving his resistance (the perceived unacceptability of exploiting child labor). Additionally, the agent himself (from what we know) is not inconsistent. Given the available information, there is no conflict between his commitments and his refusal to buy shoes from this particular company. Of course, we may have to learn a great deal more about his commitments before we can safely declare him to be consistent. But the point here is that given what we do know, he appears to be consistent.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding the second type of case, in which we have inconsistent resistance paired with a consistent resister, consider:

**Pyromaniac's Protest:** A man is a pyromaniac and sees nothing wrong with his pyromania or his acting on it. One day, he learns from his friends that the manager of a local store has a history of destroying other peoples' property for fun. The friends say that something must be done about this store owner, for his actions are unacceptable. In response, the pyromaniac joyfully burns the store owner's store to the ground.

This resistance is inconsistent, insofar as the reason driving it—that the store owner's destruction of others' property is unacceptable—conflicts with the form that the agent's opposition takes. However, the resister himself is consistent, insofar as there is no conflict between his commitments and his opposition (in the form of burning the store owner's shop to the ground).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> If, for example, he were strongly committed to the view that one ought to buy shoes from the company that sells them at the lowest prices and the company he was boycotting did this, then he might indeed be an inconsistent resister.

<sup>17</sup> This category (where a consistent resister is paired with inconsistent resistance) may be fairly rare. After all, it seems plausible that agents' resistance will often be driven *by* their commitments in some important way. However, what the Pyromaniac's Protest

Third, the Vegan Protester provided an instance of consistent resistance paired with an inconsistent resister. There, the form that her opposition took (throwing eggs at a politician's car) did not conflict with her reasons for resistance (her deeming his election to office to be unacceptable given her belief that he was corrupt). But her actions did conflict with her own commitments (namely, her belief that one ought not destroy animal products).

Fourth, regarding cases in which an agent is inconsistent *and* they resist in an inconsistent way, here is an illustration:

Abortion Clinic Bombing 2.0: A man believes that all innocent human life ought to be protected and is strongly committed to the preservation of all innocent human life. He also believes that the practice of abortion involves the termination of innocent human life. As such, he deems the practice (and clinics that perform abortions) to be morally unacceptable. In opposition to one such clinic, the man bombs it, knowingly killing more than a dozen innocent people and wounding many more in the process.

In this case, the reason for the man's resistance (the unacceptability of ending innocent human lives) directly conflicts with the method of opposition the man adopts (namely, bombing the clinic and ending innocent human lives). But his actions also conflict with his own commitments (specifically, his view that innocent human lives ought to be preserved). And so, he is inconsistent in both ways.

As was the case in our discussion of consistent resistance, several concerns arise when considering consistent resisters. First, given that consistency is tied with reasonability, it seems that an inconsistent resister will automatically be labeled "unreasonable." And perhaps that is too strong, especially given the possibility that some people might (reasonably) sacrifice their personal commitments for some greater good.

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case illustrates is that it is *possible* to have a case in which a consistent resister resists something in an inconsistent way.

Second, to declare that an agent is inconsistent and therefore, unreasonable, sounds a bit like an ad hominem attack. And we will want to avoid that.

Regarding the first concern, there seem to be counterexamples to my requirement that reasonable resisters be *consistent*. For instance, an agent might sacrifice her own personal commitments for the sake of a greater purpose. Consider, as one example:

Vegan Diplomat: A man is strongly committed to the view that is wrong to consume or destroy any animal products. He is also a diplomat to a nation that is threatening to commit genocide against its own people. Upon meeting with the leader of this nation, the leader tells the diplomat that no violence will occur if the diplomat is willing to eat a cheeseburger. The diplomat does so, on the grounds that genocide is unacceptable.

Here, we can describe the diplomat's action as a kind of opposition, insofar as he acts to oppose a particular state of affairs (one in which genocide would occur). Though he acts to prevent this, he does so in a way that conflicts with his own commitments. And so, if the present analysis is correct, then it would seem that he is unreasonable. But surely that cannot be right. If anything, it seems unreasonable for the man to *refuse* to participate in the deal he has been offered.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Allison Krile Thornton presented me with the following response to this concern: There is not *really* a conflict between the diplomat's commitments and his opposition. After all, commitments may be conditional. So, for example, the diplomat may have a commitment to not destroying any animal products *if human lives are not at risk when living this way*. But in his current circumstances, human lives are at risk. Thus, his (conditional) commitment to veganism does not come into play and so, is not in conflict with his eating a cheeseburger. This response provides a way of explaining why, contrary to the objector's concerns, the diplomat does *not* violate the virtue of consistency. I think this is a fair response to make to the concern. One worry I have about this line of response, however, is this: By thinking of commitments as conditional, agents may be able to avoid the charge of inconsistency by fine-tuning the conditions of their commitments in certain ways. Yet, as we saw when comparing the Looting and Justice case with the Looting and Race case, it must be emphasized that agents cannot simply *choose* their reasons for resisting something (or the conditions of their commitments). With that said, however, I will set this type of response to the side for now.

In response, it will be important (once again) to distinguish between different uses of the word “reasonable.” An action may be unreasonable as an act of resistance, and a resister may be unreasonable *as a resister*, but this does not necessarily imply that he is unreasonable *all things considered*. By analogy, consider:

Invalid Argument: A pacifist is addressing the leaders of several countries that are on the verge of a very bloody war. She knows that her audience is not well-versed in the laws of logic, and she knows that were she to make a particular argument (which happens to be invalid) that there is a high probability she will be able to dissuade these leaders from going to war. As such, she presents the fallacious argument to the audience and they accept it. The war is averted.

In Invalid Argument, we might assess the pacifist’s actions in different ways. Did she do what was morally right? Did she do what was reasonable in general? Did she provide a good argument in defense of her claims? Regarding this last question, we might understand “good argument” in two different ways: (i) good arguments are *effective* arguments or (ii) good arguments satisfy basic laws of logic (e.g. the principle of non-contradiction). According to the first standard, the pacifist made a good argument. But if we opt for the second standard, the pacifist fails to provide a good argument (despite its being an effective one). And that does not mean the pacifist did anything *morally* wrong. It may have been morally obligatory (and even reasonable *all things considered*) for the pacifist to act as she did. But even so, none of that implies that her argument is a good one when assessed according to basic principles of logic.

In a similar way, resisters may oppose objects in ways that conflict with their own commitments. This makes them inconsistent resisters. And this kind of resistance may be effective in bringing about the change the resister desires. It may even be morally obligatory that they resist as they do. Nonetheless, that does not make them reasonable *qua* resisters. In sacrificing consistency, they are failing to exhibit reasonable *resistance*,

just as the pacifist in Invalid Argument fails to produce a “good” argument (in terms of the principles of logic).

The point to take away here is that there *may* be cases in which it is morally right to resist in an inconsistent manner, just as there *may* be cases in which it is morally right to use logically unsound arguments. But even in such cases, despite there being an overriding reason to be inconsistent, that does not mean an agent’s resistance is reasonable *qua resistance*, nor does it mean they are reasonable *qua resister*. It is possible to fail with respect to those parameters while acting properly *all things considered*.

The second concern that arises when we begin to assess the consistency of resisters is this: To declare that agents themselves are inconsistent and, therefore, unreasonable, seems to be some kind of ad hominem attack. But, in response, it is important to understand that by declaring an agent to be unreasonable in the relevant way, that does not necessarily imply that the object she is resisting does not *deserve* to be resisted. In other words, the critic may think that the resister is correct to deem that the object in question is worthy of opposition. But the problem is that the resister herself is somehow not in a good position to resist the object in a reasonable way. In response to this criticism, the resister should abandon whatever commitment is causing the inconsistency, abandon her resistance, or explain why her acting unreasonably *qua resister* is justified on other grounds (i.e. by some overriding reason).

If the resister opts for this third option, she may say things like, “Yes, I am being hypocritical in some way, but it is for a good cause.” In other words, there may be an acknowledgment by the agent that there is something unreasonable or amiss about the way she is resisting. However, in this case, she is willing to accept that cost for the sake

of some greater good. Relatedly, in the Invalid Argument case, the pacifist may say, “yes, I am violating important principles of logic when making this argument, but it is for a good cause.” And she may even be morally right in doing so. But, again, that does not imply that her argument is logically sound or reasonable *according to the laws of logic*. The same follows for the case of inconsistent resisters. They may be able to justify being inconsistent given some overriding reason, but that does not erase the inconsistency. And, lastly, since identifying this inconsistency does not require a rejection of their implicit or explicit claims about the unacceptability of the object they resist, there is no ad hominem attack here.

What, therefore, should we say to inconsistent resisters? Given the three options I have suggested, it seems fair to require the agent to provide a justification for their inconsistency when it is brought to their attention. And, should they fail to do so, then they may be pressed to abandon either their commitment(s)—at least whichever one(s) cause the inconsistency—OR abandon their resistance. Additionally, absent a justification for their inconsistency, should they refuse to give up their commitment(s) or their resistance, then they are open to criticism.

### 3.3 Proportionality

The next virtue of resistance I will consider is *proportionality*. An agent’s resistance is *proportional* when the strength of the agent’s opposition is in proportion to how unacceptable she perceives the relevant object to be.<sup>19</sup> For example, assume that an agent deems some object to be extremely unacceptable. We will suppose (as one

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<sup>19</sup> A different approach would say that an agent’s resistance is proportional when her opposition is in proportion to how unacceptable a relevant object *is*. But difficulties arise for this view, as I will discuss in a moment.

example) that in her eyes, the object embodies some tremendous moral wrong. If her resistance is *proportional*, then she will oppose the object to a very high degree. As an example:

Child Sacrifice: A woman learns that her neighbor intends to sacrifice his first-born son in the hopes that a watching deity will allow his favorite basketball team to win the championship. This woman thinks the man's plan is horrific—she deems it to be thoroughly unacceptable given her belief that parents ought never harm their children. Driven by this belief, she confronts her neighbor, knocks him unconscious, helps his son escape, and calls the police. She later devotes a lot of time towards publicly condemning the man and raising awareness about child abuse.

In this case, the woman's resistance to her neighbor's plan is fairly extreme. She pours time into her opposition of the man's plan and even risks her own safety to oppose it. But, given that she sees the man's plan as *horrific*, it makes sense—it is fitting—that she has such a strong reaction and that she opposes it so adamantly. In fact, it might seem unreasonable for her *not* to react so strongly. In other words, if she claimed to genuinely believe that this was a horrific act and did little (or nothing) to stop it, we might call her testimony into question or judge that her lack of action was morally wrong.

On the other hand, if an agent deems an object to be unacceptable, but only very slightly, then—assuming her resistance is proportional—she will resist the object to a lesser degree (relatively). This occurs in cases like the following:

Fast Food Foul-up: A man orders a vanilla milkshake from a fast food restaurant and receives a chocolate milkshake. He is annoyed—and committed to the view that it is not right to charge a person for something they did not order—but politely asks the employees to fix their mistake.

Here, the agent deems a situation to be unacceptable—it is not okay to charge a person for something they did not order (the agent thinks). And the agent takes measures to oppose this state of affairs (in the form of politely asking the employees to fix their

mistake). As far as opposition goes, this is rather mild, especially when compared to the opposition that occurred in the Child Sacrifice case. But it is a kind of opposition nonetheless. And that it is not very strong opposition seems reasonable, given that the resister did not feel too strongly about the unacceptability of the situation. If this same resister, rather than asking for the mistake to be corrected, pulled out a gun and began firing at the employees, we might say that this is an extreme *overreaction* (at least given his perception of the mistake as only slightly unacceptable).

What these cases—Child Sacrifice and Fast Food Foul-up—suggest (in part) is that an agent’s resistance can fail to exhibit the virtue of proportionality in one of two ways: Her opposition may be too strong or her opposition may be too weak.<sup>20</sup> In the Child Sacrifice case, should the woman do little (or nothing) to oppose the man’s plan (at least when given the opportunity), then her opposition is too weak. We could imagine her opposition being too strong, however, should she respond to the man’s plan by blowing up his house (and his entire family) as a means of preventing his plans from being carried out. Similarly, in the Fast Food Foul-up case, the agent’s reaction would be too strong if he caused immense physical harm to the employees who made the relevant mistake. But his reaction would also be too weak if he simply did *nothing* to oppose it whatsoever (given that he deems the situation to be unacceptable).<sup>21</sup>

Moving forward, the above discussion suggests that the strength of an agent’s resistance comes in degrees. We might describe an agent’s opposition as extremely

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<sup>20</sup> Because of this, *proportionality* might be seen as a kind of mean between two extremes, akin to how Aristotle thinks of virtue generally (*NE* 1106b.34-1107a.5).

<sup>21</sup> I am not suggesting that the man in this case must take some kind of *action*. But I am suggesting he should oppose the situation in *some* manner (even if this opposition is not made manifest in action), given that he deems it to be unacceptable.

strong, somewhat strong, and so forth, all the way down to extremely weak (or, perhaps, non-existent). In terms of measuring the strength of one's resistance, we must be careful not to expect more precision than the subject matter admits. While there are no exact numeric values available to consult in our assessment of the strength of one's resistance, intuition can guide our way in terms of how to do this. For example, killing or destroying an object one opposes may (usually) be a strong way to oppose it, whereas injuring it (or harming it without destroying it) is usually weaker. Or devoting a lot of time and energy to opposing an object may count as "strong" resistance, whereas opposing it for a short time (and only when convenient) may generally count as relatively weak resistance.

And so, without becoming too rigid in our procedure, there are a few factors we might consider when assessing the strength of an agent's opposition. These might include:

- The cost the resister pays (or is willing to pay) to oppose the object,
- The breadth of contexts in which the resister is prone to resist the object,
- The degree of persistence or tenacity the resister is prone to when resisting the object, and
- The emotions (and strength of emotions) that the resister is prone to experience when resisting the object.

As far as costs are concerned, we can ask questions like: What is the resister willing to risk or give up in her opposition to the object? Are they willing to risk life and limb? To sacrifice their lives or their own resources? Are they willing to give up some of their time, but not a lifetime of working towards their opposition? Roughly speaking, the more one is willing to risk or give up (i.e. the higher the cost one is willing to pay to resist something), the stronger her opposition is.

When it comes to the breadth of contexts in which a resister is prone to resist, we can ask: When is the resister willing to oppose the object? All the time? Only in special

circumstances (for instance, when it is convenient for her to do so)?<sup>22</sup> As a very general rule, the more contexts in which an agent is prone to resist an object, the stronger her resistance is towards it. For instance, an agent that is willing to oppose her government only when her activity goes undetected will, I think, be opposed in a weaker sense than an agent who is willing to oppose her government whether she is found out or not.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the degree of persistence or tenacity the resister is prone to when resisting the object, a resister may be extremely persistent in her opposition all the way down to not persistent at all. As another general rule, the more persistent an agent is, the stronger her opposition is.<sup>24</sup> And this relates back to proportionality as follows: Generally, if an agent deems a particular object to be exceptionally worthy of opposition, it would only seem reasonable that she persists in her opposition towards it.

Lastly, as far as the resister's emotions are concerned, it may be that something like the following is true: The stronger the resister's emotions in opposing a given object,

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<sup>22</sup> This will relate to the first factor (cost), insofar as we can say that an agent who resists something only when convenient is not willing to pay the cost of any inconvenience when opposing the object in question. But, once again, these ways of measuring strength provide a rough overview and are not meant to be strictly independent factors or generate universal principles.

<sup>23</sup> The latter agent may take great care that her opposition remain covert, of course. The point is simply that she is willing to oppose the relevant object in more situations than the other agent in question (who resists only when her opposition remains covert).

<sup>24</sup> No doubt there will be some people that are more persistent than others (given their personality). But differences in personality do not affect my points here. Those who by nature are less persistent may struggle to resist in proportional ways, given their tendency to give up too easily. And those who by nature are overly persistent may also struggle to resist in proportional ways, given their tendency to hold on *too much* to their opposition. This is like Aristotle's mention that human beings are often disposed (by nature) towards one extreme or the other, and so must work to overcome that tendency, sometimes by aiming at the *opposite* extreme (*NE* 1109a.7-1109b.26).

the stronger her resistance to it is.<sup>25</sup> In other words, given the virtue of proportionality, in order to resist in an excellent manner, reasonable agents will emote to whatever degree is called for given *their perception* of the situation. An agent that deems an object to be extremely unacceptable, but is not prone to strong emotions in opposition to it, seems (generally) to be deficient in some way.

So, to sum up on the virtue of proportionality, an agent's resistance to a given object is reasonable insofar as her opposition to the object is *proportional* in strength to how unacceptable she deems it to be. Agents can err (with respect to proportionality) by opposing an object too strongly or too weakly. And strength may be measured by considering various features of the resister's dispositions: Are they willing to resist the object at all, some, or no costs, are they willing to resist the object in all contexts or just some, and so forth.

At least two major concerns arise for the virtue of proportionality as I have described it. First, we might ask, which is truly relevant here: How unacceptable the agent *perceives* the object to be or how unacceptable the object actually *is*? It seems like the present account favors the former, but problems arise for that view. Second, there are cases in which a disproportionate response will be more likely to accomplish whatever

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<sup>25</sup> I say that this “may be” true because some people may not be as prone to experiencing strong emotions as others. As such, we might relativize this factor to the individual. So, if Tim is not an emotional person—he does not experience many emotions and does not usually experience them to a very high degree—then even when resisting something to a high degree, he may only feel slight emotion. But *relative to Tim*, slight emotion will be a powerful emotion. As such, when he deems something to be extremely unacceptable, we should expect him to experience whatever level of emotion is strong-for-Tim.

change the resister hopes to bring about.<sup>26</sup> Do we really want to call the resister's opposition (in cases like that) "unreasonable"? I will discuss and respond to each of these concerns in order.

The first major concern is that we have two choices when describing the virtue of proportionality: Measure the agent's level of opposition against how unacceptable they *perceive* the object to be or measure the agent's level of opposition against how unacceptable the object *is*. Proportionality, as I have described it, focuses on the former. It is a measure of how strong an agent's opposition is compared against how unacceptable they perceive an object to be. But this has odd results. For example:

Picky Eater 2.0: A young child perceives carrots to be a significant threat. As such, when someone attempts to feed him carrots, he kicks, screams, and fights in every way he can to avoid having to eat them.

Here, it seems like the child's opposition is proportional to how unacceptable he deems the situation he is resisting to be.<sup>27</sup> But do we want to be committed to the view that his behavior (and opposition) is thereby *reasonable*? It seems much more plausible to say that his behavior is unreasonable, given that there is no real threat present. And, were we to adopt the second way of describing proportionality—that an agent's resistant is proportional when the strength of her opposition is in proportion to how unacceptable the

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<sup>26</sup> I am grateful to Jonathan Brenneman for bringing this objection to my attention.

<sup>27</sup> To avoid any kind of circularity here, it is important to note that the strength of one's opposition does not reveal how unacceptable the agent perceives the object to be. In other words, it is not as though an agent that opposes an object to a great degree therefore perceives that object to be extremely bad. One's perception of the object as bad—that they deem it to be unacceptable in some way—is a matter of their belief about the object (or construal of it), which is independent of how strongly they resist the object. Proportionality is a matter of getting the strength of one's opposition to "match" the degree to which one deems an object to be unacceptable.

object being resisted *actually is*—then the child’s behavior would be labeled “unreasonable.” And so, if that is indeed the right result, we *should* understand proportionality in the second way.

There a few responses to make here. First, that resistance is proportional means it is reasonable in *that* way. As we saw in the discussion of consistency, being reasonable along one parameter (that is, satisfying one virtue of resistance) does not guarantee that one’s resistance is reasonable *all things considered*. So, in Picky Eater 2.0, the child’s behavior may be proportional (and so, reasonable in that way) without being reasonable *all things considered*.

To respond in a different way, however, we can distinguish between whether an agent’s actions or emotions are reasonable *all things considered* or reasonable *given just his perception* of the object in question. To illustrate, we might break the Picky Eater 2.0 case down as follows:

1. If the child perceives an object to be a significant threat and he opposes it in a proportional manner, then he will oppose it to a high degree.
2. The child perceives eating carrots to be a significant threat and opposes eating them in a proportional manner.
3. Hence, the child opposes eating carrots to a high degree.

We may agree that his behavior described in the third statement is unreasonable. Further, we might label this behavior unreasonable because carrots do not pose the threat to the child that he imagines they do. But in that case, it seems like the child’s *perception* is the problem, not his resistance *given* his perception. In other words, there does not seem to be anything wrong with the first statement. It seems reasonable to strongly oppose things that one takes to be a significant threat. So, if we were to try to teach the child to act in a reasonable way (*all things considered*), we would *not* proceed by teaching him to stop

strongly opposing what he believes to be a significant threat. It is *good* that he strongly opposes what he believes is a significant threat. Instead, we might teach him the difference between genuine and imaginary threats. And, in that case, we would aim to reshape his *perception* of carrots.

This boils down to the following point: It is reasonable to strongly resist what one takes to be a significant threat. But our perception of what constitutes a significant threat is sometimes mistaken. And in those cases, reason will direct us to work towards reshaping our *perception*, but *not* our strong opposition towards objects we take to be a significant threat. So in the Picky Eater 2.0 case, we can say that the child's behavior is unreasonable because he misperceives the object being resisted. What needs to change is his perception of the object. But his proportional response to the object *given that he deems it to be a significant threat* seems perfectly reasonable. Thus, in cases like Picky Eater 2.0, the agent's lack of reasonability *all things considered* is due to their failures of *perception*, not their proportional response. So proportionality should be understood as a measure of the strength of the agent's opposition compared to how unacceptable they perceive the object to be (rather than how unacceptable the object actually is).

Recall the second major concern for proportionality: There are cases in which a disproportionate response will be more likely than a proportionate response at bringing about whatever change the resister hopes to bring about. And if proportionality is tied to reasonability, then in those cases, it seems like agents who resist in a disproportionate (but effective) manner are unreasonable compared to agents who resist in a proportional (but ineffective) manner. To illustrate, consider two cases:

Hunger Strike: To combat a company's policy of paying female workers less than male workers, several employees go on a hunger strike. They refuse to eat until

amends are made. And while they do not view the company's policy to be a *horrific* evil, they do feel strongly about its being unacceptable.

Petition and Strike: To combat a company's policy of paying female workers less than male workers, several employees sign a petition that the policy be changed and go on strike until it is changed. And while they do not view the company's policy to be a *horrific* evil, they do feel strongly about its being unacceptable.

It seems fair to say that going on a hunger strike is a "stronger" form of resistance than signing a petition and going on strike. That is especially true if the resisters are literally prepared to die in the process of carrying out their hunger strike. Further, we know that the employees believe their company's policy is unacceptable. But they do not hold it to horribly unacceptable. As such, it seems that their actions in Petition and Strike come closer to satisfying proportionality.

Additionally, it is easy to imagine the employees' resistance being more effective in Hunger Strike than in Petition and Strike. And if part of the goal of resistance is to bring about some desired change, then Hunger Strike seems to be the more reasonable option. But again, the account of proportionality developed here states that the employees in Hunger Strike are (at least with respect to proportionality) *less* reasonable than those in Petition and Strike.

But this is not much of a problem for the present account because a more effective course of action is not always a more reasonable one. As we saw in the discussion of consistency, an agent may use an invalid argument to gain some great good. Further, there will be situations where the use of the invalid argument will be more effective at accomplishing a desired goal than the use of a valid argument in its place. In such cases, while an agent may use an effective, but invalid argument to accomplish her goals, that

does not mean that the argument she gives is reasonable (according to the principles of logic).

Similarly, disproportionate resistance may be more effective (in some cases) than proportionate resistance (at bringing an end to the object being resisted). But that does not automatically make it more reasonable. As such, in cases where agents are resisting in disproportionate ways, they are left with three options (just like in our discussion of consistency): adjust the strength of their resistance to match the degree of unacceptability they attribute to the object being resisted, give up their resistance, or explain why a disproportionate response is reasonable *all things considered*.

Because this trilemma closely matches the trilemma described in the discussion of consistency, I will not discuss the three options at length. I will simply note that, once again, the third option allows for the possibility that it can sometimes be justifiable to resist in ways that violate the virtues of resistance. But this justification does not change the fact that the agent's resistance fails to be reasonable *qua resistance*.

### 3.4 Acceptance-Readiness

The third and final virtue of resistance that I will consider is *acceptance-readiness*.<sup>28</sup> Acceptance-readiness has to do with the resister's willingness to accept whatever change her opposition aims to bring about (if it aims to bring about a change).<sup>29</sup> Specifically, an agent's resistance satisfies the virtue of acceptance-readiness when: (i) the agent has a sufficient understanding of the costs that would follow were her resistance

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<sup>28</sup> Once again, it may be that there are other virtues of resistance. In other words, I do not suppose that the three I describe here are exhaustive.

<sup>29</sup> There may be cases in which an agent's resistance does not actually aim to bring about a change. I will discuss these cases in just a moment.

to succeed in bringing about the change it is working towards and (ii) the agent does not balk or hesitate when offered the change she is working towards (at least, when it is offered on terms that she claimed or implied would be acceptable).

When resistance is *not* acceptance-ready several questions are raised. Suppose, for example, that an agent balks at accepting the change she sought (and so, violates the second condition of acceptance-readiness). We might ask: Was she not serious or genuine in seeking the relevant change? Was her resistance some kind of bluff? Had she not weighed or understood the cost of adopting the relevant change (and so, violates the first condition of acceptance-readiness as well)? And note, the virtue of acceptance-readiness does not require that the agent accepts the relevant change without any concern regarding change's cost. It merely requires that these costs have been counted and deemed acceptable *prior* to the change being made available.

Additionally, acceptance-readiness does not require the agent to know about *all* of the costs that will follow from her resistance. After all, knowing the full costs of one's resistance is likely impossible, especially when we consider cases in which one's resistance may have an impact on the distant future. As such, acceptance-readiness just requires a "sufficient understanding" of the relevant costs. Relevant costs might include whichever costs are predictable, relatively easy to foresee, and so forth. We might also put the agent's understanding on a spectrum, ranging from a complete understanding of all the costs to a complete failure to understand any. And, again, though acceptance-readiness does not require the agent to have a complete understanding of all the costs, we might say that *generally*, the closer her understanding is to complete, the more reasonable

her resistance is (and, contrarily, the further from complete understanding she is, the less reasonable her resistance is).<sup>30</sup>

Now, to better understand acceptance-readiness, we must say a little more about the typical goals of an agent's resistance. In resisting something, we know that an agent opposes some object because the agent deems the object to be unacceptable. Usually, the agent's opposition aims (in part) at the undoing, defeating, revising, destroying, etc., of the object in question.<sup>31</sup> So, take a version of the Hunger Strike case from the previous section:

Hunger Strike 2.0: To combat a company's policy of paying female workers less than male workers, several employees go on a hunger strike. They refuse to eat until amends are made.

Here, the agents' resistance will be acceptance-ready if, when the company offers to revise its policy in the way the agents want, the agents willingly accept the change. As a contrast, agents' resistance would *not* be acceptance-ready in the following two scenarios:

Hunger Strike 2.1: To combat a company's policy of paying female workers less than male workers, several employees go on a hunger strike. They refuse to eat until amends are made. The company is able to close the income gap, but only by reducing the pay male employees are currently receiving. This is unknown to the resisters, but could be discovered by them very easily.

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<sup>30</sup> And this is consistent with setting a threshold somewhere along the spectrum such that, when the agent is on the "complete understanding" side of the threshold her resistance is reasonable, but anything below that threshold is unreasonable. Where to draw the line is a matter of debate. I imagine that wherever it is drawn, it will be somewhat arbitrarily placed. But the important thing is that none of this undermines the existence of the relevant spectrum.

<sup>31</sup> And this "aim" may be present whether the resister recognizes it or not. After all, resistance in general can occur knowingly or not, as established in Chapter Two (Section Three).

Hunger Strike 2.2: To combat a company's policy of paying female workers less than male workers, several employees go on a hunger strike. They refuse to eat until amends are made. The company eventually agrees to close the income gap in whatever way the resisters want. The resisters, however, reject the offer.

In Hunger Strike 2.1, the resisters fail to meet the first criterion of acceptance-readiness.

That is, they lack a sufficient understanding of what costs would follow were their opposition to succeed in bringing about the change they are aiming at. Were the company in question to offer to make the changes (at the cost of paying male employees less), some resisters might accept that cost, others might not. We will need to consider both.

To start, consider those who *would* accept the costs. In Hunger Strike 2.1, their acceptance of the costs would be coincidental.<sup>32</sup> That is, if they really had no idea that the change they sought would come with the relevant costs, then it would *just so happen* that they would judge the outcome to be acceptable. But it would have been *better* if they had foreseen that this was the nature of the change their resistance was driving towards. And this is not necessarily a *major* strike against the reasonableness of their resistance, but it does reveal that there is some room for improvement.<sup>33</sup> There are two replies to consider to this line of argument, however: Perhaps resisters that are open to negotiate the costs of a change do not need to know what its costs are, and second, perhaps some of the resisters in Hunger Strike 2.1 were willing to accept *any* cost (and so, do not need to know what costs will come with the change they work towards).

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<sup>32</sup> This might be something analogous to Gettier cases, where, through luck or coincidence, individuals end up with some justified, true beliefs that nonetheless fall short of knowledge. See Gettier (1963). Ichikawa and Steup (2017: Section Three) also provide an overview of Gettier cases.

<sup>33</sup> That some errors are relatively minor fits well with the idea I have been pressing that these sorts of errors come in degrees. Some are much worse than others, and in Hunger Strike 2.1, those who (coincidentally) accept the change on the terms it is offered may only err in relatively slight ways.

As for the first concern, maybe it would seem to make better sense to say that the employees that accept the terms of the change offered in Hunger Strike 2.1 resisted in ways that worked towards a change, but were open to negotiate the terms of the that change. If that were so, then they do not really need to know what those terms will be. But in response, if resisters are open to negotiating the costs of their resistance in this way, that is compatible with requiring that they have *some* sense of the range of costs that might come with their resistance. That is, the real costs of their resistance might fall well beyond anything that they would find acceptable during a negotiation. And so, in those cases, their willingness to negotiate would count for nothing. So even those agents that are willing to accept a range of costs must have some sense of the real costs of their resistance. And this just underscores my assertion above that what counts as “sufficient understanding” is up for debate. It seems unreasonable to resist while being *completely* ignorant of the costs that come with one’s resistance. But total understanding of the costs seems unobtainable, so we must not require that resisters possess a total understanding either. And so, the line between reasonable and unreasonable lies somewhere in the murky middle.

As for the second concern here: Perhaps some of the employees in Hunger Strike 2.1 were willing to accept the change *no matter what the cost*. As such, surely *they* do not need to know (in advance) what the costs might be, because *whatever* they are, those costs are acceptable. In response, while this may indeed allow agents to satisfy the first condition of acceptance-readiness, it is highly doubtful that the majority of resisters (if any) ever really oppose something *at all costs* (in a literal way). So I will bracket those types of cases.

I mentioned that in Hunger Strike 2.1, it may be that some employees accept the change (on the terms it is offered) and some do not. I already considered the former group and argued that given their violation of the first condition of acceptance-readiness, there is something wrong (i.e. unreasonable) with their resistance (where this kind of “wrongness” comes in degrees). But now, turning to those who would *not* accept the cost, they obviously failed to understand what their resistance would lead to. Yet, as I claimed above, it is unreasonable to resist an object while being *completely* ignorant of the costs that would result were one’s resistance successful. Acceptance-readiness requires that agents have a “sufficient understanding” of the relevant costs. And “no understanding” will (almost always, if not always) fail to meet that standard. So these employees are in clear violation of acceptance-readiness.

Regarding Hunger Strike 2.2, the agents’ resistance is unreasonable given that they are unwilling to accept the change their resistance aimed at bringing about (even when that change is offered on terms they suggested or implied were acceptable). In that sort of case, the agents’ resistance seems to be nothing but a kind of bluff. Maybe the resisters wanted to die as martyrs for what they deemed a worthy cause. Or perhaps there was some other explanation for their rejection of the change they were seeking. But either way, it is unreasonable to make a demand for some change and then reject that change when it is offered to you (on your terms).<sup>34</sup> Observers of this kind of resistance may wonder, “what more do the resisters want?”

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<sup>34</sup> I do not claim that this is the point of his illustration, but we might consider a case given by Kierkegaard (1980) in a different context. Kierkegaard imagines an author’s error (e.g. a typo) that becomes sentient and then revolts “against the author, out of hatred toward him” and refuses to be corrected, declaring, “No, I refuse to be erased; I will stand as a witness against you, a witness that you are a second-rate author” (74). This

The same would apply to agents who, upon being offered the change they were driving towards, are *unsure* about whether or not they want to accept it (and its costs). Again, we might wonder if such agents have thought through their resistance and the costs that come with it. And if they have not (and they are unwilling or uncertain about accepting the change they were seeking), then their resistance would not be acceptance-ready, and, therefore, would be unreasonable.<sup>35</sup>

Changing gears a bit, the above application of acceptance-readiness only applies to cases of resistance in which the agent's opposition aims at bringing about some change. But there may also be cases in which resistance does not aim at the undoing, defeating, etc., of an object (or some of its negative aspects).<sup>36</sup> That is, there may be cases in which resistance is not driving towards the bringing about of a particular change. For example:

Future Anti-Nazism: In the distant future, suppose the world is a place where Nazism and all of its ideological progeny are entirely absent. Nobody endorses Nazism or anything like it, nobody believes in accordance with Nazi ideology, etc. Nonetheless, every year thousands of people gather in the form of a peace march, which is meant as a kind of symbolic opposition against Nazism of the past.

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is a violation of acceptance-readiness, since the error's perception seems to be that the presence of a mistake (such as itself) constitutes a kind of unacceptable state of affairs. But when offered (by the author) to have the state of affairs "corrected," the error refuses. And that does not seem fair.

<sup>35</sup> As was the case with consistency and proportionality, failures with respect to acceptance-readiness may also come in degrees. An agent who outright rejects the change she was seeking may be in greater violation of acceptance-readiness than an agent who is unsure about whether or not to accept the costs associated with that change.

<sup>36</sup> Cuneo (2016), for example, discusses cases in which agents might be "for the good and against evil symbolically," even when they are relatively "helpless" (i.e. unable to affect any change for the good or against evil) (40). So, at the very least, that this kind of opposition occurs is reason enough to address it here.

In Future Anti-Nazism, it seems like agents resist Nazism (on ideological grounds). So what change does their opposition work towards? If we say “it works towards destroying, undermining, etc., the object” we must recognize that the object does not exist. There is no object present to be destroyed or changed. The only real object of their resistance existed in the past, and the past cannot be changed by anyone. And so, the agents’ resistance does not seem to work towards a change. For this reason, we might describe this kind of resistance as “merely symbolic.”<sup>37</sup> But in any case, if acceptance-readiness pertains to an agent’s willingness to accept a sought-after change, how does it apply (if at all) to cases in which no change is sought?

As a response, I will argue that acceptance-readiness still applies, even in cases of merely symbolic resistance. Here is why. If merely symbolic resistance is really a kind of resistance (and not some other relation or phenomenon), then the resister stands in opposition to some object they deem to be unacceptable. In the cases we are considering, the object cannot be changed. However, we can ask the resister the following question: *were* you given the power to change the object in question (or were the change made possible, even *per impossibile*), would you accept the change? If the agent is willing to accept the change without the relevant sort of hesitation, then her resistance is acceptance-ready. If the agent is *unwilling* to accept the change (or *uncertain* about accepting the change), then her resistance is *not* acceptance-ready (and so, is unreasonable). To illustrate, consider a revised version of the Future Anti-Nazism case:

Future Anti-Nazism 2.0: In the distant future, suppose the world is a place where Nazism and all of its ideological progeny are entirely absent. Nobody endorses Nazism or anything like it, nobody believes in accordance with Nazi ideology,

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<sup>37</sup> See Cuneo (2016) for a discussion of *particular instances* of symbolic opposition to evil and ways of symbolically being “for the good” (especially pp. 40-2).

etc. Nonetheless, every year thousands of people gather in the form of a peace march, which is meant as a kind of symbolic opposition against Nazism of the past. During one such march, a time traveler arrives on the scene and announces that he possesses the power to go back in time to prevent Nazism from ever existing. He asks the crowd if they would like him to do this or not.

It would not be surprising if many of the resisters quickly agreed that the time traveler should go back to undo Nazism and its evils. But they may *fail to sufficiently understand* the costs associated with this decision (and so, would stand in violation of acceptance-readiness). But suppose the time traveler made clear the costs of his actions: It is highly likely (if not certain) that virtually every living person in the present would be wiped out of existence (not to mention most of their ancestors). After all, assuming that the identity of persons is tied to their genetic lineage (at least in part), it is fairly safe to assume that all of the resisters would never come to be (nor would their friends or family). Some resisters might be fine with this cost, but others may not be. And for those who are not (or who are unsure whether or not it is worth the cost), their resistance would fail to meet the standards of acceptance-readiness. Additionally, if WWII were suddenly removed from history, there is no telling what might have followed instead (whether it would have been better, worse, etc.). And realization of this fact might only make the resisters *more* uncertain (and, therefore, more in violation of acceptance-readiness).

So in cases where one's resistance does not aim at bringing about actual change because the object being resisted cannot be changed, we can ask, "suppose the thing you are opposing *could* be undone. Would you accept the cost of undoing it?" Even though this is a purely hypothetical question (and it will sometimes make use of *per impossibile* scenarios), how the resister responds will help to reveal whether or not she is resisting in

a reasonable manner.<sup>38</sup> An agent's failure to adequately grasp (or accept) the "costs" of her resistance means her resistance is unreasonable (in some way). In such a case, upon learning about the costs of her resistance, she is faced with a dilemma: Reject the costs (or admit that she is uncertain about them) and suspend her resistance (or work towards doing so) *or* accept the costs and continue resisting. Only in the latter case does her resistance shift from unreasonable to reasonable (as in the former cases, her resistance simply goes away).<sup>39</sup> And if the agent is uncertain about whether or not she wants to accept the cost (or would accept the cost), then acceptance-readiness demands that she suspend her resistance. This does not mean that she must suddenly be *for* the object she once resisted.<sup>40</sup> But it does, at the very least, mean she should become (or work to become) *neutral towards* the object until she can figure out whether or not her resistance is worth the cost.

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<sup>38</sup> Here, I am basing the assessment on a *true* response from the resister. It would be easy for a resister to say "yes, I would accept the cost" when there is no real risk of paying the cost. But for our purposes, acceptance-readiness pertains to what the resister would *actually* do, given the choice. And what they would actually do may not be the same as what they *say* they would do.

<sup>39</sup> *Maybe* there is a third option here: Continue to resist in a way that violates acceptance-readiness but explain that one is justified in doing so for some overriding reason. For example, in the Future Anti-Nazism 2.0 case, suppose a resister says, "I do not want the time traveler to undo WWII. Nonetheless, I must continue to resist in the way I have been because it is contributing to our avoiding another Holocaust in the future." Here, as was the case with consistency and proportionality, the resister may have some justification for behaving in an otherwise unreasonable way.

<sup>40</sup> See Adams (2006) and Chapter Two of this project (specifically, Chapter Two, Section Two, A) for a discussion on what it means to be *for* something.

### 3.5 A Quasi-Virtue, Effectiveness

Having discussed the virtues of resistance, I turn now to two “quasi-virtues”: Effectiveness and Transparency. These traits are, perhaps, desirable features of an agent’s resistance (at least from the agent’s standpoint), but do not count as virtues given that both rely too heavily on factors external to the agent’s resistance. As a parallel, we might want an argument we give to be persuasive, but whether or not it is persuasive (to a given audience) is independent of whether or not it is logically valid or sound.

Regarding effectiveness, an agent’s resistance can be effective in a number of ways. When an agent’s resistance works towards bringing about a particular change, for example, her resistance is effective if it successfully brings about that change (and ineffective if it does not). And, furthermore, the change that is brought about may occur at different rates of speed, may be isolated or widespread, and may be temporary or permanent. It is easy to imagine that if an agent’s resistance is *highly* effective, it will *quickly* bring about *widespread* and *lasting* change. But again, whether this change occurs or not (and whether it is widespread and lasting) depends on too many external factors. By analogy, consider:

Irrational Audience: A philosopher gives a logically sound proof demonstrating that morality is not entirely relative. The philosopher’s audience rejects the proof, however, simply because they do not trust academics (especially philosophers).

In Irrational Audience, a philosopher gives a proof that is structurally valid with all true premises. There is nothing inherently wrong with the proof. But it is not an effective argument (if effectiveness is tied to an argument’s persuasiveness). We might criticize the philosopher for failing to convince her audience of the point she was trying to make,

but whether or not that is a fair criticism, we have no real grounds to criticize the internal structure of the argument itself.

Similarly, an agent may resist a particular object in a consistent, proportional, and acceptance-ready way, yet the resistance may fail to bring about the change it works towards. In these cases, we may fault the resister for not doing what needed to be done to bring about change. But whether or not that is a fair criticism, we cannot fault the internal structure of her resistance. She might have resisted in an inconsistent manner (or failed along the lines of one of the other virtues), and perhaps this would have been more effective at bringing about the change she sought (more effective, that is, than resisting in a reasonable manner). But this does not make it a *good* (or “excellent”) instance of resistance.

An objector may respond by arguing that effectiveness is all that matters (or nearly all that matters) when it comes to resistance. If resistance generally works towards bringing about a particular change, then it is successful when it does so and unsuccessful when it does not. And success is all that matters. But here, I worry that the objector makes a value judgment of the sort the current project is aiming to avoid. The current project is an attempt to develop tools of evaluation for resistance akin to the tools logic provides us when assessing arguments. And just as effectiveness (e.g. persuasiveness) is irrelevant in that context, so it is in this one.

Further, the present account is open to the possibility that there will be cases in which it is reasonable *all things considered* to do things that are illogical or irrational. But in those cases, the onus is on the agent (or her defenders) to explain why acting in such an irrational (and, subsequently, unreasonable) manner is justified by some other

consideration. Just as the principles of logic give us tools to distinguish between good and bad arguments, the virtues of resistance give us tools to distinguish between good and bad instances of resistance. It may be that making a good (logically sound) argument is not of the utmost value, just as resisting excellently may not be of the utmost value. But whether one makes use of an unsound argument (for some greater good) or one resists in an unreasonable manner (for some greater good), these actions require justification.

### 3.6 *A Quasi-Virtue, Transparency*

A second quasi-virtue of resistance is “transparency.” Transparency was not discussed nearly as much as effectiveness in the preceding sections, so I will spend a little more time discussing it here. An agent’s resistance is transparent in the relevant way when it is clear to others why the resistance is occurring. Put differently, this clarity allows others (and the resister) to understand *why* the resister is resisting the object in question. Specifically, given that a resister deems an object to be unacceptable for some reason, this reason will be especially clear (or accessible) to others when the resister’s resistance is transparent.

Transparency of this sort has several benefits. First, it makes it easier for the observer—including the resister (and the object, when applicable)—to assess the reasonability of the agent’s resistance. By knowing the agent’s reason for resistance, we have only to compare this reason against the agent’s form of opposition, strength of resistance, and so forth. Additionally, transparency gives onlookers greater opportunity to decide whether or not they want to join in on the resistance. It will also tend to provide the object being resisted (when the object is a person) greater opportunity to understand

why they are being resisted, and greater opportunity to make reparations, understand their errors, make reparations, or defend themselves (should they decide that the resistance in question is unfair for some reason).

When resistance occurs as a group activity or social movement, transparency also will allow participants to better understand the nature of the movement and why it is being advanced. This *may* tend to increase the chances that members of the resistance (including those who join) will all be “on the same page.” And so, transparency may actually protect consistency within a movement (because those who join in resistance will be more informed regarding the reason for resistance and will be made more aware regarding what forms of opposition are appropriate in that context).

However, transparency is not a true virtue of resistance. It depends too heavily on external factors. To illustrate:

Uncaring CEO: A group of protesters decide to boycott a company given its exploitation of child labor. The protesters write a detailed explanation of their reasons for resisting (in language that is accessible to virtually everyone, including the company’s CEO). Upon receiving this document, the CEO tears it to pieces without ever reading it.

In Uncaring CEO, the protesters’ resistance fails to be transparent in an important way: It is not made clear to the object of their resistance why they are resisting. This is no fault of the protesters, but is entirely the fault of the CEO (given his unwillingness to take the time to understand their position). And so, to him, their resistance lacks transparency.

One might object that in Uncaring CEO, the resistance in question *is* transparent, just not to everyone. And given that it is transparent to anyone who cares to listen to the protesters’ explanations, the resistance should be labeled “excellent” (at least in some important way). However, it would be easy to imagine a world full of individuals like the

CEO. In such a world, nobody would take the time to read the protesters' explanation (or hear them out). As such, the protesters' resistance would remain opaque to everyone except the protesters themselves. But it seems strange to call the protesters' resistance "unreasonable" in this kind of case (which we would *have* to do if transparency were a virtue of resistance).

Another response here might be this: Even though—in a world full of individuals like the uncaring CEO—the resisters' reason(s) for resisting are opaque to all outsiders, they are at least *accessible* to anyone who is willing to listen. And maybe *that* is enough for their resistance to count as excellent. But suppose it was not a lack of caring, but an inability to understand the resisters' language that created a barrier between the resisters and all others. Others simply lacked the ability to understand the resisters' language. Here, their reasons would be neither clear *nor* accessible to others. And it does not seem right to thereby declare that the resisters are unreasonable (or are resisting in some unreasonable way). Their inability to satisfy transparency is not *their* fault, after all.

Lastly, it may be that excellent resistance is often transparent. After all, if an agent's resistance satisfies consistency, proportionality, and acceptance-readiness, to unknowingly (or coincidentally) hit all of these marks may be rare. But it is possible nonetheless. In other words, through sheer luck, an agent may resist in a consistent, proportional, and acceptance-ready way. But I suspect that in most cases, to hit all the right marks agents will have to have some transparency regarding their own resistance and the methods of opposition they adopt. So while transparency may help an agent to better understand and shape her own resistance (as well as better assess the resistance of others), it is not an excellence *inherent to* resistance.

In sum, effectiveness and transparency may both be desirable features of one's resistance. Effectiveness often means that an agent's "goals"—whether they are explicit or implicit—are more likely to be brought about. And transparency may help an agent to resist in more consistent and proportional ways. But while these features are desirable—just as it may be desirable that all of one's arguments are persuasive—the features are too dependent on external factors to count as *inherent* excellences of resistance.

### *3.7 Responding to Unreasonable Resistance*

The previous six sections of this chapter have provided us with a variety of tools for assessing the reasonability of an agent's resistance. But what do we do in cases where an agent is resisting in an unreasonable manner? How should we respond to them, and how should we judge their resistance? Here, I close out this chapter by using the above account to make several suggestions regarding how we might fruitfully respond to unreasonable resisters (and instances of unreasonable resistance more generally). I begin by describing ways we might apply the virtues of resistance when discussing an agent's unreasonable resistance. I then end with a discussion of how these virtues relate to doxastic, non-doxastic, and compound resistance.

First, the above tools provide us a variety of ways to assess an agent's resistance. We can examine resistance for consistency (in two ways), proportionality, and acceptance-readiness. And as we do so, we are provided with several ways to engage the agent.

Specifically, in cases where an agent's resistance is inconsistent (or the agent is an inconsistent resister), we must keep in mind that this inconsistency does not mean the object being resisted is undeserving of resistance. All it tells us is that the agent must

adopt a different form of opposition, change her commitments in some way, drop her resistance (or work towards dropping it), or provide an overriding justification for her resistance. Thus, once an agent's resistance is found to be inconsistent (or once we discover that she is an inconsistent resister), we should pursue one of these options.

Second, in cases where an agent's resistance is disproportionate, this means that she is either overreacting or underreacting. That is, her opposition is either too strong or too weak. In cases where it is too strong, there are a variety of ways in which we might encourage her to weaken her opposition (or provide an overriding justification for her overreaction). She might work to lessen her emotional reaction (not getting so angry, for example). Or she might back her opposition down by resisting in less serious ways. Or she might actually give up her resistance if the situation calls for it. The same sort of story applies in cases where an agent is found to be underreacting (i.e. where her resistance is too weak). In such cases, we might spur her on to do more to oppose the object in question (or to work towards opposing it more). Or, at least, we might encourage her to provide us with an overriding justification for her underreacting to the object.

Lastly, the virtue of acceptance-readiness invites us to examine whether or not the resister is sufficiently informed and if she is really willing to accept the "cost" of whatever change her resistance works towards. If we discover that the agent is uninformed regarding the costs of her resistance, then we can begin a discussion of those costs. Once the agent is sufficiently informed, we might ask her to reassess her resistance. That is, we might ask something like, "knowing what you know now, will you continue resisting?" It may be that by becoming aware of the costs of her resistance, the agent

decides the costs are not worth paying (or is unsure in the matter). In those cases, she should work towards giving her resistance up. In cases where she decides the costs *are* worth paying, her resistance becomes more reasonable.

Second, if we discover that an agent would balk at accepting the change that her resistance aims at, we have the opportunity to have them reconsider their resistance. We might ask *why* they are balking—were they not serious about their resistance? Was it a bluff? Did they not think it would actually bring about change, and so resisted just for show? And in the course of this discussion, agents should either give up their resistance (if it becomes apparent that, to them, the costs of their resistance are not really worth paying or they become unsure in the matter) or work towards overcoming their hesitancy to accept the change. At the end of the process, their resistance should either satisfy acceptance-ready or be suspended.

Transitioning to a discussion of how the virtues of resistance relate to doxastic, non-doxastic, and compound resistance, it must be noted that not all resistance can simply be “given up” at the drop of a hat. Some agents—even upon discovering that their resistance is unreasonable—will struggle greatly to alter it or give it up. For example, when it comes to non-doxastic resistance (and compound resistance, insofar as it is non-doxastic), the agent’s resistance is grounded in the way she construes a particular object. Suppose an agent resists an object in this way, discovers that her resistance is unreasonable, and desires to give up her resistance entirely (as, we will assume, this is the only reasonable course of action for her). Here, she would have to work hard to reconstrue the object. To see why this may be very difficult, recall the False Allegations example from the previous chapter:

False Allegations: A man is charged with child molestation, but the charges are later discovered to have been entirely false. Yet, even though members of the community *believe* him to be totally innocent, they cannot help but *see* him as guilty and a threat to their safety.

Here, a community of people believe one thing about a man, but cannot help but construe him as something else. In order to overcome their resistance, they would have to work hard to *see* him differently. Analogously, regarding the Duck-Rabbit image, if a person saw only a duck, it may take a lot of work for her to be able to see a rabbit in the image. This might involve getting help from someone who *can* see the rabbit. Perhaps the helper will point out features one by one, while tracing them and describing what each part of the image is supposed to represent (i.e. explicitly organizing the sensory data according to a new set of concepts). With time and effort, the hope is that the person will come to see things differently.

Doxastic resistance may be easier to overcome (when reason demands that an agent overcome it). After all, doxastic resistance is entirely based on an agent's beliefs about an object, and so when the belief that the object is unacceptable changes, we might expect the agent's resistance to change with it.<sup>41</sup> In these cases, the agent might discover some crucial but overlooked piece of information that changes her mind about the object.<sup>42</sup> And upon making that discovery, she would likely drop her resistance against it, given that there is nothing left to drive her to resist. But when resistance is compound—in

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<sup>41</sup> Assuming, of course, that she does not change from believing the object is unacceptable for reason *X* to believing it is unacceptable for reason *Y*, where *X* and *Y* are distinct reasons.

<sup>42</sup> And even in that sort of case, the agent's ignorance of this information *could* put her in danger of violating the first condition of acceptance-readiness.

that the agent resists something on both doxastic and non-doxastic grounds—things may become trickier.

Suppose, for instance, that an agent resists an object in a compound way. Take the community in the False Allegations case (immediately above) *prior* to their discovering that the charges brought against the alleged offender were false. In that case, they might resist on both doxastic and non-doxastic grounds, believing him to be guilty (and so, worthy of opposition) and construing him as guilty. Yet, upon discovering that he is innocent, while they may drop their resistance along doxastic grounds while being unable to drop their resistance along non-doxastic grounds. Thus, their resistance would shift from compound to non-doxastic. Here, reason would direct the agents to work towards construing the alleged offender differently. But again, that may be a difficult task. The important thing to note is that even when agents drop their resistance in one way (e.g. they give up their doxastic resistance) they may continue to resist an object on different grounds (e.g. non-doxastic grounds). And so, when reason directs that an agent abandon her resistance entirely, she must take care that she does so in both ways (and not just one), at least when her resistance towards the object is compound.

Finally, what can we do in cases where a person continues to resist in an unreasonable manner, but refuses to change? In response, we might consider a series of related questions: When a person makes an unsound argument and refuses to listen to an explanation of what is wrong with the argument, what should we do? We might continue to debate the issue, present different sorts of counter-arguments or evidence against their view, and so forth. And, in some unfortunate cases, we may arrive at a point where nothing more *can* be done.

But it is worth noting that concerning arguments, it may be that the conclusion of an agent's argument is true, even though the argument is unsound. So even though we reject the agent's argument, we can still assess the truth of her conclusion independently. Relatedly, an unreasonable resister may be resisting something that really deserves to be resisted. As such, even upon discovering that an agent is resisting unreasonably, we must still assess whether or not the object they are resisting really deserves to be opposed.

But in both cases, the agent themselves is acting in a way that invites criticism. The arguer has failed to give us a sufficient reason to believe her conclusion, and the resister has failed to resist in a way that deserves emulation (at the very least). And the above tools provide us with a way of being quite specific about where we find fault with the resistance in question. As such, when discussing the matter with the resister or others, we now have a way to explain precisely why we find the agent's resistance to be flawed, how it might be improved, and whether or not it should be suspended.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Logic of Resistance

In the previous two chapters, I developed a general account of resistance and several virtues of resistance. This allowed us to distinguish between instances of reasonable resistance and unreasonable resistance. While the virtues of resistance provide us with several general principles for drawing this distinction, the present chapter aims to be even more precise. Specifically, I will now work to develop a “logic” of resistance. This logic will bolster our ability to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable resistance and is designed to work in tandem with the virtues. The logic is importantly different from the virtues, however, as it enriches our understanding of what it means to reasonably resist something *on the basis of* something else.

#### *4.1 Resistance “On the Basis of” Something*

In developing the logic of resistance, we must first be clear on what it means to resist one thing *on the basis of* something else. But first, recall my general account of resistance: If an agent resists some object, then the agent opposes the object because she deems it to be unacceptable. Further, in deeming the object to be unacceptable, the agent takes the object to constitute, embody, include, or entail some kind of negative feature where that negative feature is sufficient to drive the agent’s opposition. That is, the agent believes or perceives the object to be a negative thing (or to have or entail some negative feature) and this belief/perception is what gives rise to the agent’s opposition. So, when an agent resists an object *on the basis of* something, the “something” will be this negative

feature of the object.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the Fear of Flying cases described in the previous chapters, an agent might resist getting onto a plane *on the basis of* the apparent threat that boarding a plane involves.

With this in mind, suppose *S* resists *Z*. That means that some feature of *Z*—which I will label *Q*—is the reason *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable. Thus, when an agent, *S*, resists a given object, *Z*, *on the basis of Q*, then the following conditions hold:

- (i) Some feature(s)<sup>2</sup> of *Z* (labeled *Q*) is perceived by *S* in a negative way, and
- (ii) *S*'s negative perception of *Q* is the reason *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable.

So, for example, agents may resist air travel on the basis of it being a threat (in their mind), they may resist certain government authorities on the basis that these authorities are unjust, and so forth.

Generally, but not always, an agent's negative perception of *Q* will be related to the agent's perception that *Q* has some negative effect on one or more of the agent's attachments. The threat of air travel, for example, has a negative effect on an agent's health or bodily well-being (for which the agent is concerned). As another case, the actions of an unjust government will have a negative effect on some agents' commitment to justice for all people. Thus, if the agent in Fear of Flying suddenly stopped caring about her own well-being (and so, is not attached to it), she would no longer have a

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<sup>1</sup> Note that when I refer to *Q* as a "negative feature" of the object being resisted, I mean this to include cases where *Q* is entailed by *Z*. So, to say that "*Q* is a negative feature of *Z*" is meant as shorthand for saying that *Z* constitutes, possesses, includes, embodies, or entails some negative thing (where the agent's perception of that thing as negative is what is driving the agent to resist *Z*).

<sup>2</sup> Where, to echo my previous note, this "feature" may simply be an entailment of *Z*. And we must be careful here. If *S* resists *Z* on the basis of *Q*, what *S* finds unacceptable concerning *Z* is *Q*, not *the fact that Z entails Q* or something like that. That is, it is *Q* that is driving *S* to resist *Z*, not the *fact* "*Z entails Q*."

reason to be resistant to air travel (even if she continued to perceive it as a threat to her well-being). So, again, when an agent perceives an object to have some negative feature,  $Q$ , it will usually be because  $Q$  is bad for one of the agent's attachments: It threatens, undermines, harms, or destroys something that the agent cares about.

#### 4.2 Rules of Reasonable Resistance

Transitioning now to the “logic” of resistance, it is composed of at least two rules.<sup>3</sup> If an agent's resistance is to count as *reasonable* (at least *reasonable qua resistance*), then it must conform to these rules. As such, let  $P$  stand for something that an agent is *actually* attached to or the *well-being* of something the agent is *actually* attached to. If an agent ( $S$ ) reasonably resists some object ( $Z$ ) *on the basis of*  $Q$ , then the following rules are satisfied:

Rule 1: There is no  $P$ , such that:

- (i) the agent prefers  $P$  to its absence,
- (ii) the agent deems  $Q$  to be a cost worth paying for  $P$  (or the agent is unsure whether or not  $Q$  is a cost worth paying for  $P$ ), and
- (iii) The agent believes that  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ .

Rule 2: When all else is equal (or equal insofar as is possible),  $S$  thinks worlds in which  $Q$  does not occur/exist should be actualized over worlds in which  $Q$  does occur/exist.<sup>4</sup>

In the next two subsections, I will provide a detailed explanation of these rules, as well as an argument for why these rules must be satisfied if the agent's resistance is to count as *reasonable*.

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<sup>3</sup> These two rules are central to reasonable resistance. However, as I will argue below, there may be additional rules that need to be added into the account of reasonable resistance, depending on the context. More on that below.

<sup>4</sup> Rule 2 may be unsurprising, given that  $Q$  is already set aside as whatever negative feature drives an agent to resistance. I will, however, have more to say about the importance of Rule 2 below (see Chapter Four, Section Two, B).

#### 4.2a Defense of Rule 1

The first rule of reasonable resistance involves an agent's attachments and the well-being of those attachments. Specifically, if the agent believes that one (or more) of her attachments (or the well-being of such attachments) cannot be obtained without  $Q$ , the rule applies. For example, consider:

Factory Boycott: A man leads others in boycotting a factory that has been polluting a local lake. The factory owners state that the factory cannot function without producing pollution in this way (and they are correct in their assertions). The factory also employs the man's brother (and the man cares deeply for his brother). Should the factory shut down, the man's brother will be out of work and highly unlikely to find a comparable job elsewhere (which would drastically undermine the brother's well-being).

In Factory Boycott, the agent leads a resistance against a factory on the basis that it is causing pollution. So  $Q$ , in this case, is the factory's causing pollution—this is the basis of the agent's resistance. Yet pollution is an unavoidable byproduct of this particular factory; The only way to stop the pollution would be to shut down the factory. But the factory's functioning (and, subsequently, polluting) is required to support the well-being of one of the agent's attachments (i.e. his brother). So, suppose the agent recognizes the connection between his attachment and the object of his resistance (thus satisfying the third criterion of Rule 1). If the agent's resistance is reasonable, according to Rule 1, it must be that the agent thinks worlds in which the factory is shut down and his brother loses his job should be actualized rather than worlds in which the factory continues to function and his brother maintains his job (at least when *all else is equal*). In other words, if given the choice to close down the factory, the resister *must* willingly accept the cost of his brother's losses (if he is to be a *reasonable* resister). This cost may be lamentable, but must be "worth paying" (in the resister's mind).

What about cases in which the resister does *not* recognize the connection between his attachments and the object of his resistance (i.e. cases in which he does *not* satisfy the third criterion of Rule 1). In such cases, Rule 1 does not apply, and so does not imply that the agent's resistance is unreasonable should he fail to satisfy the other two conditions of Rule 1. However, in such a case, the agent's resistance would fail to satisfy the requirements of *acceptance-readiness*. To satisfy *those* requirements, the reader will recall, means the agent must (in part) possess a *sufficient understanding* of the costs that would follow were her opposition to succeed in bringing about the change it is aimed at. And should the agent in Factory Boycott fail to recognize that his opposition (if successful) would affect his family in the relevant ways, he would fail to possess a sufficient understanding of the costs of his opposition. So by failing to satisfy condition (iii) of Rule 1, he dodges any criticism in terms of Rule 1, but falls prey to criticism in terms of acceptance-readiness.<sup>5</sup>

So why is Rule 1 a requirement for *reasonable* resistance? We might demonstrate that it is a requirement for reasonable resistance via a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*. To start, suppose that an agent resists some object, *Z*, on the basis of *Q*. Furthermore, let us consider two types of possible worlds:

Type-1 Worlds: The agent's attachments (or their well-being) are preserved, though *Q* is preserved as well.

Type-2 Worlds: The agent's attachments (or their well-being) are not preserved, though *Q* is eliminated as well.

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<sup>5</sup> This is why we must remember that the virtues and logic are designed to work together. By avoiding criticism along one parameter, an agent may violate others. This is similar to my illustration in Chapter Three (Section Two, A) in which an agent modifies an invalid argument to make it valid, but thereby commits herself to a false premise. Sometimes fixing one fault simply leads to others. The key to reasonable resistance will be to satisfy all of the parameters together.

According to Rule 1, the agent must be committed to the view that Type-2 Worlds should be actualized over Type-1 Worlds (where all else is equal). So, assume for reductio that a resister fails to satisfy this requirement. This means one of two things:

- (i) The resister thinks Type-1 Worlds should be actualized over Type-2 Worlds, or
- (ii) The resister has no clear preferences between these two types of worlds—that is, she neither thinks Type-1 Worlds should be actualized over Type-2 Worlds or vice versa.

Assume the first option is the case for our particular resister. This means that the resister acts to preserve her attachments (or their well-being) even if it comes at the cost of  $Q$ . To her,  $Q$  is “worth paying” if it means preserving  $P$ . And this may be the case even if she hates  $Q$ , wishes it away, and so forth. In those cases, she might call  $Q$  a kind of “necessary evil” for protecting her attachments.

What this means is that were the resister given a choice to eliminate  $Q$  at the cost of  $P$ , she would not take it. In other words, giving up  $P$  is too high a cost (in her mind) for eliminating  $Q$ . Or, put differently, to her,  $Q$  is a cost “worth” paying, since  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ . For example, in the Factory Boycott case, it would be as if the resister were given the option to close down the factory, but responded: “No, I want it to keep running because my brother’s livelihood depends on it.” If the agent perceives  $Q$  to be unacceptable while simultaneously holding that  $Q$  is “worth” the cost of  $P$ , then there is a kind of deep inconsistency between his rejection of  $Z$  on the basis of  $Q$  and his overall view that  $Q$  should be preserved. He is, in a way, demanding that  $Q$  be undone while being unwilling to have it undone. This is akin to demanding that a child clean her room, while insisting that she allow her room to remain messy (or preventing her from cleaning the room whenever she tries to clean it).

Observers may ask the resister: “What do you want to see happen here? You are opposing this particular object on the grounds that it has some negative feature, but you also demand that the feature be left unchanged to preserve something you are attached to. *How are we supposed to proceed?*” And, as it seems, in such a case there would be no way of satisfying the resister’s (conflicting) demands. But to make such conflicting demands puts the object (or others, on behalf of the object) in an impossible position—that is, they are being asked to do something impossible. And it is unreasonable (if not outright *irrational*) to demand that others do the impossible.

So, in the process of this *reductio*, it seems the first option is an unreasonable one. Now consider the second option (the second way in which the agent might fail to satisfy Rule 1): The agent has no clear preferences between Type-1 and Type-2 worlds (i.e. he neither thinks Type-1 Worlds should be actualized over Type-2 Worlds or vice versa). In this case, suppose the agent were given the choice to eliminate  $Q$  (though  $P$  would be eliminated as well) or to let both  $Q$  and  $P$  be. Given that the agent has no clear preferences, it seems she would not know how to proceed.

In other words, it seems as though she would balk or hesitate when given the choice. But in resisting some object on the basis of  $Q$ , she is, in a way, pitting herself against the object (and  $Q$ ), demanding, in effect, that  $Q$  (if not the object itself) be undone, altered, or changed. And yet, when given the chance to do just that, she is uncertain about whether or not the undoing of  $Q$  is worth the cost. This may suggest she was not sufficiently informed about the actual costs of undoing  $Q$ . Or, perhaps, she was not truly serious in her resistance (maybe her opposition was a bluff or just for show). To illustrate, consider an elaboration on the Factory Boycott case:

Factory Boycott 2.0: A man leads others in boycotting a factory that has been polluting a local lake. The factory owners state that the factory cannot function without producing pollution in this way (and they are correct in their assertions). The factory also employs the man's brother (and the man cares deeply for his brother). Should the factory shut down, the man's brother will be out of work and highly unlikely to find a comparable job elsewhere. The factory owner sits down with the man in charge of the boycott and explains the costs associated with shutting down the factory, emphasizing the negative impact it will have on the man's brother. The factory owner then says, "Your choice. If you tell me to shut down the factory, I will. What do you want me to do?"

If the resister's response is "I am not sure," then it is clear his resistance worked towards bringing about some change that he does not clearly want to occur. He had not adequately weighed the costs of his resistance or the costs of the change it would bring about if successful. And this, as we saw in the discussion of acceptance-readiness (in Chapter Three), means that the agent's resistance is unreasonable.

And so, to complete the *reductio*, it is now clear that if agents fail to satisfy Rule 1, then they will resist in one of two ways described by options (i) and (ii), respectively. But either way, they resist in an unreasonable manner. And so, a failure to satisfy Rule 1 means one's resistance is unreasonable. So if an agent's resistance is to count as reasonable, it must satisfy Rule 1.

In sum, concerning Rule 1, reasonable resisters must accept the (foreseeable) costs associated with their resistance and the (foreseeable) costs of the change their opposition works towards. If there is some overriding factor that makes them reconsider whether or not the change they are working towards is "worth it," then they must try to suspend their resistance.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, this does not imply that they must embrace or be *for Q*. Even if an agent decides the reasonable thing to do is stop resisting *Z* on the basis

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<sup>6</sup> I say they must *try* to suspend their resistance because what an agent resists is not always a mere result of her willing to resist (or not resist).

of  $Q$ , she may lament the fact that  $Q$  is necessary as a means of preserving her attachments (or her attachments' well-being). In other words, the agent may *hate* that  $P$  depends on  $Q$  and they may wish for an impossible world in which  $P$  is preserved and  $Q$  is eliminated. But wishing for an impossible world and demanding that the impossible be done are two separate things. And whereas the former may be reasonable, the latter is not.

Lastly, even if the agent retains a negative perception of  $Q$ , she must no longer use it as a basis for her resistance towards  $Z$ . Of course, she may adopt some *other* basis for resisting  $Z$  (other than  $Q$ , that is). In other words, simply because an agent cannot reasonably resist  $Z$  on the basis of  $Q$ , that does not imply that the agent cannot reasonably resist  $Z$ . Agents that cannot reasonably resist some object,  $Z$  on the basis of some negative feature  $Q$ , but who want to continue to resist  $Z$  must simply find a different basis for their resistance. If it turns out that the agent can resist  $Z$  on the basis of something else (other than  $Q$ ) while satisfying Rule 1, then they may continue to resist  $Z$  (and do so in a reasonable manner).

Before we move on to a discussion of Rule 2, however, suppose someone who objects to Rule 1 provides us with the following scenario:

*Alien Overlords:* An agent resists the Nazis on the basis that they enslave fellow human beings. The agent maintains that innocent human beings should be protected from such harms. However, there is an extremely powerful race of aliens monitoring the situation on earth. If Nazi slavery is halted, the aliens will destroy the planet along with everything living on it.

In *Alien Overlords*, there are two possible worlds to consider. The first is one in which Nazi slavery is halted, but the earth is subsequently destroyed. The second world is one in which Nazi slavery continues, as does life on earth. Now, the resister in this case—who believes that innocent human beings should not be harmed—would no doubt think that

the second type of world should be actualized. That is, she prefers a world in which  $Q$  continues as does  $P$  to a world in which both  $Q$  and  $P$  are eliminated.

This places her in violation of the first two conditions of Rule 1 since, for her, there is some  $P$  such that it is not obtainable without  $Q$  and she thinks  $Q$  is “worth” the cost of  $P$ . As such, her resistance against the Nazis (on the basis of their practice of slavery) is at risk for being counted as unreasonable. But if that is so, we can apply the same type of scenario to just about any case of resistance: We need only imagine that (when an agent resists some object on the basis of  $Q$ ) alien overlords will destroy the earth if  $Q$  is eliminated or changed. Given that most agents will prefer that life on earth continues rather than not (and they will usually be willing to accept  $Q$  as a cost of preserving all life), the possibility of alien overlord scenarios will result in just about every instance of resistance being in violation of the first two conditions of Rule 1. Thus, nearly every instance of resistance would be at risk for being counted as unreasonable.

In response to this problem, it is important to note a few things about  $P$ ,  $Q$ , and the dependence relation that holds between them. First, I have stated that  $P$  must be something that the resister is *actually* attached to. Second, it must be that the agent *believes* that  $P$  is actually dependent on  $Q$ . In Alien Overlords and similar scenarios, the first criterion of Rule 1 is satisfied both in that scenario and in the actual world: The agent is actually attached to the well-being of innocent life on earth. But the third criterion—that the agent *believes* the well-being of all innocent human life cannot be obtained without Nazi slavery—is not satisfied in our world. In fact, in our world, it is false that the preservation of all life on earth *actually* depends on Nazi slavery. And so, in *our* world—where Nazi slavery is not a cost for preserving all life on earth—the agent in

question may resist Nazism on the basis of slavery without violating Rule 1. If it became clear, however, that our world is *actually* the type of world described in Alien Overlords, then indeed, the agent's resistance *would* be in violation of Rule 1 (if she became aware of the alien overlords and their plans, that is).<sup>7</sup> And in those worlds, her resistance would therefore be unreasonable. But given that our world is not like that, the agent's resistance (in our world) is not in violation of the rule.<sup>8</sup>

To elaborate, we might focus on the choice the agent is faced with. Rule 1 alludes to the agent being faced with a choice between two worlds: One in which *P* and *Q* occur (or exist) and one in which neither does. The rule states that reasonable resisters must think that worlds with neither *P* nor *Q* should be actualized rather than worlds with both, *all else being equal*. So, were our agent faced with the choice between a world in which slavery continues and so does human life or a world in which slavery ends, but so does all human life, she would not be able to reasonably resist Nazism on the basis of slavery (given that she thinks the former world should be actualized over the latter).

But this result is intuitive. In such a case, it would not make sense for the agent to continue a resistance that aims to bring about an end she is extremely concerned to avoid. However, once again, in the actual world, that is not the *actual* choice the agent is faced

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<sup>7</sup> What if we did live in an Alien Overlord world and the agent did not believe that the world was like that. In such a case, she might be able to satisfy Rule 1, and so her resistance would not be unreasonable in terms of Rule 1. But she would be in violation of *acceptance-readiness* given her lack of sufficient understanding regarding the costs of her opposition. So, as has been the theme throughout this project, just because one's resistance is reasonable in one way, that does not imply that it is reasonable in all ways (along all relevant parameters) nor does it imply that one's resistance is reasonable *overall*.

<sup>8</sup> What if, in our world (where no alien overlords exist), the agent *believed* that they existed and planned to destroy the earth if Nazi slavery was halted? In that case, she *would* violate Rule 1 and, therefore, her resistance would be unreasonable.

with. In the actual world, the choice the agent is faced with is between a world in which slavery continues or it does not (and should it be halted, there will not be any negative repercussions so severe as “the world and all life being destroyed”). So given that *that* is the choice she is actually faced with, she may go on resisting Nazism on the basis of slavery.

In sum, assuming the agent is located in our world (or a world relevantly like ours), her resistance may satisfy Rule 1, even though she might fail to satisfy the rule were she to live in a world like the one described in *Alien Overlords*. When assessing whether or not agents satisfy Rule 1, therefore, we must focus on the type of world her opposition works towards actualizing given the options she *actually* faces. The options the agent is faced with will vary across worlds. Subsequently, her ability to resist reasonably will vary across worlds as well.<sup>9</sup>

#### *4.2b Defense of Rule 2*

The second rule of reasonable resistance is as follows. If an agent (*S*) reasonably resists some object (*Z*) *on the basis of Q*, then the following rule is satisfied:

Rule 2: When all else is equal (or equal insofar as is possible), *S* thinks worlds in which *Q* does not occur/exist should be actualized over worlds in which *Q* does occur/exist.

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<sup>9</sup> These points are connected with what was said in Chapter Two about unconditional and conditional resistance. In particular, an agent might unconditionally resist *Z* on the basis of *Q* in cases where for any relevant attachment *P*, the agent prefers worlds without *P* and *Q* to worlds with both. In the *Alien Overlords* case, agents who unconditionally resist Nazism on the basis of Nazi slavery would prefer to see the world ended if it meant ending Nazi slavery. Other agents, who resist Nazism in this way, but would *not* resist it if the stakes were so high, would, therefore, resist in a *conditional* manner.

Rule 2 basically states that the resister must stand in opposition to  $Q$ —to her, it would be better if  $Q$  did not occur or exist, *all else being equal*. As I noted above, this should be unsurprising, given that we have already stipulated that the agent’s negative perception of  $Q$  is what drives her to resist the object she is resisting ( $Z$ ). But it is possible for agent to use some  $Q$  as a basis for opposing an object while at the same time judging  $Q$  to be preferable to its absence. And that, I will argue, is unreasonable.

To start, consider a case:

Corporate Corruption: A woman protests against a company on the basis that the company drastically overpays its executives while underpaying its employees and taking advantage of its customers.

Suppose that in Corporate Corruption, the woman is given a chance to undo  $Q$  (which, in this case, is the company’s practice of drastically overpaying its executives at others’ expense). If she responds, “actually, I think it is perfectly fair for the company to do that. I think that the practice should remain in place (rather than be overturned or undone) because we live in a free country.” Here, the woman’s resistance is driven by a particular practice, but it is a practice that she thinks should remain in place (rather than not). It is as though she says, “This practice is bad enough that it drives me to fight against a company that does it, but I think that the practice should not be changed, even if that company offered to make the change.” Here, we might ask, “why continue fighting on that basis? If that basis is something you would not want to see changed, then why oppose it?” In other words, a reasonable resister must be *genuine* in her perception of  $Q$  as some negative feature. To resist an object on the basis of some  $Q$  that one does not *actually* take to be a bad thing is a kind of hypocrisy that, as I argued when discussing the virtue of

consistency, renders the agent's resistance unreasonable.<sup>10</sup> Thus, when all else is equal, the resister must really think that *Q* not occur/exist rather than occur/exist.

One might object: Suppose the agent *likes* (or prefers) *Q* on an emotional or sentimental level. But she *judges* that (overall) *Q* should be undone (or that it is a negative thing). There does not seem to be anything unreasonable about that. So, in such a case, the agent is not violating consistency.

In response, liking *Q* in this way is compatible with an agent thinking it should not exist or occur. It is also compatible with her judging that *Q* is a negative thing overall. All Rule 2 says is that the agent must hold that worlds without *Q* should be actualized over worlds with it (all else being equal). So, an agent can theoretically satisfy Rule 2 despite liking *Q* in some way. Thus, if the resister says, "Overall, I think that *Q* should remain (rather than not), but since *Q* is a negative thing, it should be undone" and we *could* interpret her claim as follows. By "*Q* should remain (rather than not)" she is merely expressing her emotional attachment (or something like that). But saying "since *Q* is a negative thing, it should be undone" reveals her overall judgment that *Q* should be undone. So in that case, the agent may not be in violation of Rule 2 or consistency.

However, I take it that generally, an assertion like "I think that *Q* should remain (rather than not)" does not convey that an agent merely has an emotional or sentimental attachment to *Q*. Instead, I take it that it typically suggests something like "Worlds with *Q* should be actualized over worlds without it" or "I would not remove *Q* from this world if given the chance." And if the agent takes either of *those* stances regarding *Q*, then they *are* in violation of Rule 2 (at least if they are resisting some object on the basis of *Q*).

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<sup>10</sup> See, especially, Chapter Three, Section Two.

Lastly, as a further defense of Rule 2, it may be that agents who resist an object on the basis of some *Q*—but also think that *Q* should exist/occur rather than not—do not genuinely *resist* the object at all! Instead, they may simply *oppose* the object in a more general sense. After all, resistance means opposing an object *that has been deemed by the resister to be unacceptable*. And the feature of the object that *makes* the object unacceptable (in the resister’s mind) just is *Q*. So if the agent thinks *Q* should occur/exist (rather than not), then how is it that *Q* drives her to resist *Z* in the first place?<sup>11</sup> Again, *Q* is supposed to be the thing about *Z* that the resister finds to be unacceptable. Whatever *Q* is, it is bad enough to drive her to resist *Z*. So, from the fact she resists *Z* on the basis of *Q*, it may usually follow that she thinks it would be better if *Q* did not exist or occur (as opposed to existing/occurring).

#### 4.3 Additional Rules

The first two rules of reasonable resistance apply in all cases of resistance. As such, they are most central to my account of reasonable resistance. However, there *may* be additional rules depending on the type of resistance under consideration. For example, consider *moral* resistance (i.e. resistance that is advanced on moral grounds). In such cases, agents resist a particular object on the grounds that it is deemed by them to be *morally* unacceptable in some way. And so, in this case, *Q* would refer to whatever morally unacceptable feature is associated with the object being resisted. Thus, in the case of reasonable moral resistance, we might add the following rule to Rule 1 and Rule 2:

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<sup>11</sup> Supposing that such a phenomenon is possible, I suspect it would be a rare (and strange) sort of case.

MR Rule: The fact that the agent's resistance satisfies both Rule 1 and Rule 2 depends *sufficiently* on *moral* reasons.

In other words, when resistance is advanced on moral grounds, when faced with a choice described in the discussion of Rule 1, the agent must be sufficiently motivated by *moral* considerations. And, furthermore, the agent's preference that *Q* not occur (or exist) must also be sufficiently motivated by moral reasons.

To make the requirements of MR Rule especially clear, consider two cases and the contrast between them:

Civil Disobedience (Moral): In Germany during WWII, a young couple hides several Jewish people from German authorities because the couple believes the authorities to be wrongly persecuting Jewish people. Their opposition to German authorities is driven simply by their perception that what the authorities are doing is morally abhorrent.

Civil Disobedience (Amoral): In Germany during WWII, a young couple hides several Jewish people from German authorities, in part, because the couple believes the authorities to be wrongly persecuting Jewish people. They resist the authorities in small part because they perceive what the authorities are doing to be morally objectionable, but almost entirely because they know the people they are protecting are very wealthy and will almost certainly reward them.

In the first case, the couple resist German authorities on moral grounds—they oppose the authorities given that they perceive the authorities' actions to be immoral. And that consideration is sufficient to drive their opposition. In the second case, however, moral considerations are not sufficient to generate the couple's opposition (even though they resist on moral grounds).

In other words, in the second case, we can suppose that had the people the couple chose to protect *not* been wealthy, they would not have protected them. And in the second couple's case, they oppose an object given their perception—their genuine perception—that the object is unacceptable on moral grounds. Yet their resistance is not

primarily (or sufficiently) grounded in moral considerations. If they had not been motivated by the prospect of a reward, they would not have resisted, even though they would nonetheless perceive the object to be morally unacceptable. And for these reasons, we can conclude that there is something defective about their resistance. There is some way in which it might be improved. And rules like MR Rule provide us with a way of identifying and assessing those defects.

There may be other rules that we might add to the list that do not connect to issues of morality. Perhaps there are similar rules related to political or social considerations (or matters of etiquette). But, for the sake of space, I will not explore the matter any further here.

#### *4.4 Conclusion*

I have argued that both Rule 1 and Rule 2 are central requirements for an agent's resistance to count as reasonable. In assessing agents' resistance for reasonability, we may be able to add more rules, however, such as MR Rule. As we add more rules, it follows that it will become increasingly difficult to resist in a reasonable manner. That is, the bar for what counts as *reasonable* gets set higher and higher as we add more rules to the logic of resistance. And this is no cause for concern. Compare Aristotle's observations that (a) virtue is a difficult target to hit (whereas vice is easy to fall into) and (b) virtue comes in one form, whereas vice comes in countless forms (*NE* 1106b.29-35). By following that example, we might simply assert that to resist in a reasonable manner is difficult. It consists in walking a relatively narrow path. And there are countless ways of failing to resist in reasonable ways. So it goes when one strives for excellence.

We can now begin to transition from an account of resistance to an application of the account. This chapter (and the previous two) have provided a general account of resistance as well as several ways of distinguishing between reasonable and unreasonable resistance. Regarding the latter task, we have at our disposal an account of several virtues of resistance—necessary conditions for resistance to count as reasonable *qua* *resistance*—as well as a logic of resistance, which complements those virtues. In the remainder of this project, I will apply these tools to several topics frequently discussed in philosophy of religion.

Specifically, Chapters Five through Seven I will focus on resistance and the problem of evil. In Chapter Five, I aim to describe several versions of the problem of evil in which individuals become resistant towards God, or theism (i.e. theistic belief) on the basis of their interaction with the evils of the world. To this end, I will provide detailed examples of doxastic, non-doxastic, and compound resistance. These latter two types of resistance are forms of resistance (and the problem of evil) that are most often bracketed in philosophical discussions. But, I will argue, they should not be.

In Chapter Six, I apply the principles of reasonable resistance developed in Chapters Three and Four to *particular* cases of the problem of evil (cases that are detailed in Chapter Five). This shows how philosophers can use the tools of Chapters Three and Four to engage with those particular instances of the problem in fruitful ways. In Chapter Seven, I use the observations made in Chapter Six to draw some general conclusions regarding the pitfalls that resisters of God (or theism) will commonly fall into. Not only does this give us a way to engage individuals that are resistant towards theism, it gives the resister a way to understand and evaluate her own resistance (should she be resistant

to theism or to God). And this goes some distance towards responding to various forms of the problem of evil, particularly those that are often taken to be “off limits” to philosophers.

Finally, Chapter Eight describes how resistance, as I have understood it, relates to faith. In particular, it describes faith—whatever one’s account of faith is—as generating a kind of resistance in the faithful agent. And I argue that this kind of resistance is not only reasonable (in many cases), but can insulate the theist’s commitment to God (or theism), even in the face of strong evidence against God’s existence (or the truth of theism) that comes from the presence of evil in the world.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Resistance and the Problem(s) of Evil

As many have stated before, “the problem of evil” is a misleading phrase. Whereas the phrase seems to imply that there is some *singular* problem, there are, in fact, a family of related problems.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I will begin by briefly discussing several versions of the problem of evil, as they have been delineated by others.<sup>2</sup> I will then draw special attention to certain versions of the problem of evil that are often bracketed in philosophical discussions of evil (and I will discuss the reasons why they have done this). By the end of the chapter, I will have produced an in-depth description of these problems, which will set the stage for the next chapter, where I will use the virtues and logic of resistance to engage (and respond to) particular instances of these problems.

#### *5.1 The Problem(s) of Evil*

The problem of evil is a problem for theists, since it challenges the internal consistency of claims theists usually make.<sup>3</sup> The problem, most generally, goes something like this. Theists claim that the following two statements are true:

- (i) God exists, and
- (ii) There is evil in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> This point is argued by Adams (1999: 7-16) and van Inwagen (2006: 4-5), among many others.

<sup>2</sup> Such as van Inwagen (2006) and Hasker (2008).

<sup>3</sup> For a defense of the claim that the problem of evil is a problem *specifically for the theist*, see Mackie (1955) and van Inwagen (2006: 12-15).

But some kind of problem exists for people that assert both (i) and (ii). Some versions of this problem—the *logical* problem of evil—state that the truth of (i) is logically incompatible with the truth of (ii). Other versions state that the truth of (ii) is powerful evidence against the truth of (i) (i.e. or good reason to think (i) is false). We might call these the *evidential* or *probabilistic* forms of the problem. But either way, the onus is on the theist to explain why (i) and (ii) are logically compatible, that (ii) does not actually count against (i), or adopt some other form of response.

These are not the only ways of delineating between problems, however. The general problem may also be divided into *philosophical* and *existential* or *pastoral* forms. The former, says Hasker (2008), “asks whether the evil in the world provides rationally compelling reasons to disbelieve in the God of theism” (21). Thus, the logical and evidential problems may fall into this category. But the latter “deals with the impact of evil on a personal and emotional level” and “applies especially, though not exclusively, to those who are personally suffering from terrible evil of some kind” (21). For now, I will focus on this, the *existential*, problem.

The existential problem of evil (as Hasker defines it) is vividly displayed in the lives of individuals like Job (from the Christian Bible’s Old Testament). In that case, an individual (Job) suffers immensely and grapples with his “inability to understand how the God he trusted could let such things happen to him” (Stump, 1996: 62). He has been impacted by evil—it has touched him in some way. And that encounter with evil has reshaped the way he sees the world (or has, at least, threatened the way he used to see it).

Philosophers will often avoid exploring or developing “solutions” to the existential problem. This may be for good reason. Hasker argues, for instance, that “not

everything that may legitimately be said in a philosophical discussion of evil is appropriate or helpful for use in a grief-counseling session” (21-22). In other words, it seems philosophical analyses of evil and arguments for God’s compatibility with the evils of the world may not be the greatest antidote to the suffering of those afflicted by the existential problem. And to proceed as though they *are* the antidote is to risk exhibiting a kind of “gross moral insensitivity” (22). For example, van Inwagen (2006) asks us to imagine a “grieving mother whose child had just died of leukemia” who is questioning how God could allow such a thing to happen (10). In such a case, he argues, “it would be ... stupid and cruel to respond to the mother's question with some sort of just-so story about why a loving and all-powerful God might allow such things to happen, even given that this just-so story would, in another context, constitute a brilliant refutation of the [philosophical] argument from evil” (10-11). We might even take it a step further to say that to proceed in such a manner could be morally reprehensible.<sup>4</sup>

So, to sum up, approaching the existential problem with philosophical arguments may constitute moral insensitivity, stupidity, or even cruelty. As if that were not enough, van Inwagen gives at least one more reason for why the existential problem should—for the most part—be left to the side by philosophers. He states,

If I were to try to say something that could be “immediately” useful to ordinary believers to whom some terrible thing had happened or to the pastors who ministered to them, I should almost certainly fall between two stools: I should neither give the argument from evil its intellectual due nor say anything that would be of any aid to the grieving Christian. (11-12)

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<sup>4</sup> The idea that it is morally reprehensible to offer a philosophical explanation of evil (e.g. a theodicy) to those who are in the midst of suffering is often emphasized in Holocaust theology. For example, Irving Greenberg (1989) argues that following the Holocaust, “No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children” (315). Much more on these claims (and Holocaust theology) in what follows.

In other words, to engage the philosophical problem adequately, we may need to speak about evil in ways that will not always be helpful to sufferers. And to attempt to minister to those who suffer while adequately engaging the philosophical problem will likely lead to our doing a bad job of both. Perhaps Job’s friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—represent examples of what happens when people give theoretical (or philosophical) responses to the existential problem. In that case, they sought to provide Job with a number of reasons to explain why he was suffering so much. And as became clear, not only were they “miserable comforters,” they were ultimately incorrect in their theorizing about God’s reasons for allowing Job’s suffering!<sup>5</sup> They indeed “fell between two stools.”

With all of this before us, the present chapter is an attempt to outline the various forms of the problem of evil—including the existential problem—in terms of resistance. The focus of this project is not “grief-counseling” by any means. But it is an attempt to understand the existential problem in philosophical terms. As we will see in the next chapter, it is also an attempt to show that by understanding the problem in terms of resistance (as I have defined it), there are many fruitful ways in which philosophers *can* engage with and respond to the problem *without* exhibiting moral insensitivity, stupidity, cruelty, *and* while giving the existential problem its intellectual due.

Venturing forth, as I will argue, evil creates a problem for theists because it can generate a kind of *resistance* in individuals towards God and/or theism. Additionally, this resistance may be doxastic, non-doxastic, or compound in nature. And in any of those cases, an individual’s resistance may develop on the basis of their encounter with various

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<sup>5</sup> That they were “miserable comforters,” see Job 16:2. That they were incorrect in their assessments, see Job 42:7.

evils in their own lives or in the lives of others. But to better understand this type of problem (and this type of resistance), we will need to do several things. First, we need to be clear about what *object* is being resisted (whether it be God, theism, theistic belief, religion generally, specific religions, etc.). Second, we need to articulate what it means for an agent to resist these particular objects on doxastic, non-doxastic, or compound grounds. Third, we need to consider which evils serve as the basis of an individual's resistance (whether they be evils that have befallen the individual themselves or evils they have seen befall others). Then, in the following chapter, we will be in a position to evaluate this kind of resistance in terms of the virtues and logic of resistance.

## 5.2 *The Object(s) of Resistance*

Individuals may resist God, theism, theistic belief, religion generally, specific religions, religious practices, religious figures (whether living or dead), and so forth. Any of these objects may be resisted on the basis of some evil the agent encounters or discovers. While it would be worthwhile to explore how resistance might look in each of these cases (that is, when directed at each of these objects), I will limit the scope of this project to the following two objects: God and theism, respectively.

### 5.2a *The Object(s) of Resistance: Resisting God*

To start, consider cases in which an individual is resistant towards *God*. Here, the agent opposes God in some way on the grounds that He is unacceptable in some way or another (in the agent's mind). Perhaps the agent takes an *act* of God to be unacceptable. Or maybe the agent perceives God's *willingness* to allow certain evils to be unacceptable. Whatever the case, the agent's opposition may take many different forms as well. The

resister may curse God's name, refuse to obey God's commands, or reject God's "plan" for his life (or God's "plan" for the lives of others, the universe, etc.). To really understand the nature of this kind of resistance, it will help to discuss a few specific examples of it in detail. These examples include: The biblical character of Job, Dostoyevsky's (2011) character, Ivan Karamazov from *The Brothers Karamazov*, Camus's (1991b) character, Dr. Rieux from *The Plague*, and the innkeeper, Berish, from Elie Wiesel's (1995) *The Trial of God*.<sup>6</sup> By the end, it should be clearer to the reader what it means for an agent to resist *God* on the basis of some evil(s).

The first example of an agent who becomes resistant towards God on the basis of some evil is the biblical character of Job. Job is described in the Bible as a very wealthy man who is also "a blameless and upright man" (1:1). And yet, despite being "blameless," God allows a series of horrific evils to befall Job. These include the total loss of his property, the death of his many children, and his being covered from head to toe in "loathsome sores" (1:13-19, 2:7-8). In the midst of his suffering, three of Job's friends arrive to comfort him. After sitting with Job in silence for seven days, a conversation between the four friends begins. In the course of this conversation, it becomes clear that Job's misfortunes have led him to become resistant towards God (at

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<sup>6</sup> With any of these examples throughout this project, it is no matter if the reader believes that my presentation or interpretation of these characters does not accurately represent them as they are presented in their source material. For example, if the "Job" character one meets here is one of my own invention, rather than the Job of the Bible, that is fine. All that matters is that we have clear examples of resistance with sufficient depth that we can later assess them for reasonability. That said, I do think I portray each character faithfully. But I will not defend that claim at length.

least in some way).<sup>7</sup> To best understand Job's resistance, it will help to recount some of the conversation that occurs between he and his friends.

The conversation centers around three statements (each of which is the subject of debate):

1. If a person is blameless, then that person will *not* suffer.
2. If a person is wicked (not blameless), then that person *will* suffer.
3. Job is blameless.

It is clear to all involved that Job is suffering and suffering greatly. But if statements 1 and 3 were true, then Job would not be suffering. As such, given that Job *is* suffering, one of those two statements (either 1 or 3) must be false.

Job and his friends seem to think that statements 1 and 2 (or something like them) must be true given that God is *just* in his dealings with human beings. As just one example, Bildad states,

Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression. If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great. (Job 8:3-7)

Here, Bildad explicitly links statements like 1 and 2 to his understanding of divine justice. Bildad asserts an instance of statement 2 by claiming that Job's children have been killed for their transgressions. And he asserts something like statement 1 when he tells Job that if he is "pure and upright" that God will relieve Job's suffering. Importantly, Job's initial response to Bildad's statements is: "Truly I know that it is so" (9:2). In other

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<sup>7</sup> I will not argue that Job's resistance is (or is not) a culpable offense against God. That is, in my view, Job's resistance may or may not be sinful in nature. As such, I leave open the possibility that there is a distinction between *rebellion* and *resistance*, where the former is a specific kind of resistance that *is* sinful, and the latter may or may not be sinful in nature.

words, Job seems to acknowledge that Bildad’s claims—something like statements 1 and 2—are true, given that God is just.<sup>8</sup> But Job continues to grapple with the oddity of his situation (given that divine justice seems to have failed in his case):

Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back? Who will say to him, “What are you doing?” ... How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him? Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser. If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. For he crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause... (9:12-18)

Here, just after agreeing with Bildad that God is just, Job seems to suggest that something has gone wrong in his case. Job seems to state that God is either not listening, or has failed to accurately enforce justice in his case. As such, given that Job is in no position to contend with an all-powerful deity, he must beg for God’s mercy (even though, Job thinks, he should not be in this position to begin with). So Job continues trying to affirm all three statements while assigning the oddity of his situation to some kind of cosmic mistake or oversight. On the other hand, Job’s friends are so committed to statements 1 and 2 that they emphatically reject statement 3 (and so argue that Job must be blameworthy and thus, deserving of his fate).

But given Job’s commitment to statement 3 (that is, his commitment to his being innocent), he begins to challenge statements 1 and 2. He asks his friends, “The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the faces of its judges—if it is not he, who

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<sup>8</sup> As an additional piece of evidence that Job and his friends accept something like statements 1 and 2, note that in chapter 11, Zophar seems to argue for statements 1 and 2. In 11:13-15, he states that “if you prepare your heart... and let not injustice dwell in your tents. Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish” (which is like statement 1). In 11:20, he adds that “the eyes of the wicked will fail” (which is like statement 2). And Job’s initial reply is: “...I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these?” (12:2-3). So again, Job seems to affirm this particular understanding of God’s justice (though he is in the process of grappling with it, given his undeserved suffering).

then is it?” (9:24). This seems to undermine statement 2. Job then speaks directly to God: “Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me. Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands and favor the designs of the wicked” (10:1). Here, Job provides ample evidence against statement 2. After all, as just one example, “the tents of robbers are at peace” he tells us (12:6). And so, perhaps God has not just overlooked his situation, but is also failing to enforce justice *systematically*.

In other words, in Job’s mind, perhaps God has not just overlooked what must be done to satisfy justice in *Job’s* case; perhaps God has a habit of overlooking or failing to attend to matters of injustice across the world. And so, Job claims, if only he were given the chance to make his case *known* to God, then he will be vindicated (that is, it will become clear to everyone that statement 3 is true). Specifically, Job says, “I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God... I will argue my ways to his face. This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him...Behold, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right” (13:3, 15-18). And so, again, the idea seems to be that if God became *aware* of Job’s plight, then given that divine justice operates according to something like statements 1 and 2, Job would be vindicated.

With this background before us, we can describe Job’s resistance towards God as follows: Job opposes God because Job deems God’s apparent violation of certain principles of justice to be unacceptable. To unpack this a bit, Job’s opposition takes the form in his demanding an audience with God. He never curses God or calls Him unjust (directly), but is clear that he believes his suffering is undeserved. His opposition, then, takes form in his demanding a chance to argue his case *against* God (that is, to argue that God’s management of the situation has failed to satisfy certain principles of justice). That

Job takes God to be in violation of principles of justice has to do with God's apparently failing to adequately attend to Job's situation. Again, if only Job is allowed the chance to make his case *known* to God, then that will clear everything up. The implication here being that God simply does not know what has happened to Job (or has mistakenly judged Job to be wicked when he is, in fact, innocent).

By understanding Job's resistance towards God in this way, it becomes clear why God's response to Job is an appropriate one.<sup>9</sup> God's response begins with:

Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (38:2-7)

In other words, in this passage and beyond, God makes it exceptionally clear that His providence extends to all corners of time and space, and does so to an unfathomable degree. Not only is he *aware* of Job's situation, He is aware of *every* situation across time. So what of Job's resistance? Job had resisted on the grounds that His situation had been *overlooked* (God either did not see Him or failed to notice his innocence). But here, God assures Job that he has *not* been overlooked.

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<sup>9</sup> This is especially important to point out given that God's "answer" to Job is often seen as *inappropriate*. For example, Roth (2001) claims that "God thundered back with his *nonanswer*, challenging Job with a 'Who-do-you-think-you-are?'" (15, emphasis added). Wiesel (2005) also calls God's response into question, stating, "God said nothing that Job could interpret as an answer or an explanation or a justification of his ordeals...God spoke to Job of everything except that which concerned him" (231). These views—which I do not think are uncommon—suggest that God *bullies* Job into submission without really addressing any of Job's concerns. And, if that is right, then Job's subsequent response to God (to repent and worship) is *especially* disturbing, as it would seem to be driven entirely by fear. In fact, Wiesel calls Job's submission to God "an insult to man" and insists that Job "should have continued to protest" (234). But again, I will argue here that this assessment is based on a misunderstanding concerning Job's resistance.

It is crucial to note that after God's response to Job, Job's resistance subsides. This is explained, on the present account, given that the *basis* of Job's resistance has been eroded away by God's response.<sup>10</sup> Job was not resisting God given his *suffering* per se. He resisted God on the grounds that his suffering was the result of an *unacceptable oversight*. And now, God has made it clear that *nothing* goes overlooked on His part. And so, if Job's resistance was indeed grounded in his perception that God did not see him, God's reassurance that He *does* see Job is sufficient to undermine the whole basis of Job's resistance. Thus, it is entirely fitting that Job abandons his resistance towards God.

One might object: It seems like Job should actually become *more* resistant towards God because God's speech makes it clear that, at the very least, He *knowingly allowed* Job to suffer an incredible injustice.<sup>11</sup> But in response, we must keep in mind two things. First (and most importantly): The suffering of innocents and the prospering of the wicked was *not* Job's primary concern. Neither consideration was the basis of his resistance. In fact, he was aware of those phenomena prior to his becoming resistant towards God; they are not *why* he became resistant. His primary concern—the basis of his resistance—was that he had been *overlooked* in some way. And God responded (convincingly) that Job had not been overlooked. Thus, the basis of Job's resistance was removed, and so Job's resistance dissipated. Now maybe *we* feel some resistance towards

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<sup>10</sup> It is not always the case that an agent's resistance will dissipate when the basis of her resistance is removed or resolved. Cases like False Allegations from Chapter Two make it clear that sometimes resistance persists even after its basis is sufficiently undermined. But it does seem that a fair-minded individual *will* give up her resistance (or work towards doing so) when the basis of her resistance is sufficiently undermined. And I take Job to be a fair-minded individual.

<sup>11</sup> This is what Wiesel (2005) thinks (233-4).

God on the basis of the suffering of innocents (or prospering of the wicked). But we are not Job.

Second, in the course of God's response to Job, He makes it painfully clear that divine providence extends far beyond the understanding of creatures. Thus, Job tells God, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. . . . I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (42:2–3). And immediately in response, God turns to Job's friends and declares, "you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (42:7). And so, we see God *reject* the claims of Job's friends, who served as defenders of God's justice via championing statements like 1 and 2. Following Stump's (1996) interpretation of St. Thomas on this matter, "the problem with Job's friends is that they have a wrong view of the way providence operates" (60). And so, since God asserts that divine providence extends far beyond creaturely understanding (in its depth and the way it functions), it cannot be reduced down to simple statements like 1 and 2. Thus, it is Job who speaks correctly of God in declaring that "no purpose of yours can be thwarted." The reader may be left puzzled about how horrific evils, suffering, and injustices can possibly fit into God's good plan for creation. But again, those puzzles were not Job's primary concern. *Job's* basis for resisting God was his perception that he had been overlooked. So even if God's allowance of horrific evils is the basis for *others'* resistance, once again, they differ from Job in this way.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Relatedly, Stump (1996) goes on to argue that, according to St. Thomas, there is a plausible story to be told regarding the way in which Job's suffering was a great benefit to him. As such, there may be a similar story to be told regarding other instances of horrific suffering (63ff).

This leads to our second case of an individual who *does* resist God on the basis of some horrific evils that appear to be part of God’s providential plan: Dostoyevsky’s Ivan Karamazov from *The Brothers Karamazov*. In beginning a conversation about God’s existence and the evils of the world, Ivan tells his brother, Alyosha:

I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidian mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, of all the blood they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened with men—but though all that may come to pass, *I don't accept it. I won't accept it.* (2011: 258, emphasis added)

In this passage, Ivan exemplifies a kind of resistance. The object of His resistance is God’s plan for creation (and, as I will argue in a moment, this makes Ivan resistant towards God as well).

In short, Ivan claims to *believe* that God will one day bring about some great good that will justify all the evils of the world. That great, justifying good is tied up with God’s ultimate plan for creation. Yet, Ivan is unable to accept this plan. We learn later that Ivan holds this plan to be unacceptable given his “love for humanity” (269). In other words, even though Ivan believes God’s plan may one day be justified by the good it brings about, Ivan cannot let go of his perception that the plan is unacceptable given that it involves the horrific maiming of certain human beings in the process. It is the pain, suffering, and destruction of human beings that leads Ivan to perceive God’s plan as unacceptable. And so, Ivan stands in resistance to God’s plan.

Ivan does explicitly claim that he rejects God’s plan *without* rejecting God Himself, stating, “It’s not God that I don’t accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully

return Him the ticket” (269). Here, Ivan is saying that he wants no part of whatever harmonious plan God has in mind for creation. The “ticket” is God’s invitation for Ivan to join in the plan (and the eternal harmony that will follow). But Ivan wants no part of it, given the suffering that it is purchased with.

Now despite Ivan’s claims to the contrary, I would argue that he is resistant towards God on the basis of God’s allowing (or ordaining) certain instances of suffering in the world. He may not *reject* God (insofar as he is not claiming that God must be destroyed), but he does *resist* God in some way. As mentioned already, God’s plan for creation includes some instances of intense suffering and destruction, which render it unacceptable, in Ivan’s mind. As such, he opposes God’s plan in the form of “returning [God] his ticket.” That is, Ivan explicitly refuses to play any part in God’s plan for creation (willingly).

Alyosha responds to Ivan by telling Ivan that this is “rebellion” (269). And indeed, it is rebellion against God. Unlike Job, who never refused to play a role in God’s plan, Ivan is opposing cooperation with God. It is as though Ivan says, “if this is how you will govern the universe, then I want nothing to do with your plans,” whereas Job simply demanded an audience with God to defend his own innocence. Job put his hope in God’s character (as a just being), as he believed that bringing his case to God’s attention would result in his being vindicated.<sup>13</sup> But Ivan is clear that even if God is fully justified in allowing the sufferings of this world to occur, that that is not good enough. And so, he does not put his trust in God as Job does. To Ivan, God is the *culprit*.

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<sup>13</sup> For Job’s claim to this end, see Job 23:10.

Furthermore, in defense of the claim that resisting God’s plan (as Ivan does) means resisting God by extension: It might be that God’s plans—what God wills for creation—is intimately connected with His character (in a much deeper way than creatures’ wills are connected with their plans and actions). That is, perhaps God’s plans for creation are an extension of His divine will and character. And if that is so, then to reject God’s plan—which is an extension of Who God is, in His infinite wisdom and love—is to reject God Himself. So Ivan’s claim that he “rejects God’s plan but not God” may be untenable.<sup>14</sup>

Either way, regarding Ivan Karamazov, we can plausibly say that Ivan resists God’s plan for the universe (and, subsequently, God Himself) on the basis of certain evils of the world. It is those evils (or some subset of them) that lead Him to deem (perceive) God’s plan to be unacceptable. And his opposition to the plan takes form in his refusing to willfully play any part in the plan.<sup>15</sup> And it is very important to note that this resistance occurs despite Ivan’s professed *belief* in both God and in the legitimate justification of God’s plan.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This type of reasoning is not without precedent. For a defense that God’s will is identical with His essence, see St. Thomas’s *Summa Theologica*, Ia, Q.19, Art.2, ad.1.

<sup>15</sup> Even if it is impossible for an agent to avoid playing a part in God’s plan, it may yet be possible to avoid playing a role *willingly*. And where the will *rejects* God (or His plan), that is rightfully called a kind of “rebellion.” But again, I leave open the possibility of a distinction between rebellion and resistance, where the former is always sinful and the latter is sometimes not sinful.

<sup>16</sup> This creates a bit of a puzzle. If Ivan believes that God’s plan will be revealed to be entirely justified, then how can he maintain that the plan is unacceptable? To deem (e.g. believe) something as both unacceptable and entirely justified seems to be contradictory. To resolve this puzzle, I will argue below that it is best to understand Ivan’s resistance as *non-doxastic* resistance. This allows us to say that he deems God’s plan to be justified (or acceptable) on a doxastic level while deeming it to be

Ivan's resistance is very similar to that of Dr. Rieux in Camus's (1991b) *The Plague*, with a few important differences. In short, Dr. Rieux witnesses a child die in a horrific manner; the child is slowly (and painfully) drained of his life by the plague. In the aftermath, the local priest, Father Paneloux, attempts to console Rieux. Paneloux explains that God's allowance of such evil "passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand" (218). Additionally, Paneloux had previously pressed the idea that suffering occurs because God's "love" for his creatures includes His allowing them to suffer so that they might turn from sin and turn back to Him (97-8).

In response to these ideas, Rieux insists: "That child...was innocent, and you know it as well as I do!" (218). In other words, the claim that the child's death occurred as judgment upon him is a non-starter. Rieux later adds: "I've a very different idea of love. And until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture" (218-19). So, like Ivan Karamazov, Rieux is rejecting the kind of cosmic scheme—some "eternal harmony"—that a good God would supposedly bring forth at the cost of allowing the suffering of children. But unlike Ivan, Rieux does *not* believe that these evils will one day be redeemed, nor does he believe in God's existence at all (126-7).

This is especially relevant given the adjustments that Paneloux makes to his own view. Rather than insisting upon suffering as God's means of inflicting just punishment

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unacceptable on a non-doxastic level. And, in Ivan's case, his non-doxastic resistance appears to control his overall stance towards God's plan (despite his lack of doxastic resistance).

on sinners, he later preaches a sermon that emphasizes the importance of embracing God's will, even when we do not understand it:

...the love of God is a hard love. It demands total self-surrender, disdain of our human personality. And yet it alone can reconcile us to suffering and the deaths of children, it alone can justify them, since we cannot understand them, and we can only make God's will ours. That is the hard lesson I would share with you today. That is the faith, cruel in men's eyes, and crucial in God's, which we must ever strive to compass. We must aspire beyond ourselves toward that high and fearful vision. And on that lofty plane all will fall into place, all discords be resolved, and truth flash forth from the dark cloud of seeming injustice. (228)

Now, I would note that although Paneloux's perspective on suffering has changed—from identifying suffering with punishment to a statement that sometimes we simply do not know why God allows suffering—it still endorses a picture of God's love that Rieux explicitly rejects. As Rieux put it, any scheme—any story of divine love—that includes the torture of children is unacceptable. As such, even though Paneloux has adjusted his view, it still falls short when judged by Rieux's statement. After all, according to Paneloux, God is still working all evil—including the torture of children—for some good. The issue is that we simply cannot comprehend why those events are part of the scheme, what goods will be brought about, and so forth. But the events are still a part of the scheme—part of a loving God's plan—nonetheless. And our job as creatures, says Paneloux, is to submit and embrace this plan, that God's will be done.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Paneloux is careful to qualify this view as differing from one of passivity, noting that “we should go forward, groping our way through the darkness, stumbling perhaps at times, and try to do what good lay in our power. As for the rest, we must hold fast, trusting in the divine goodness, even as to the deaths of little children, and not seeking personal respite” (227). So even if God can work all horrors for good, that does not imply that one should not fight against those horrors. On the other hand, as C. Stephen Evans pointed out to me in conversation, Paneloux later seems to adopt the view that one should simply accept whatever happens as God's will, rather than fight against it. This is especially clear when Paneloux becomes ill and simply accepts it rather than going to see a doctor. And this costs him his life.

This stance—the embrace or acceptance or willing of what God apparently wills—stands in contrast to Rieux’s position: The proper response to be made here is one of defiance, resistance, and revolt. The scheme is to be rejected for it is unacceptable. And this revolt must occur, even though the evils that befall creatures (including death included) cannot ultimately be overcome. Without hope of victory, they are to be resisted and opposed with all our might.<sup>18</sup> Those evils are, in Rieux’s mind, incompatible with God’s being loving. I take it that he neither *believes* they can be reconciled with a meaningful understanding of “love” nor is he able to *see* how the scheme can be reconciled with love. And this preemptively blocks Paneloux’s suggestion that horrific evils occur for good reasons that go beyond our understanding. In Rieux’s mind, there simply can be no such reasons.

As one last example of someone who resists God on the basis of some evil, we have the character Berish from Elie Wiesel’s (1995) play *The Trial of God*.<sup>19</sup> To provide some background, Wiesel’s play is based on an event he observed while imprisoned in the Nazi death camp, Auschwitz. As Wiesel (1995) describes it, “inside the kingdom of night, I witnessed a strange trial. Three rabbis—all erudite and pious men—decided one winter evening to indict God for allowing his children to be massacred. I remember: I was there, and I felt like crying. But there nobody cried” (1). Rather than simply describe what happened during that “strange trial,” Wiesel chose to capture the spirit of the event in the form of a play.

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<sup>18</sup> See Camus (1991b: 128ff). Unsurprisingly, the perspective that Rieux takes fits exceptionally well with Camus’s comments on revolt (described in detail in Chapter Two, Section Two, E).

<sup>19</sup> See Wiesel (1995).

Regarding the play itself, the story occurs in the fictional town of Shamgorod where several characters choose to put God on trial for His allowing certain evils to occur. Specifically, one year prior to the trial, all the Jews in Shamgorod (except two) were brutally slaughtered. The two remaining Jews living in Shamgorod are Berish, an innkeeper who plays the role of God's prosecutor, and his daughter Hanna. During the slaughter, which occurred on the day of Hanna's wedding, Berish was tied to a table and forced to watch as his wife was beheaded, his extended family and hundreds of guests were murdered, and his daughter Hanna was brutally gang-raped by dozens of men for "hours and hours" (105). Hanna never recovered. As Berish explains, "She is barely alive; you can't call that living. She sleeps, she sighs, she eats, she listens, she smiles; she is silent: something in her is silent. She speaks silently, she weeps silently; she remembers silently, she screams silently" (104). It is in light of what was done to Hanna—and the other Jews of Shamgorod—that Berish decides to bring God to trial.

Leading up to the trial (and while it takes place), Berish expresses opposition towards God in several ways. Berish tells Mendel—one of the "judges" in the trial and a former rabbi that witnessed the mass slaughtering of Jewish families in the temple where he once was rabbi—that even if he were to be given the chance to understand why God has allowed so much evil and suffering that "I would refuse to understand—I would refuse to understand so as not to forgive Him" (43). In other words, the evils that Berish has experienced are so great that he finds himself unable (and unwilling) to forgive God. And he tells Mendel that his inability to forgive remains regardless of whether or not he eventually learns that so much suffering and death was all part of some grand cosmic scheme for the good of humanity.

Additionally, when articulating the exact charges to be brought against God, Berish states, “[God] could use His might to save the victims, but He doesn’t! So—on whose side is He? Could the killer kill without His blessing—without His complicity?” In response, God’s “defense attorney,” Sam, states that “God is God, and His will is independent from ours—as is His reasoning” and so all creatures have left to do is “Endure. Accept. And say Amen” (132). But Berish clings to his resistance, despite Sam’s attempts to defend God. Berish states,

He annihilated Shamgorod and you want me to be for Him? I can’t! If He insists upon going on with His methods, let Him—but I won’t say Amen...Let Him kill me, let Him kill us all, I shall shout and shout that it’s His fault. I’ll use my last energy to make my protest known. Whether I live or die, I submit to Him no longer. (133)

With these statements before us, it becomes clear that Berish’s resistance has taken the following sort of form. He resists God on the basis of certain evils that have occurred, given his perception that God is complicit in these evils (and this kind of complicity is unacceptable). And Berish will not even entertain the possibility that God has some higher purpose for causing or allowing these particular evils.<sup>20</sup> He does not see these evils as justifiable, does not care to listen to attempts at justifying them, and he insists that God is culpably complicit in them. That is, Berish claims, there is nothing that could outweigh or compensate for the evils that he (and the other Jewish families in Shamgorod) have suffered. And even if God were to offer some kind of justification, Berish would reject it outright.

At this point, it is easy to see several points of comparison between Berish, Ivan Karamazov, and Dr. Rieux. All three reject God’s plan for creation (given the evils it

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<sup>20</sup> And this seems to put Berish in the same sort of position as Dr. Rieux, mentioned above.

apparently involves). But Berish differs from the others in at least one important way. When, in the midst of the trial, an angry mob surrounds Berish's inn, he is given the opportunity to convert to Christianity rather than face the wrath of the mob. His friends plead with him to accept this offer. But ultimately, when his life is at stake, Berish exclaims, "I lived as a Jew, and it is as a Jew that I shall die—and it is as a Jew that, with my last breath, I shall shout my protest to God! And because the end is near, I shall shout louder! Because the end is near, I'll tell Him that He's more guilty than ever!" (156). In this exclamation, we have a strange balance between submission to God and resistance towards God. Berish remains faithful to God (insofar as he refuses to abandon his faith), and yet makes it clear that he stands in opposition to God nonetheless.

This tension is mentioned earlier in the trial, when Berish refuses to abandon his faith when it is merely suggested that his life may be at stake. When that occurs, Sam (God's defense attorney) states, "I take note of the important fact that the prosecutor opted for God against the enemy of God; he did so at the sacrifice of his life. Does it mean that the case is to be dismissed?" (156). In other words, if Berish is still submissive to God—willing to die for his faith—then it seems like he should also abandon his opposition towards God. But Berish responds, "Not at all! I have not opted for God. I'm against His enemies, that's all" (156). So Berish's willingness to die for his faith may simply be the result of his standing opposed to the angry mob that surrounds his inn, rather than his submitting or remaining faithful to God.

But, as a brief aside, I think there is more to be said here than just that. As Brown (1995) writes, "one of Wiesel's teachers taught him that 'Only the Jew knows that he may oppose God as long as he does so in defense of His creation'" (xvi). That seems to

capture Berish's perspective quite well: He opposes God—he resists God—in defense of God's creation. And in doing so, it may be that he actually draws closer to God, Who also opposes evil. And this drawing closer may occur whether or not Berish would like to admit it (or whether or not he realizes it). In this same vein, Brown draws an important comparison between Berish and another of Wiesel's characters, Pedro, from *The Town Beyond the Wall*. Brown writes that Pedro is “a man who has experienced unmentionable evil,” before crying out:

I want to blaspheme and I can't quite manage it. I go up against Him, I shake my fist, I froth with rage, but it's still a way of telling Him that He's there, that He exists, that He's never the same twice, that denial itself is an offering to His grandeur. The shout becomes a prayer in spite of me. (xvi)

Here again, we see that an agent resists God in some way—he stands in opposition to God on the basis of something he deems to be unacceptable about God (namely, God's apparent complicity in allowing evil). But rather than this being outright rebellion—a sinful turning away from God—his resistance becomes “a prayer”—a form of worshipping God or acknowledging His being.

So again, there appears to be the *possibility* that a creature might resist God in a non-sinful (and even *worshipful*) way. It is, after all, God-like to oppose and resist the evils of the world (even if it is not fair to charge God with being *complicit* in those evils). But whether the reader thinks that resisters like Berish are sinful or not (given their resistance), it should be clear that they do resist God (in some way) on the basis of the evils of the world. And it is that kind of resistance that I have aimed to illustrate.

### 5.2b The Object(s) of Resistance: Resisting Theism

Next, consider cases in which individuals resist *theism* on the basis of the evils of the world. Usually this means they resist *theistic belief*.<sup>21</sup> That is, they resist *believing* that there exists an all-powerful, all-knowing, loving, personal God.<sup>22</sup> As such, this is the kind of resistance that is much more commonly discussed in contemporary philosophical literature (even though it is not usually described in terms of resistance). Examples I will discuss include Hume's (2007b) character, Philo, from his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, the "common-sense" problem of evil discussed by Dougherty (2016) and advanced by Russell (1999), and the problem of evil as advanced by Dawkins (2008).

To start, consider Hume's (2007b) character, Philo. In the course of debating whether or not the universe has a creator relevantly like the God of Christianity, Philo argues:

It must be admitted, I think, that if a being who had very limited intelligence and was utterly unacquainted with our universe were assured that it is the product of a being who, though finite, is very good, wise, and powerful, this would lead him *beforehand* to expect something different from what our experience shows the universe to be like; he would never imagine, merely from being informed that the cause is very good, wise, and powerful that the effect could be as full of vice and misery and disorder as it appears to be in this life. (47)

So how does this constitute a kind of resistance against theistic belief? Well, if Philo is right, then the mere *appearance* of our universe—that it is "full of vice and misery" and

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<sup>21</sup> I say that it is *usually* the case that those who resist theism resist theistic belief because I want to leave open the possibility that an agent can resist theism in other ways. If it turns out that there are no such possibilities, that is no problem for the present account, since I am only aiming to illustrate one particular kind of resistance towards theism.

<sup>22</sup> This does not commit me to volunteerism regarding belief. After all, what an individual resists (or does not resist) is not always an act of the will, as I argued in Chapter Two.

so unlike what we would expect to see from a “good, wise, and powerful” cause—is sufficient to render theistic belief untenable (where “theistic belief” denotes belief in an all-powerful, all-knowing, good God).<sup>23</sup>

In Philo’s thought-experiment, if an outside observer were to observe our universe, they would (Philo argues) find belief in the existence of a “very good, wise, and powerful” creator difficult to maintain. This is because theistic belief would, Philo claims, lead one to expect to see a universe far different than the one we inhabit. To put this type of phenomena explicitly in terms of resistance, we might say that Philo’s “outsider” would develop some level of opposition towards theistic belief (i.e. she would find it harder to believe) given that theistic belief would require positing a being that—given the state of the universe—just *seems* unlikely to exist.

To make this especially clear, we might say that *Z*—the object being resisted—is theistic belief. Philo is resisting something like the state of affairs in which (all else being equal) he believes the claims of theism are true. The reason that this state of affairs is unacceptable is the presence of evil in the world. So *Q*, in this case, should be something like “the data of good and evil” or “the presence of evil in the world.” An objector may raise the following point, however: It seems to make more sense to say that *Q*, in this case, is the *inconsistency* between theism and the data of good and evil. Should Philo

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<sup>23</sup> To be clear here, regarding the quoted text, Philo has already ruled out the claim that the distribution of good and evil is evidence that supports the existence of an all-powerful, perfectly good creator. Hence, at this point in the dialogue, he is focused on whether or not the universe points to the existence of a *finite* creator (who is nonetheless good, wise, and powerful). But if he stands opposed to the existence of even a *finite* (but good) creator (on the basis of evil), he will be all the more opposed to the existence of an *infinite* creator.

believe the claims of theism to be true, he would (in his mind) believe something that wildly conflicts with available data. And *that* is why theistic belief is unacceptable.

In response, I think it is entirely possible that an individual resists theistic belief on those grounds. That is, it is surely possible that some individuals resist believing the claims of theism on the basis that believing those claims would seemingly result in their (unacceptably) being epistemically irresponsible agents. But I do not think that is what is going on in many cases. After all, imagine that the data of good and evil in this world *really are* inconsistent with the claims of theism. Let the evils of this world be *E* and God's existence be *G*. It follows that there are not worlds in which *E* and *G* occur.

Let us then imagine that Philo is in a world where God exists (and, therefore, evils that occur—if there are any—are not comparable to *E*). Would Philo resist theistic belief in that world (*in the same way* that he resists in the actual world)? Clearly not.<sup>24</sup> Yet even in that world, the inconsistency still holds. That is, it is still true that *G* and *E* are inconsistent. But theistic belief is not unacceptable to Philo on those grounds. In short, the inconsistency remains the same across worlds, but Philo resists in one world (the actual world) but not the other. The only difference between these worlds, however, is that one of the worlds contains *E* and the other does not (nor does it contain anything relevantly like *E*, worse than *E*, etc.). Thus, it is the presence of evil—not the relevant inconsistency—that is driving Philo to see theistic belief as unacceptable. Thus, the presence of evil—or the data of good and evil—should stand for *Z*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Of course, he may resist theistic belief on some other basis, but I will put that possibility to the side for now.

<sup>25</sup> An alternative story to this description of Philo's resistance is this: Philo *believes* that the claims of theism are false *on the basis of* evidence from evil. As I will

Moving on, the kind of resistance that Philo's case illustrates is related to what Dougherty (2016) describes as the common-sense problem of evil.<sup>26</sup> Dougherty describes the common-sense problem as follows:

Common-Sense Problem of Evil: A reasonable person can have a network of background beliefs about what to expect from an infinitely resourceful being such that the addition of facts about evil can cause them to have a basic (non-inferred) belief that God does not exist. (§6.2)

In such cases, to the “reasonable person...the world *strikes* them as nothing like what theism would predict” (§6.2). So, their expectations about what theism would entail (regarding the state of the universe) are betrayed. And this puts pressure on theistic belief. This pressure, I would argue, takes the form of their becoming opposed (to some degree or another) to theistic belief on the grounds that it seems incompatible with their observations. This kind of resistance is, I think, captured nicely in Bertrand Russell's (1999) statement, “it is a most astonishing thing that people can believe that this world, with all the things that are in it, with all its defects, should be the best that omnipotence and omniscience has been able to produce in millions of years. I really cannot believe it” (82). And, following Dougherty, there is no reason to assert that this kind of resistance must occur “consciously” (§6.2). Russell was obviously aware of his opposition to theistic belief, but there is no reason to assume that all resisters are equally aware of their opposition to it.

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discuss at length at the end of Chapter Six, however, belief *on the basis* of evidence is a different sort of relation than resistance *on the basis* of something. And as I will argue in Chapter Six, the virtues and logic of resistance will provide us with a way of assessing the former kind of phenomenon, though not the latter (at least not obviously).

<sup>26</sup> See also Dougherty (2008) for a discussion of the common-sense problem of evil.

Furthermore, resistance towards theistic belief may occur on the basis of “global” evils, “local” evils, or both (to borrow a distinction from van Inwagen).<sup>27</sup> As van Inwagen writes, “global” arguments from evil proceed on the basis of the “vast amounts of truly horrendous evil in the world” (57). These evils—in terms of their intensity and distribution—are seen as incompatible with the existence of God (or as strong evidence against it).<sup>28</sup> In other words, the state of the universe, taken as a whole, *appears* to count against theistic belief. This is the kind of resistance that is advanced by Philo, described by Dougherty (in the above quotations), and exemplified by Russell in the previous paragraph.

“Local” arguments, on the other hand, “proceed not from a premise about ‘all the evils of the world’, but from a premise about a single horrible event” (van Inwagen 2006: 95). In these cases, some *particular* event leads agents to become resistant towards theistic belief. According to Marilyn Adams (1989), these types of events might include:

...the rape of a woman and axing off of her arms, psychophysical torture whose ultimate goal is the disintegration of personality, betrayal of one’s deepest loyalties, cannibalizing one’s own off-spring, child abuse of the sort described by Ivan Karamazov, child pornography, parental incest, slow death by starvation, participation in the Nazi death camps, [and so forth]. (300)<sup>29</sup>

In each case, agents experiencing such horrors (or agents who learn of them) may develop a kind of resistance towards theistic belief, given the apparent clash (or

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<sup>27</sup> See van Inwagen (2006: Ch. 4-6).

<sup>28</sup> See Dougherty (2014b: 118ff) for a discussion of the distribution and intensity of evils in the world.

<sup>29</sup> Also, see Adams (1999) for an elaborate discussion of these kinds of “horrendous” evils.

incompatibility, tension, etc.) between the occurrence such events and the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, benevolent deity.

So far, I have described resistance towards theistic belief as it might occur on epistemological and phenomenological bases. That is, agents might oppose theistic belief because they deem it to be unacceptable on epistemological grounds. In such cases, it is unacceptable because there is insufficient evidence for it (or too much evidence against it). Or they might oppose it because they deem it to be unacceptable given the way the universe *appears* to them (especially in light of the evils they observe). But there are other bases upon which agents might become resistant towards theistic belief as well.

For example, in *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins (2008) argues that theistic belief—at least in fundamentalist circles—“actively debauches the scientific enterprise” and “teaches us not to change our minds, and not to want to know exciting things that are available to be known. It subverts science and saps the intellect” (321).<sup>30</sup> In this passage—and many others—Dawkins seems to oppose theistic belief on *moral* grounds. He holds that theistic belief is destructive to certain goods (in the passage quoted above), and, elsewhere, that it promotes the psychological (and even physical) abuse of others (354ff). As such, in Dawkins’ mind, it appears that theistic belief is worthy of opposition on *moral* grounds. That is, in Dawkins’ mind, there is some aspect of theistic belief that

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<sup>30</sup> That someone might oppose theistic belief in this way does not imply that doing so is reasonable, of course. Nor do we need to agree with Dawkins about the tendencies of (fundamentalist) theistic belief in order to recognize that his perception of its tendencies serves as a basis for his resisting it.

is morally unacceptable, and in light of this morally unacceptable aspect, Dawkins takes a stance of opposition against theistic belief.<sup>31</sup>

In sum, there are many ways in which individuals might resist (or become resistant towards) theistic belief. They may do so on the grounds that it is, in their mind, epistemically, phenomenologically, or even morally unacceptable. And in each case, the evils of the world (whether global or local) may play a central role in generating this resistance. It may be that the evils of the world are seen as evidence that makes theistic belief epistemically untenable. Or perhaps the evils of the world—or the appearance of the world—conflict so heavily with one’s expectations about how a God-governed world would look that theistic belief is something one must oppose. And lastly, perhaps theistic belief itself is seen *as* an evil (or as something that tends towards the promotion of various evils), and so, is deemed worthy of opposition on moral grounds.

In conclusion of our discussion *objects*, we have seen that the object of an agent’s resistance may be God or theistic belief. Agents may resist either object on epistemic, moral, or some other grounds. And in any of those cases, the evils of the world (whether global or local) may be what generates their resistance.

### *5.3 Different Forms of Resistance*

Having explored two objects that an individual might resist on the basis of some evil(s)—God and theism—I will transition to a discussion of different forms of resistance. There are three ways in which an individual might resist a given object:

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<sup>31</sup> There is no question that Dawkins is also opposed to theistic belief on epistemological grounds as well. But I highlight his moral resistance towards theistic belief simply to illustrate that it is a real type of resistance that people exhibit towards that particular object.

doxastic, non-doxastic, and compound.<sup>32</sup> For that reason, there are three ways in which an individual might resist *God* on the basis of some evil(s) in the world:

Non-Doxastic Resistance to God: *S* resists God on the basis of some evils of the world, and *S*'s resistance is entirely non-doxastic in nature.

Doxastic Resistance to God: *S* resists God on the basis of some evils of the world, and *S*'s resistance is entirely doxastic in nature.

Compound Resistance to God: *S* resists God on the basis of some evils of the world, and *S*'s resistance is (to some extent) of a doxastic nature *and* of a non-doxastic nature.

Likewise, there are three ways in which an individual might resist *theism* on the basis of some evil(s) in the world:

Non-Doxastic Resistance to Theism: *S* resists theism on the basis of some evils of the world, and *S*'s resistance is entirely non-doxastic in nature.

Doxastic Resistance to Theism: *S* resists theism on the basis of some evils of the world, and *S*'s resistance is entirely doxastic in nature.

Compound Resistance to Theism: *S* resists theism on the basis of some evils of the world, and *S*'s resistance is (to some extent) of a doxastic nature *and* of a non-doxastic nature.

In the following three subsections, I will describe the nature of (and differences between) non-doxastic, doxastic, and compound resistance, specifically when an agent is resistant towards either God or theism on the basis of some evils in the world.

### *5.3a Non-Doxastic Resistance to God (or Theism)*

As was the case in Chapter Two, I begin with an analysis of non-doxastic resistance. Recall that generally, when an agent resists something in a non-doxastic manner, this means the agent deems the object being resisted to be unacceptable given

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<sup>32</sup> See Section Two, C, in Chapter Two for a detailed overview of these forms of resistance.

her *construal* of the object—or some feature(s) of the object—as unacceptable (in some way). And given that her resistance is non-doxastic, this it is driven by this construal, not her beliefs about the object.

To help illustrate how non-doxastic resistance connects with the problem of evil, I will describe several examples. I begin with a discussion of Ivan Karamazov’s resistance towards God before turning to the type of resistance advocated by Roth (2001).<sup>33</sup> Since, in both of these cases, the object of the agents’ resistance is God, I will end this subsection with a consideration of some cases in which the object of agents’ non-doxastic resistance is *theistic belief*.

Recall Ivan Karamazov’s resistance towards God. If we take Ivan at his word, then he is clear that he *believes* God exists and even that God’s allowance of horrific evils will one day be justified. Despite these beliefs, he resists God; he opposes God’s plan and wants no part of it. Again, if we take him at his word when he reports his beliefs, this suggests that his resistance is being driven by something other than his *beliefs* about God and God’s justification for enacting this particular plan for creation. My suggestion is that Ivan (and those who *see* the world as he does) cannot help but *construe* the relevant evils of the world as so horrific that there can be nothing done to rectify, redeem, or justify them.

Compare this to the Fear of Flying cases from Chapters Two and Three, where a woman could not help but construe flying as a threat to her safety, despite her *believing* it

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<sup>33</sup> Regarding these examples, it is technically not necessary that they be genuine instances of *non-doxastic* resistance as opposed to *compound* resistance. What matters is that they are not *doxastic*. So, if an objector insists, for instance, that Ivan Karamazov’s resistance is actually compound (rather than non-doxastic), that will not matter. In that case, I will respond that I simply intend to focus on the non-doxastic *component* of each agent’s resistance.

to be perfectly safe. Similarly, Ivan (and those like him) cannot break the construal of the evils of the world as grounds to oppose God's plan (and, thereby, God Himself), even though they may sincerely believe that one day the evils will be justified or redeemed.

What is even more telling of the fact that Ivan's resistance is non-doxastic in nature is the *way* in which he presents various evils to his brother, Alyosha. He describes one horrendous evil after another. He begins with stories of prisoners having their ears nailed to a fence before being killed and women being forced to watch their babies tossed into the air and impaled on bayonets (260-1). A bit later, he continues with stories of parents that beat and torture their children in horrific ways (264-5). In one particularly disturbing case, Ivan describes a little girl whose parents

...beat her, thrashed her, kicked her for no reason till her body was one bruise. Then, they went to greater refinements of cruelty—shut her up all night in the cold and frost in a privy, and because she didn't ask to be taken up at night (as though a child of five sleeping its angelic, sound sleep could be trained to wake and ask), they smeared her face and filled her mouth with excrement, and it was her mother, her mother did this. And that mother could sleep, hearing the poor child's groans! (265)

And in light of these horrors, Ivan puts a series of questions to Alyosha:

Can you understand why a little creature, who can't even understand what's done to her, should beat her little aching heart with her tiny fist in the dark and the cold, and weep her meek unresentful tears to dear, kind God to protect her? Do you understand that, friend and brother, you pious and humble novice? Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted? Without it, I am told, man could not have existed on earth, for he could not have known good and evil. Why should he know that diabolical good and evil when it costs so much? Why, the whole world of knowledge is not worth that child's prayer to 'dear, kind God'! I say nothing of the sufferings of grown-up people, they have eaten the apple, damn them, and the devil take them all! But these little ones! (265)

In light of Ivan's speech, we might ask: Why does he include *so many* stories of horrific evils? Is he simply attempting to tip the scales against God, as though the stories of seven

horrific evils will not constitute sufficient grounds on which to oppose God's plan, whereas eight would? To me, that sort of suggestion seems far too silly to take seriously.

Instead, I think we should look at Ivan's inclusion of horrific story after horrific story as having the effect on his audience of *breaking down* their construal of the universe as a good place (or as a place that is governed by an all-powerful, all-knowing, wise and loving God).<sup>34</sup> He is inviting the audience in to enter into his "point of view"; to see the world as he sees it. He wants Alyosha to see the way that horrific evils appear to him and the way that he sees claims about God's good plan in light of those evils. And by telling story after story, Ivan's speech may have a tendency to break down the audience's construal of God's plan as an *acceptable* one. And, following the discussions in Chapter Two, the audience's construal might even begin to change without them experiencing any real change in belief. But in any case, if the relevant shift in construal occurs in the minds of Ivan's audience, his resistance may start to become their resistance.

Ivan seems entirely aware that his stories may have this effect. Before beginning his speech, Ivan states, "Dear little brother, I don't want to corrupt you or to turn you from your stronghold, perhaps I want to be healed by you" and Dostoyevsky adds that "Ivan smiled suddenly quite like a little gentle child. Alyosha had never seen such a smile on his face before" (259). In a word, I would argue that Ivan is aware of the transformative power that this succession of stories may have on the mind of a believer. He understands that it may wear on them; it may have the effect of wearing down their belief in God (or their acceptance of God and God's plan), perhaps even to the point of

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<sup>34</sup> Whether Ivan—or Dostoyevsky—intended this effect or not.

destroying their faith.<sup>35</sup> In effect, he might be telling Alyosha that he worries his stories will cause Alyosha to reconstrue the world (or God, or God's plan) in ways that will undermine or destroy Alyosha's faith.

On the other hand, his adding that "perhaps I want to be healed by you" signals his awareness of the possibility that Alyosha's response to these evils may provide a way for Ivan to reconstrue these horrific evils in a way that undoes his own resistance towards God. From what I can tell, when two individuals who construe a given object differently clash, one of four results will occur. Either Person A will take on the construal put forth by Person B, Person B will take on the construal of Person A, neither will change their construal of the object, or both will become able to construe it in both ways.<sup>36</sup>

Ivan seems to hint at the dangers of undermining Alyosha's construal while expressing some level of hope that he can, through conversation, become better able to take on Alyosha's construal of God's plan (and God). If that were to occur, faithful adherence to God's plan would become much easier for Ivan. So, in sum, it seems plausible to me that Ivan is telling his brother (in effect), "I worry that I will cause you to see God (or God's plan) differently after this conversation. But I hope that you help *me* see God differently. Help me to see differently, that I may surrender my opposition towards Him." And importantly, this all takes place independently of Ivan's alleged beliefs about God, God's plan, and God's justification for His plans.

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<sup>35</sup> For a lengthier discussion of the connection between resistance and faith, see Chapter Eight.

<sup>36</sup> If someone claimed that there are gradations of these four categories, I would not argue with them. I suggest that these four constitute the major categories of possible results from the relevant sort of interaction.

Another instance of non-doxastic resistance is illustrated in the “theodicy of protest” (or “antitheodicy”) developed by Roth (2001). For Roth, advocating for an “antitheodicy” means “refusing to justify, explain, or accept...the relationship that subsists between God...evil, and suffering” (4). Roth thinks that any attempt to justify the evils of the world is doomed to fail primarily because there is literally nothing God can do to redeem the immense suffering and evil (what Roth calls “waste”) that has occurred throughout history (10–12). To be especially clear, Roth claims that “no matter what happens” in the eschaton, “God is going to be much less than perfectly justified” in His allowance of the evils that have occurred on earth (like the Holocaust) (12). Roth is not simply saying that God’s justification is beyond his understanding. He is claiming that there *cannot be* any real justification.

There are, therefore, two objects of Roth’s resistance: (i) he resists *God* on the grounds that God has allowed too much waste throughout history than can possibly be justified and (ii) he opposes any *theodicy* on the grounds that it aims to provide God with a justification for allowing these evils (when there is *no possible justification* for God’s doing so) (10–12). God is deserving of opposition because—given His failure to prevent evils like those that occurred during the Holocaust—He is not “perfectly good” (31). And insofar as God is evil (or has some evil aspect to His character) we must stand against Him.

Second, theodicies (as well as those who argue for them) are worthy of opposition given they aim to “legitimate evil” that cannot possibly be justified (17). For this reason, to offer a theodicy is epistemically unacceptable (insofar as it aims to provide justification for something that cannot be justified). Theodicies call us to believe

something that is unbelievable. Offering a theodicy is also morally unacceptable, given that it “mocks the victims” of evil (12). As Davis (2001b) puts Roth’s view, to advocate a theodicy that posits God’s redeeming power will extend to evils like those that occurred during the Holocaust “is to fail to have solidarity with the victims and sufferers. It is to allow their screams of pain to be muted” (23). In other words, to offer a theodicy is to *harm* those who have suffered horrendous evils.

So why characterize this type of resistance as *non-doxastic* in nature?<sup>37</sup> To see the answer, we must unpack the debate a bit more. Roth reiterates again and again that history is full of “too much waste” to be redeemed, that “such a wasteful God cannot be totally benevolent,” that there is “no good...on earth or beyond” that is “worth the freedom” God has given creatures, and that ultimately, “unjustified waste is everlasting” (5–12). The point is clear: Too much has been lost and too much blood has been shed for God to ever fully redeem the evils of history. In Roth’s words, “existence is permanently scarred” and nothing—not even a God for Whom all things are possible—can do anything to fix it.

In response, Roth’s claims have received considerable criticism from Davis (2001b), Hick (2001), and Hasker (2008). All of these critics agree on one thing: Roth has not offered an *argument* for his claims. Instead, he has presented us with a kind of emotion-based reaction to the evils of the world. For example, Davis (2001b) writes in response to Roth’s essay, “I suspect I can do little to deflect Roth from this path, which is, I believe, something of a gut-level, emotive (I do not intend these words in any pejorative sense) reaction to the suffering he sees in the world, especially the outrages of

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<sup>37</sup> Or, at the very least, as *compound* resistance with an obvious *non-doxastic* component.

the Holocaust” (21). Hick (2001) adds that “Roth nowhere tries to give any serious consideration to” the possibility that the eschaton can *genuinely* account for and redeem the evils of the world and that “this is [Roth’s] disabling *blind spot*” (29, emphasis added). Hick ends by asserting that we “have a duty to exercise our reason as well as our emotions,” whereas, it seems, Roth has focused too much on the latter at the expense of the former (30). Lastly, when considering Roth’s essay, Hasker (2008) adds that “the sheer fact that in the light of the Holocaust and other evils [Roth] is unable to believe in a wholly good God does not, by itself, constitute a reason why...others who share this belief, should abandon it. Passionate rhetoric is one thing; shouldering the burden of proof is another” (38).

According to these authors, Roth sees the world a certain way: The world appears to contain too much waste to be redeemed (fully). Perhaps Roth sees the world this way because of a “blind spot.” But whatever the case, in response to Davis, Roth insists that things like

[C]ancer and the Holocaust render improbable the claim that ‘God is omnipotent and God is perfectly good.’ Sufficient evidence to do so is available for *anyone who will see it*. Accumulating massively over the centuries, it consists of millions who have suffered without justification and died without peace, to say nothing of their agonizing but unanswered questions. (Davis 2001b: 99, emphasis added)

In other words, Roth insists that his critics are *overlooking* (i.e. not seeing) obvious evidence against God’s (perfect) goodness. And Roth’s critics are accusing Roth of failing to seriously consider the redemptive power of God. In his final response, Davis summarizes the debate as follows:

Roth’s irritation with me is simply a function of our approaching the problem of evil with different sets of assumptions. Moreover, I do not see how the evidence of waste in the world, massive as it is, shows that a perfectly good God could never have allowed it. Sadly, Roth and I are at an impasse here. I argue that in the

light of the eschaton a perfectly good God morally can allow the waste that we see in human history. To counter this, Roth keeps pointing out how terrible and massive the waste is. And I keep looking for an argument why this admitted amount of waste—whatever amount it is—could not have been allowed by God. He thinks I am *looking at the evidence blindly*; I think he is not producing an argument. (104, emphasis added)

The distinction between non-doxastic and doxastic resistance developed in this project can not only explain this “impasse,” it also predicts that such impasses will occur from time to time. After all, non-doxastic resistance operates on the basis of an agent’s construal of some object, and arguments that operate on doxastic grounds—which aim to provide evidence, change belief, etc.—will not always affect such construals.

As for the current debate we are considering, Roth is resistant towards God (and theodicies) on non-doxastic grounds. He *sees* things like the Holocaust—he conceptualizes them—as irredeemable. As such, suggestions to the contrary seem absurd. To illustrate, imagine that a person is looking at the duck-rabbit illustration and can only see a duck. Their friend then suggests to them that it is a picture of a rabbit. This may seem laughable. They might respond with surprise: “What are you talking about? How can you confuse a duck with a rabbit?” But in the debate between Roth and his critics, we are not concerned with trivial matters like ducks and rabbits. We are considering some of the most horrific evils ever to occur. And so, should one person genuinely *construe* them as irredeemable, it is unsurprising that they might find suggestions to the contrary to be ridiculous or even offensive.

So I disagree with Davis’s assessment that he and Roth are approaching the problem with “different sets of assumptions.” Instead, I would say that Roth embodies a kind of non-doxastic resistance towards God (and theodicies) that is based on a construal that his critics do not share. This will leave them in a state in which he cannot

comprehend how they cannot just *see* the evidence in front of them. And they, in turn, are asking for an argument for why they should *believe* what Roth is suggesting. That is, Roth's critics are looking for an explanation that operates on a *doxastic* level. So the parties are simply talking past one another.

An impressive theodicy may do great work in disarming a person's *doxastic* resistance towards God (or theism). But it will not necessarily do the same amount of work in disarming a person's *non-doxastic* resistance. As such, continued attempts on the part of Roth's critics to respond to *doxastic* resistance towards God or theism will fall flat. A response to doxastic resistance is not the appropriate solution to a problem grounded in non-doxastic resistance. And, in this context, to attempt to convince someone—on doxastic grounds—that an evil they construe as irredeemable is possibly redeemable, may simply be an application of the wrong tools. It might be something like trying to remove a deeply embedded screw with the claw of a hammer. Most likely, proceeding that way will only result in damage or failure.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, if Roth *sees* the evils of the world in one way, whereas his critics do not, who is seeing clearly? Whose perception is correct? According to Roth, failure to see the world in this way is to fall out of solidarity with the victims of evil (33). To see the Holocaust as something that may be redeemed one day is “incredible, if not obscene”

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<sup>38</sup> Perhaps it is not the role of the philosopher to address instances of non-doxastic resistance. Maybe this is why Hasker and van Inwagen cautioned against the use of philosophical tools in “fixing” the existential or “pastoral” problems arising from agents' encounters with evil (see Section One in Chapter Five). Davis might add that non-doxastic resistance, as I have described it, is a kind of “evangelistic difficulty” generated from agents' encounters with evil (81). And, in his words, “evangelism is not philosophy” (81). That is, maybe it is not the job of the philosopher to address non-doxastic resistance because this is not something philosophers are *equipped* to deal with. In the next two chapters, however, I will aim to put pressure on these claims.

(33). On the other hand, Roth's critics insist that Roth ought to at least be open to the *possibility* that these evils could one day be redeemed. That does not imply that they currently see the evils as redeemable. In fact, they often admit that they do *not* see how these evils can be redeemed.<sup>39</sup> But they *hope* for redemption. They hold open the possibility that horrific evils may one day be redeemed or defeated. And so they hold open the possibility that their perception of such evils as irredeemable is mistaken. Does holding open that kind of possibility (or hoping for it) imply that they cannot enter into solidarity with the victims of evils? That is, does their hope for redemption really silence the screams of the tortured souls of the Holocaust? I do not think so.

To see why (and as a brief aside), imagine we are presented with two proposals regarding solidarity:

Solidarity 1: To enter into solidarity with victims of the Holocaust, an agent must see (construe) the evils that befell them as entirely irredeemable *and* the agent must not dare to construe (or entertain construing) the evils as redeemable.

Solidarity 2: To enter into solidarity with victims of the Holocaust, an agent must see (construe) the evils that befell them as entirely irredeemable.

In light of the evidence included above, Roth appears to argue for Solidarity 1. His opponents, on the other hand, seem to favor Solidarity 2. But Solidarity 2 is compatible with an agent being *able* to construe the evils of the Holocaust differently. It is also compatible with their *hoping* or entertaining a different construal of those evils. That is, they may believe (or hope) that their construal of these evils as irredeemable is mistaken.

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Davis (2001a) writes, "Roth says he cannot understand how God could possibly redeem and render acceptable all the waste that has occurred (*and I must admit that I cannot understand it either*)" (22, emphasis added). Griffin (2001) echoes this view (25), as does

In other words, even if they do see those evils as irredeemable (and they cannot imagine *how* God will redeem them), they may yet hope that God will do so.

So agents who satisfy Solidarity 2 at least have the *ability* to see the evils of the Holocaust as irredeemable, but they may also be able to construe them differently. As a parallel, when looking at the duck-rabbit illustration, many people are capable of seeing the image as a duck or as a rabbit. They can change between construals; They can see the image either way. But, given Roth's commitment to something like Solidarity 1, to change one's construal of the evils of the Holocaust—to see those evils as anything but irredeemable—or to even entertain the possibility that those evils are redeemable, is to mock the victims of the Holocaust and silence their screams.

In my view, Solidarity 2 seems more plausible than Solidarity 1. But I will not argue for that view here. What I have hoped to illustrate, in part, is that the framework (and the vocabulary) developed in my account of resistance can provide several fruitful ways to engage these debates and shed light on points of disagreement between various parties.

To sum up so far, we have considered what non-doxastic resistance to God (or theodicies) might look like. In Ivan Karamazov, we see a kind of non-doxastic resistance against God. And in his telling of one horrific story after another, I have argued that this non-doxastic resistance may threaten to affect his audience's construal of the world. That is, as Ivan tells story after story, his audience may find that their construal of the world begins to move closer to Ivan's view. And this *may* all operate independently of their

*beliefs* about what evils are redeemable, the acceptability of God’s plan, and the goodness of God in general.<sup>40</sup>

Next, we saw that in certain debates over the problem of evil, the framework of resistance allows us to understand points of disagreement between parties, as well as why they might find themselves at an “impasse” of sorts. Specifically, when non-doxastic resistance is met with a solution that targets *doxastic* resistance, it is unsurprising that the result is an “impasse” between the parties. By identifying distinct problems in terms of doxastic and non-doxastic resistance (respectively), however, we can begin to make progress in these debates.

Now, we have considered non-doxastic resistance when its object is *God*. But what about when the object of an agent’s non-doxastic resistance is *theism*? Here, we might consider the common-sense problem of evil (described by Dougherty 2016): “A reasonable person can have a network of background beliefs about what to expect from an infinitely resourceful being such that the addition of facts about evil can cause them to have a basic (non-inferred) belief that God does not exist” (§6.2). As I noted above, Dougherty adds that in such cases, to the “reasonable person...the world *strikes* them as nothing like what theism would predict” (§6.2). So, in these cases, the way in which a person construes the world—especially how they perceive evil in the world—leads them

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<sup>40</sup> Of course, as I noted in Chapter Two, it may be that the vast majority of instances of resistance (even in the “problem of evil” cases) are compound. So cases where resistance is *strictly* non-doxastic may be few and far between. Suppose, therefore, that an objector argues that Ivan’s resistance is compound, in that he “sees” God’s plan as unacceptable and then comes to believe that it is unacceptable. I do not think this is what is going on in his case, but suppose it is. There is still an easily identifiable non-doxastic component to Ivan’s resistance. As such, by focusing on just that component of his resistance, it serves as an adequate illustration of non-doxastic resistance (at least for the present discussion).

to see it as one in which theism is false. The universe—as it “strikes” them—just seems like one in which the claims of theists are false.

One might object that the picture here is more complicated. After all, individuals who “see” the world as one in which theism is false may still *believe* that the claims of theism are true. But, in response, I would argue that their construal of the world will often make it *harder* to believe the claims of theism, since it leads them to be opposed to theistic belief on some level. Such people might embody a “faith seeking understanding” mindset, in which they work hard to understand, see, and/or accept what they already confess to believe. In the language of resistance, they may work hard to overcome their non-doxastic resistance towards theistic belief while continuing to maintain their belief.<sup>41</sup>

As a specific instance of an individual who expresses a kind of resistance towards theistic belief on the basis of evil, consider a story that Elie Wiesel recounts in his (1982) memoir, *Night*. In this case, a child—whom Wiesel describes as “a sad-eyed angel”—became associated with the sabotaging of a Nazi power station. After being tortured and refusing to disclose who was involved—if the child even knew—the child was sentenced to be hanged. Wiesel describes the scene (35):

One day when we came back from work, we saw three gallows rearing up in the assembly place, three black crows. Roll call. SS all around us, machine guns trained: the traditional ceremony. Three victims in chains—and one of them, the little servant, the sad-eyed angel.

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<sup>41</sup> Maintaining theistic belief in the face of opposition towards it is central to the discussion in Chapter Eight. Additionally, I do not mean to suggest that the theist’s maintaining their belief is an act of the will (though the will might play *some* role to play here). In other words, it may be that a theist maintains their belief in God on the basis of good evidence for God’s existence, but nonetheless struggles with non-doxastic resistance to theism. This is akin to the **Fear of Flying** cases, where a woman maintains her belief that air travel is safe (on the basis of good evidence that it is safe), but still struggles with her construal of air travel as dangerous.

The SS seemed more preoccupied, more disturbed than usual. To hang a young boy in front of thousands of spectators was no light matter. The head of the camp read the verdict. All eyes were on the child. He was lividly pale, almost calm, biting his lips. The gallows threw its shadow over him.

This time the Lagerkapo refused to act as executioner. Three SS replaced him.

The three victims mounted together onto the chairs.

The three necks were placed at the same moment within the nooses.

“Long live liberty!” cried the two adults.

But the child was silent.

“Where is God? Where is He?” someone behind me asked.

At a sign from the head of the camp, the three chairs tipped over.

Total silence throughout the camp. On the horizon, the sun was setting.

“Bare your heads!” yelled the head of the camp. His voice was raucous.

We were weeping

“Cover your heads!”

Then the march past began. The two adults were no longer alive. Their tongues hung swollen, blue-tinged. But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive...

For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes were not yet glazed.

Behind me, I heard the same man asking:

“Where is God now?”

And I heard a voice within me answer him:

“Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows....”

In light of his observation of this truly horrific event—the brutal torture and murder of a child—Wiesel seems to declare that God is dead. God cannot exist. This event is a testament to His non-existence. Just look and you will see that God is dead. And in this particular case, Wiesel does not seem to *blame* God or accuse Him. Indeed, it seems strange to think that the object of Wiesel’s resistance (in this instance) could be God (though, it is very clear that Wiesel expresses resistance towards God elsewhere).<sup>42</sup> After all, in this instance, resistance toward God would require Wiesel to blame God for

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<sup>42</sup> As a few examples, I have already described this type of resistance as it is found in Wiesel (1995) and (2005). But Wiesel himself also explicitly expresses his resistance toward God in *Night* (see 1986: 37ff).

His own death (or non-existence).<sup>43</sup> But that does not seem to be what is happening here. Instead, in light of this child's terrible fate, Wiesel sees the world as one in which God is dead—the world is one in which there is no God—and thus, theistic claims about God's existence are false. For Wiesel, it seems, theism was seen as unacceptable, given its inability to square with the events that happened before him. These events (to him) just made it plainly apparent that theism is false.

I describe Wiesel's resistance as non-doxastic given that it does not seem to be associated with Wiesel's *beliefs* about God. It is not as though he reasons, "I believe that God would not allow this kind of event, but this kind of event has occurred, thus there is no God." Instead, it is much closer to Dougherty's common-sense problem, in which this event just *strikes* Wiesel as one that tells (decisively) against the existence of God. And so, his resistance seems to be grounded on the basis of his construal of the world, rather than his beliefs about it (again, at least in this one case).

Finally, other theistic claims—like "this is the best of all possible worlds"—may also be the object of non-doxastic resistance. This is captured in the spirit of Voltaire's (1759) *Candide*. Within the story, one of Voltaire's characters, Dr. Pangloss, is committed to the view that was championed by Leibniz: This world is the best of all possible worlds. And Pangloss continues to reiterate this claim (in a variety of ways) despite having faced numerous, horrific evils. The point, I take it, is that continuing to utter that kind of claim (in the face of such evil and suffering) just seems foolish. The horrific evils of the world seemingly put so much pressure on the idea that this really is the best of all possible worlds that belief in the claim—for many—becomes untenable.

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<sup>43</sup> To be fair, there have been people who have expressed anger at God for His "not existing." See, for example, Lewis (1955: 141).

Voltaire seems to be inviting us to just *see* how silly that kind of theistic claim is, given the horrors of the world. And in light of this perception, one is invited into opposition towards the claim (in the form of rejecting it—even if only at a non-doxastic level).

In sum, non-doxastic resistance towards God on the basis of some evil(s) of the world takes the form of an agent opposing God on the grounds that the evils of the world make God, His plan, His actions, and/or His inaction unacceptable in some way. One's perception of those evils can also lead one to oppose theistic belief. As in the case of the common-sense problem of evil described by Dougherty, individuals' construal of the evils of the world renders theistic belief untenable (or even morally offensive) for them.

### *5.3b Doxastic Resistance to God (or Theism)*

Having considered non-doxastic resistance towards God (and/or theism) in detail, we turn now to a consideration of *doxastic* resistance towards these objects. Following the lessons of Chapter Two, if an agent resists an object in a doxastic manner, then her resistance towards that object is grounded entirely in her beliefs about the object.

Specifically, in the case of doxastic resistance, the agent deems the object being resisted to be unacceptable given her beliefs that the object (or some feature(s) of the object) is unacceptable. And given that her resistance is doxastic, these beliefs that the object is unacceptable occur without reference to her *construal* of the object.

To show how this type of resistance relates to the problem of evil, I will (once again) consider a few examples in detail. I begin with a discussion of Job's resistance towards God. I then consider arguments given by Mackie (1955) and Rowe (1979), which seem to express, promote, and argue for doxastic resistance towards theistic belief.

To start, there is no doubt that Job expresses a kind of compound resistance towards God; he resists on both doxastic and non-doxastic grounds. But there is an easily identifiable doxastic component of his resistance. Hence, he will serve as a suitable example as doxastic resistance (even if an objector insists that his resistance is *compound* in nature).

Now, if my assessment of Job in Section Two, A, of Chapter Five is accurate, then in the course of his suffering, Job was attempting to make sense of three statements:

1. If a person is blameless, then that person will *not* suffer.
2. If a person is wicked (not blameless), then that person *will* suffer.
3. Job is blameless.

Given that Job was suffering, it became clear to he and his friends that these three statements were inconsistent. As we saw, Job's friends' favorite target was statement 3, whereas Job tended towards attributing the confusion to some kind of divine oversight or mix-up. Given Job's belief that he had been overlooked, we can describe his resistance (on doxastic grounds) as follows: Job opposed God on the basis of his *belief* that God's providential care had failed (in his case, if not others as well). And this failure in providential care is unacceptable, given (something like) statements 1 and 2, which are meant to capture how God's justice is supposed to operate.

In other words, Job developed a kind of opposition towards God given his deeming God's providential care to be (unacceptably) incompatible with the demands of divine justice. And this deeming occurred (at least in part) on the grounds that Job *believed* that his suffering was undeserved and must, therefore, be the result of some

divine oversight.<sup>44</sup> So it is Job's belief about himself and about the nature of divine justice (and providence) that form the basis of his resistance towards God.

Lastly, consider some examples of agents who become resistant towards *theistic belief* on doxastic grounds. This type of resistance is relatively familiar in contemporary discussions of the problems of evil, so I will not spend a lot of time discussing it. The examples I shall discuss come from Mackie (1955) and Rowe (1979).

To start, Mackie (1955) argues that the following three statements form a logically inconsistent triad: (i) God is omnipotent, (ii) God is wholly good, and (iii) evil exists (200).<sup>45</sup> But holding inconsistent beliefs is irrational. That makes it epistemically unacceptable. So, Mackie (and those who adopt his argument) seem to express and promote a kind of doxastic resistance towards theistic belief. Specifically, they find theistic belief worthy of opposition on the grounds that it is epistemically unacceptable (since it results in a logical contradiction, given the undeniable presence of evil in the universe). This kind of opposition might take form in trying to persuade theists out of their belief, belittling theists for their apparent irrationality, etc.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> After all, positing a divine oversight seemed to be the only way to maintain something like statements 1-3 all at once. If divine justice really required God to adhere to something like statements 1 and 2, then—absent a mistake or oversight—Job would be committed to the claim that God was unjust. Admittedly, there are times he seems close to saying something like that (see 9:21-24 as one example). But I do not see any clear case in which he *does* declare God to be unjust, nor do I think these instances capture the basis of his resistance as well as his concern that he has been overlooked (as I have argued already).

<sup>45</sup> To be fair to Mackie, he admits that they are not obviously inconsistent and so, several additional principles are required to reveal the inconsistency (200-1).

<sup>46</sup> And this is not to say that *Mackie* belittles theists. It is just an example of one way someone *might* oppose theistic belief. According to Kvanvig (2013), this is the kind of opposition towards theistic belief that one finds throughout works by the “New

Next, Rowe (1979) argues that there is “an argument for atheism based on the existence of evil that may rationally justify someone in being an atheist” (335). The well-known argument goes something like this (336):

1. It is highly probable that there exist 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.
2. 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.
3. [Therefore], it is highly probable that there does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient wholly good being.

While Rowe goes on to develop this argument in greater detail, the idea is simple enough. He believes it is highly probable that there are instances of evil that could be prevented without losing some important good, and that God would prevent those evils if He existed. Since these evils are not prevented (given that they occur), it is highly probable that there is not a God. And so, Rowe concludes that theistic belief is mistaken. Put differently, he has found theistic belief to be epistemically unacceptable, given his beliefs about God and the evils of the world.<sup>47</sup>

Rowe’s position is a weaker one than Mackie’s. That is, while Rowe finds theism to be epistemically unacceptable, Mackie does the same, but to a higher degree.

Furthermore, as I mentioned at the start of this chapter, the type of argument from evil

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Atheists” such as Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Daniel Dennett (109n.1).

<sup>47</sup> And note, this is compatible with others finding it to be epistemically acceptable (on the basis of *their* beliefs about God and the evils of the world—assuming their beliefs differ from Rowe’s). This is why Rowe advocates “friendly atheism” towards the end of his essay (340-1). Friendly atheism is based on the notion that there are cases in which a person can be “rationally justified in believing a false proposition”—as is the case with some theists, in Rowe’s view (340).

associated with Mackie's view is often called the "logical" problem of evil, whereas the type of argument usually associated with Rowe's view is called the "evidential" or "probabilistic" problem of evil. But, as I have described them, both problems are just variations of doxastic resistance towards theistic belief. And if that is right, then we will be able to use the tools designed to evaluate resistance to evaluate both kinds of problems (or so I will argue in the next two chapters).

### 5.3c Compound Resistance to God (or Theism)

Finally, recall that compound resistance occurs when an agent deems an object to be unacceptable both because she *construes* the object as unacceptable and because she *believes* that it is unacceptable. In other words, her resistance is *grounded* in both doxastic and non-doxastic components. Further, I argued in Chapter Two that compound resistance may involve a complex relationship between a person's doxastic and non-doxastic resistance (towards the same object). An agent's doxastic resistance may generate (or promote) her non-doxastic resistance (or vice versa). Lastly, I showed that it need not be the case that her doxastic resistance is always doing "equal work" in producing her opposition to the object as her non-doxastic resistance towards it (or vice versa). With all of these things in mind, I will briefly consider two clear examples of compound resistance: Wiesel's (1995) character Berish (and his resistance towards God), and the position towards theistic belief advocated by Dawkins (2008).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> I think that Camus's character Dr. Rieux also exhibits *compound* resistance as well. He apparently does not believe that divine love is compatible with the type of suffering that he has observed, nor can see how those two things could possibly fit together. But for the sake of space, I will focus on just one example of compound resistance: Wiesel's character, Berish.

Regarding Berish, recall that he was resistant towards God on the basis of certain evils that occurred—namely, the slaughter of hundreds of Jewish families and the torture of his daughter, Hanna. And Berish perceived God as unacceptably complicit in these evils. Unlike Ivan Karamazov, but much like Dr. Rieux, Berish is not even willing to entertain the possibility that God might have some higher (justifying) purpose in allowing these particular evils to occur either. After all, as I noted above, when he is asked to imagine that God has a higher purpose—which would justify God’s allowance of the relevant evils—Berish fires back that even if he were to be given the chance to understand why God has allowed these evils that “I would refuse to understand—I would refuse to understand so as not to forgive Him” (43). From this, I gather that he does not understand why God allowed the relevant evils and that he refuses to “hear God out” on the matter.

So why call this resistance *compound*? Well, here, Berish believes that God is not justified in allowing the relevant evils. He is quite clear that he thinks God is “more guilty than ever” as God has allowed more and more evils to occur as time has gone on (and, Berish believes, God has more than enough power to stop them!). So in virtue of his *belief* that God is guilty of such heinous complicity in evil, Berish stands in opposition to God. Thus, his resistance has a clear doxastic component. But Berish also refuses to “see” the situation in any other light. Contrast this position with that of Sam—God’s defender—who continually tries to change Berish’s perception of evil. As Sam claims, God “created the world and me without asking for my opinion; He may do with both whatever He wishes. Our task is to glorify Him, to praise Him, to love him—in spite of ourselves” (157). On such a view, God’s creatures have only one proper path: “Endure.

Accept. And say Amen” for “God is God, and His will is independent from ours—as is His reasoning” (132).

So here, we have a clash between two ways of viewing the evils of the world. Berish sees them as inexcusable horrors—events so horrific that if God allowed them to occur, He is guilty of wrongdoing. No excuses could defend Him. This is not unlike Roth’s perception of the evils of the Holocaust, when he asserts that history is full of “too much waste” to be redeemed, that “such a wasteful God cannot be totally benevolent,” that there is “no good...on earth or beyond” that is “worth the freedom” God has given creatures, and that ultimately, “unjustified waste is everlasting” (5–12). Put this in contrast to Sam’s perspective in which the evils of history are the result of a good God doing what is—unbeknownst to us—the very best for His creation. On Sam’s view, the evils of the world are not seen as evidence against God’s goodness. Instead, those who see evils in that light are simply exhibiting their failure to comprehend the mind and purposes of the Almighty.<sup>49</sup>

And though there is a clash between these two perspectives, there is no disagreement (in terms of belief) about the specific evils that have occurred; Sam insists, “I do not dispute the events” or that they were genuinely bad things (128). On Sam’s view, even if the events were evils (in and of themselves), they must fit into God’s good plan and it is not our place to question God’s work. On Berish’s view, it does not matter why God allowed the evils. No plan could justify His doing so.<sup>50</sup> Berish does not believe

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<sup>49</sup> I will put to the side the fact that—in Wiesel’s play—it is later revealed that Sam is *Satan incarnate*. I take it that this fact is meant to represent a stern condemnation of the type of perspective and reasoning that Sam champions.

<sup>50</sup> This is a kind of echo of Dr. Rieux’s view as well.

the events can be justified, and he cannot see how these events fit into a good plan. Nor does he care to even *try* to change his perspective of the events. And it is in virtue of his seeing these events as irredeemable that he—much like Roth (2001), described above—resists God on non-doxastic grounds. Thus, his resistance towards God has both a doxastic and a non-doxastic component.<sup>51</sup>

One quick note: It may be that, in Berish's case (and those like him) that the non-doxastic component of his resistance fuels and feeds the doxastic component (and vice versa). Having undergone an immense trauma, he may find himself unable to see the events that befell him (and others) as anything other than *irredeemable*. And that perception—in combination with the great pain he endures—may lead him to believe that there can be no hope for redemption and/or the belief that God is guilty. And while this is just one way in which non-doxastic resistance may give rise to (or affect) doxastic resistance, I do not expect it to be a rare occurrence. That is, it seems plausible to me that often, a serious trauma may shape a person's perception of reality (or their lives, or other people, etc.) in such a negative way that they come to *believe* that their new perception of those objects is *accurate*.

Lastly, consider a case of compound resistance directed at theistic belief. For this case, I will focus on Dawkins (2008). To start, Dawkins opposes theistic belief on the grounds that it is epistemically unacceptable. He compares belief in God to belief in “the Flying Spaghetti Monster” in the sense that even though belief in these beings cannot be shown—conclusively—to be mistaken, that it is the believer's burden to provide

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<sup>51</sup> And compare this to Ivan Karamazov, who shares something like Berish's non-doxastic resistance but does *not* share the doxastic component of resistance that Berish exhibits.

evidence for the existence of these entities (76-7). And, Dawkins is clear that he believes (in both cases) not only have believers failed to provide such evidence, but there are mountains of evidence *against* the existence of such beings (given the findings of historical and scientific studies). And so, theistic belief is epistemically unacceptable until it can be made acceptable.

Regarding the *non-doxastic* component of his resistance towards theistic belief—at least certain kinds of theistic belief—Dawkins writes, “As a scientist, I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise. It teaches us not to change our minds, and not to want to know exciting things that are available to be known. It subverts science and saps the intellect” (321). Immediately after, Dawkins describes the case of Kurt Wise, a promising young scientist who entirely abandoned the scientific enterprise after coming to the conclusion that he had to choose between science and religion. Dawkins calls this “just plain pathetic—pathetic and contemptible” (322).

In other words, Dawkins seems to construe theistic belief (at least certain varieties) as destructive towards scientific inquiry and discovery. And for that reason, he describes himself as *hostile* towards it or having *contempt* for it. For those reasons, I would identify this resistance as non-doxastic. Dawkins *could* reconstrue theistic belief in a way that does not set it against scientific progress. But as it is, he sees the two as at odds with one another. But even were he to reconstrue the two as compatible, doing so would not require him to relinquish his claims that theistic belief is *epistemically* unacceptable.

An objector might respond: Perhaps Dawkins does not *construe* theistic belief as destructive towards scientific inquiry, but merely *believes* it to be so. If that is the case,

then the resistance in question seems doxastic—it is driven by the agent’s *beliefs* that the object is unacceptable in some way. In response, that may be so. I gather that, in Dawkins’ case, there is a non-doxastic component to his resistance given that he uses such powerful, emotive language in expressing his “contempt” for theistic belief. And if, following Roberts (2003), emotions are just concern-based construals, then contempt towards an object is what we might expect an agent to emote should he construe the object as detrimental to one of his major concerns. Therefore, that Dawkins experiences contempt is evidence that he is *construing* the object (theism) in a particular, negative way. And this falls in line with my account of non-doxastic resistance.

But even if Dawkins himself did not construe theistic belief in this way—that is, if Dawkins personally resisted theistic belief only on a doxastic level—that is no matter. We can just as easily imagine someone who (i) believes theistic belief is unacceptable and (ii) construes theistic belief in the ways I have attributed to Dawkins. And such a person would exhibit compound resistance towards theistic belief.

#### *5.4 Bases of Resistance*

There is just one more aspect of the relevant kind of resistance left to examine: The basis (or bases) of an agent’s resistance. That is, we might ask, *which* evils might serve as the basis for an agent’s resistance towards God or theism? This is an important question to consider, given van Inwagen’s (2006) observation that we should consider dividing the relevant problems of evil “into those that arise out of the person’s own misfortune (this was Job’s case) and those that arise out of misfortunes of others” (5). After all, he notes, “Even for the most altruistic person, problems of these two kinds may have quite different characters” (5). In other words, the opposition that one experiences

towards God (or theism) may vary depending on the basis of one's resistance: One's own suffering or the suffering of others.<sup>52</sup>

Following van Inwagen's suggestion, I will divide relevant cases of resistance into two categories: Resistance based on evils an agent has experienced herself (which we might call "first-order" experiences of evil) and resistance based on the suffering an agent observes befall others ("second-order" experiences of evil). And, of course, these two categories are not mutually exclusive. An agent can become resistant towards God (or theism) on the basis of only some evil that has befallen him, on the basis of only some evil that has befallen others, or on the basis of both. And, as was the case concerning compound resistance, cases in which an agent's resistance rests on both bases (first- and second-order experiences) it need not be that these two bases are doing equal work in generating her resistance. Her resistance might be predominately based in her first-order experience, but partly rested upon her second-order experience, for example (or vice versa).

Rather than engage in another drawn out discussion of examples, I will just quickly point to a few we have already considered at length. Job, for instance, is a clear case of an individual whose resistance towards God is based heavily on evils that have befallen him personally. This is true of Berish as well, though Berish's resistance seems

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<sup>52</sup> The distinction between doxastic and non-doxastic resistance may allow us to test several hypotheses in this context. For example, it may be that when an agent's resistance occurs on the basis of her own suffering, it typically is non-doxastic or *more heavily* non-doxastic than when it occurs on the basis of others' suffering. This is on the general and defeasible assumption that our own suffering tends to affect our emotions in a more profound way than the suffering of others. This, no doubt, will vary from person to person. Similarly, we might wonder if the typical agent who becomes resistant towards God/theism on the basis of *others'* suffering more frequently exhibits *doxastic* resistance (or compound resistance with a relatively strong doxastic component). Testing these ideas, however, would go far beyond the scope of this project.

to be based more heavily on second-order experiences of evil than is Job's. Contrast this type of resistance with Roth's (2001), which, he admits, is heavily based upon his second-order experiences of evil (especially the evils of the Holocaust, which he did not experience first-hand at all) (5-6). Rowe (1979) also provides a case in which an agent's resistance is based entirely (or predominantly) on second-order experiences (given that he did not experience—first-hand—any of the horrific evils he describes).

While I will not say much more about this distinction for the time being, that there is such a distinction raises a few important questions. First, if an agent resists God or theism on the basis of her second-order experience of evil, is her resistance undermined (made less reasonable or entirely unreasonable) in cases where those individuals who experience the relevant evils first-hand hold that the evils *were* acceptable? In other words, can the victim's perspective of the evils that have befallen him impact the reasonability of our resistance towards God on the basis of those same evils? These are questions I will explore in Chapters Seven and Eight. But for now, I will settle on having noted the distinction between these two bases of an agent's resistance.

### *5.5 Conclusion*

With all of these variations before us, the cases we have considered are summarized in Table 5.1 as follows:

Table 5.1. Summary of Cases.

Example	Object of Resistance	Type of Resistance	Basis of Resistance
Job	God	Doxastic <sup>53</sup>	Evils befallen self
Ivan Karamazov	God	Non-doxastic	Evils befallen others
Roth	God	Non-doxastic	Evils befallen others
Dr. Rieux	God	Compound	Evils befallen self and Evils befallen others
Berish	God	Compound	Evils befallen self and Evils befallen others
Mackie	Theistic Belief	Doxastic	Evils befallen others
Rowe	Theistic Belief	Doxastic	Evils befallen others
Philo	Theistic Belief	Non-Doxastic	Evils befallen others
Voltaire	Theistic Belief	Non-Doxastic	Evils befallen others
Wiesel <sup>54</sup>	Theistic Belief	Non-Doxastic	Evils befallen self or Evils befallen others
Dawkins	Theistic Belief	Compound	Evils befallen others

These cases make it clear just how much variation exists when it comes to individuals' resistance towards God (or theism) on the basis of evil. And, as I have suggested above, some of these variations are far more discussed than others in philosophical literature. For one reason or another, doxastic resistance towards theism as expressed in the works of Mackie and Rowe are more likely to find mention in

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<sup>53</sup> Compound with an easily identifiable doxastic component.

<sup>54</sup> In the instance from *Night*, cited above. Wiesel expresses resistance towards *God* elsewhere in *Night* (37) and in several other works: Wiesel (1995) and (2005).

contemporary philosophical discussions of evil than the non-doxastic resistance expressed by Roth or Wiesel.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, I noted at the beginning of this chapter that refusing to engage the non-doxastic problem on philosophical grounds may be prudent. Perhaps, to use the language developed here, philosophy is equipped to handle, engage, and respond to instances of doxastic resistance, whereas cases of non-doxastic resistance (or compound resistance, insofar as it is partly non-doxastic) are better left to pastors or psychiatrists. But if we can understand each of these variations of the problem in terms of resistance, then we have the tools—provided in Chapters Three and Four—to engage the non-doxastic problems as well. Nonetheless, moving forward I will proceed with great caution as I argue that philosophy *is* equipped to engage each of these variations of the problem of evil in fruitful ways.

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<sup>55</sup> This is one of the major reasons why I spent so much time discussing non-doxastic resistance and the problem of evil (at least compared to the time I spent discussing doxastic resistance and the problem of evil).

## CHAPTER SIX

### Responding to The Problem of Evil (Particular Responses)

In the previous chapter, I argued that several forms of the problem of evil can be understood in terms of resistance. With these problems before us, this chapter is an explanation of how both the virtues and the logic of resistance (from Chapters Three and Four, respectively) can be used in response. I will begin this chapter by distinguishing the present strategy of engaging the problem of evil from other strategies (such as theodicies, defenses, and antitheodicies). Next, I provide a general review of what it means for an agent to resist God (or theism) in a *reasonable* manner. I then turn to a discussion of several test cases (taken from the examples described in Chapter Five). Doing so will show how the virtues and logic of resistance allow us to engage with *specific* resisters of God (or theism).<sup>1</sup>

#### *6.1 Theodicies, Defenses, and Antitheodicies*

The ways in which the virtues and logic of resistance allow us to engage with the problem of evil are quite different from a standard “theodicy.” According to van Inwagen (2006), “A theodicy...is an attempt to ‘justify the ways of God to men’” (6). That is, he tells us, “a theodicy is an attempt to state the real truth of the matter...about why a just God allows evil to exist” (6). This chapter contains no such theodicy. It does not aim

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<sup>1</sup> In the next chapter (Chapter Seven), I will explain *general* strategies for engaging with resisters of God (or theism) that are provided by the virtues and logic of resistance. In the course of developing these general strategies, I argue that it is fairly difficult (though not impossible) for individuals to *reasonably* resist God (or theism) on the basis of evil.

justify God to man. Rather, it asks whether *man* is justified in advancing the problem of evil against God (or theism, for that matter). In other words, a theodicy—as van Inwagen defines it—seems to support the idea that it is perfectly reasonable for human beings to put God “on trial”; to seek some justification for His allowance of evils in the world. But, as we shall see in a moment, human beings as “prosecutors of God” may not even be in the position to bring the case to trial in the first place.

For related reasons, the present chapter does not form a “defense” of God or theism either. At least not if a defense is defined as laying out “possible reasons why God might permit...evils” (Adams 1999: 14). In other words, I will not be attempting to provide the reader with a story that provides a plausible reason for why God allows evils to occur. Again, the present chapter raises questions about the reasonability of resisters—the people who resist God (or theism) on the basis of evils—rather than God Himself (or theism itself).

Lastly, when applied to the problem of evil, the virtues and logic of resistance do not form an “antitheodicy” (or a “theodicy of protest”) either. As Roth (2001) defines the term, an antitheodicy “protests against theodicy itself, at least as theodicy’s attempts to justify God’s relationship to evil and suffering have usually been carried out” (4). For Roth, rejecting theodicies is done with good reason: They aim to provide a justification for what cannot possibly be justified: God’s allowing of evils like those that occurred during the Holocaust (17). But once more, the virtues and logic of resistance provide an evaluation of the people who resist God, theism, or even theodicies. The question the present account raises is whether or not people who resist are resisting in a reasonable manner. In this way, the present chapter may (at times) form a kind of anti-antitheodicy,

insofar as it may find advocates of antitheodicies to be guilty of advancing resistance against God, theism, or theodicies in an *unreasonable* manner. But even in those cases, an anti-antitheodicy is not the same as a theodicy, for reasons already mentioned.

### 6.2 Reasonably Resisting God (or Theism)

Consider what it means for some agent, *S*, to resist God (or theism) in a reasonable manner. Given the virtues of resistance (developed in Chapter Three), if *S* is to resist theism in a reasonable way, then:

- (a) *S*'s resistance is consistent,<sup>2</sup>
- (b) *S*'s resistance is proportional, and
- (c) *S*'s resistance is acceptance-ready.

According to the logic of resistance (Chapter Four) if *S* is to resist God (or theism) on the basis of some evil(s) (*Q*) in a reasonable way, then the following is also true for *S*<sup>3</sup>:

- (d) Rule 1: There is no *P*, such that:
  - (i) the agent prefers *P* to its absence,
  - (ii) the agent deems *Q* to be a cost worth paying for *P* (or the agent is unsure whether or not *Q* is a cost worth paying for *P*), and
  - (iii) The agent believes that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*.
- (e) Rule 2: When all else is equal (or equal insofar as is possible), *S* thinks worlds in which *Q* does not occur/exist should be actualized over worlds in which *Q* does occur/exist.

With these five standards before us, we can now apply them to some specific cases.

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<sup>2</sup> Where consistency applies to both *S*'s resistance and *S* as a resister.

<sup>3</sup> Recall that *P* stands for something that an agent is *actually* attached to or the *well-being* of something the agent is *actually* attached to and *Q* is whatever feature(s) about the object (*Z*) being resisted that leads the agent to deem the object to be worthy of opposition.

### 6.3 Test Cases

In the previous chapter, we saw several individuals who exemplified (or advocated) resistance towards God (or theism) on the basis of some evil(s). Rather than deal with cases of resistance towards God and cases of resistance towards theism at the same time, I will discuss each in turn. Given that conditions (c)-(e) involve agents' attachments, the testing will lead to a consideration of each resister's attachments as well.

#### 6.3a Resisting God

In the previous chapter, I considered five individuals who expressed (or advocated) resistance towards God: Job, Ivan Karamazov, Dr. Rieux, Berish the innkeeper, and Roth (2001).<sup>4</sup> For the sake of space, I will not consider all five cases. I will, however, use the standards of reasonable resistance to test the reasonability of Ivan Karamazov and Job's resistance, respectively. The reason for choosing these two cases is because they will provide us with an assessment of non-doxastic resistance (Ivan) and one of doxastic resistance (Job). And by providing an in-depth look at how the standards of reasonable resistance apply to specific cases like these, my hope is that it will be made clear how the reader can apply the same standards to other instances of resistance as well.

Recall that Ivan Karamazov exemplified non-doxastic resistance towards God on the basis of certain evils that had befallen others. As noted above, Ivan *believes* that one day, it will be revealed that God's allowance of all the evils of the world is somehow justified. But he is unable to *construe* those evils as justifiable. And so, his inability to see the evils of the world as justifiable—even though he believes they will be justified—

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<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, I switch the order of the Job and Ivan Karamazov cases for stylistic purposes.

leads him to reject any willing role in God's grand plan for the universe. And this resistance is all being driven by his "love for humanity" (269). He loves humanity so deeply that he cannot accept the evils of the world as "worthy costs" of any plan, no matter how wonderful it may be (in the end).

So, to start our evaluation, consider criteria (i)–(iii) of reasonable resistance: is Ivan's resistance consistent, proportional, and acceptance-ready? As I will argue in a moment, Ivan's resistance fails with respect to at least two of these three criteria. Thus, it is fairly unreasonable.

Begin with consistency. There are two ways in which an agent's resistance can be tested in terms of consistency. We may ask whether their resistance itself is consistent and whether they are consistent resisters. In Ivan's case, his resistance is grounded in his love for humanity (at least in part). By "love for humanity," I take it that he *wills the good* for humanity (or wills what is *best* for humanity).<sup>5</sup> His concern is not just for the race as a whole, of course, but for each and every human being—*especially* those that are innocent.<sup>6</sup> His opposition takes form in his refusing to willfully play any part in God's plan for creation. He rejects God's "ticket" to whatever universal harmony God has in store for creation. This is because the means by which God brings about such harmony is perceived by Ivan to be too costly. So now to the main two questions: Is Ivan's resistance

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<sup>5</sup> That love (charity) involves "willing the good of another" comes from St. Thomas. See *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q.59, Art.4, *corp.*

<sup>6</sup> His concern for the innocent (and relative disregard for others) is made especially clear as he contrasts children (the innocent) with adults (the non-innocent): "I say nothing of the sufferings of grown-up people, they have eaten the apple, damn them, and the devil take them all! But these little ones!" (265).

consistent? And, second, is Ivan a consistent resister? The answer to both, I will argue, is “no.”

First, Ivan’s resistance is itself inconsistent. The form of opposition that he adopts is a refusal to participate in God’s plan for creation. But whatever that comes to will run contrary to the “universal harmony” that God is working to bring about.<sup>7</sup> And such harmony will be what is *best* (or *most good*) for the human race and for each individual human being, *including* all of the innocent ones. Ivan admits as much in his confession that he believes there will come a time in which “when everything in heaven and earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived cries aloud: ‘Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed’” (268).

But at the same time, his resistance is being driven by his professed “love for humanity,” or, as I have assumed, his *willing what is good* for humanity. The problem is that his opposition runs contrary to what is best for humanity (the harmony that God aims to bring about). And so, in the name of his willing what is good for humanity, Ivan’s resistance involves opposition that interferes with (or runs contrary to) the actualization of what is *best* (the highest good) for humanity. Thus, his mode of opposition conflicts with the reasons driving his resistance. Therefore, his resistance is inconsistent.

Perhaps Ivan could be defended as follows. To love humanity means to will what is good for them. But there are certain costs of attaining what is good (or what is best) that are not “worth paying.” And so, if individuals—like the children he describes—must suffer tremendously as a means to securing what is best for humanity, then attaining what

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<sup>7</sup> This is true even if Ivan cannot *prevent* God’s plan from being actualized. That is, his opposition may still run contrary to it even if he is powerless to stop it.

is best for humanity is not “worth it.” That is, the suffering these children face is not “worth” allowing, even if this undermines what is good for humanity generally. And so, it is a love for *these individuals* that leads Ivan to resist God’s “universal harmony.”<sup>8</sup>

In response, once again, by Ivan’s own admission, he believes that in the eschaton, *even the individuals who suffered* the relevant traumas will come to embrace their past lives (for one reason or another) (268). That is, those children that suffered will *themselves* praise God for His grand plan. All of *their* pain and suffering will be washed away into insignificance.<sup>9</sup> But if that really does happen—and Ivan is confessing he believes it will—then Ivan is in the following position: He must claim that the suffering the victims underwent was not “worth paying” despite the fact that those victims themselves (and God) take the opposite stance on the matter. So Ivan’s opposition runs contrary to God’s universal harmony, and this universal harmony involves bringing about a state that victims of suffering (and God) both recognize as being the highest good, *even for the victims themselves*. But again, if Ivan truly loves those individuals—and therefore *wills their good*—then it is inconsistent for him to oppose the actualization of what is best for each of them. The “costs” are steep, there is no question of that. The traumas these

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<sup>8</sup> Making this adjustment pushes Ivan closer to Dr. Rieux in terms of the resistance he exemplifies. Recall that for Rieux, *no* cosmic scheme that included the suffering of children is acceptable. Hence Rieux’s contrasting his own position with that of Father Paneloux, when Rieux notes, “I’ve a very different idea of love” (218). In other words, it may be that Rieux is saying something like “whatever love is, it cannot allow *that* kind of suffering.”

<sup>9</sup> This is made clear in Ivan’s declaration that he believes “in the world’s finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, of all the blood they’ve shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened with men” (258).

innocent children suffer are monstrous. Yet given Ivan's own admission, they are costs that the victims *themselves* will count as "costs worth paying."<sup>10</sup>

As one last objection, Ivan's defender may present a kind of deontological argument against the relevant evils. It might run like this: No matter *what* good is brought about from suffering (as those children suffered), it is morally impermissible to allow such suffering to occur. My suggestion, however, is that given the perspective of the victims themselves, the deontological argument will be a hard sell. As Marilyn Adams (1989) suggests (and rightly so), "a major consideration in determining whether an individual's life is/has been a great good to him/her on the whole, is invariably and appropriately how it has seemed to him/her" (300). If that is correct, then the perception of those children Ivan describes (even in the afterlife) provides fairly strong—though defeasible—evidence that their lives *were* a great good to them on the whole. And so, the idea that it was impermissible for God to allow that suffering to befall them seems less plausible.

And whatever the case, Ivan is not resisting on the grounds that allowing the relevant suffering is universally impermissible. That is, he himself is not advancing a deontological argument. He is resisting on the grounds that he *loves* the individuals in question. And so, in the name of love, he undermines (or opposes) what is best for those he professes to love. He both wills the good for these individuals *and* opposes what is *most good* for them. Therefore, his opposition runs contrary to what one would do if one

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<sup>10</sup> This might make Ivan's resistance unreasonable in a way that Rieux's is not, given that Rieux does *not* share Ivan's belief that God will one day bring about some "eternal harmony" that will justify all the suffering that came prior. More on this point below.

loved humanity while this opposition was driven by his “love for humanity.” And that is where the inconsistency in his resistance lies.

If the above is correct, then I have shown why Ivan’s *resistance* is inconsistent. But next, I will argue that he, as a resister, is inconsistent as well.<sup>11</sup> To draw this conclusion, I will have to show that the opposition Ivan engages in is in conflict with his commitments. As it is, he is clearly committed to the well-being of his fellow human-beings, at least the innocent ones (e.g. children). As noted a number of times already, he insists that he *loves* them and wishes to spare them suffering. His opposition conflicts with this commitment in several ways. First, by opposing (working against) God’s grand plan for the universe—a plan that involves bringing about what is best for the individuals Ivan loves—Ivan, by extension, stands in opposition to actualizing what is best for those individuals. If we interpret his “love” for these individuals as willing what is good (or, especially what is best) for them, then his opposition does conflict with his commitment to them.

What is more, Ivan proposes the following kind of thought experiment to

Alyosha:

Thought Experiment: Suppose you were given the ability to create the universe in a perfectly harmonious way, but it required that a small child be tortured. Would you do so?

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<sup>11</sup> Recall: All else being equal, the more virtues one’s resistance lacks—that is, the more it violates the requirements of consistency (in both forms), proportionality, and acceptance-readiness—the less excellent (reasonable) it is. For this reason, it is important to assess cases of resistance with respect to each virtue. It may be that some instances of resistance are slightly inconsistent, but otherwise satisfy proportionality and acceptance-readiness. In that sort of case, the resistance in question is fairly reasonable (even if not *perfectly* reasonable). So even though Ivan’s resistance fails to satisfy consistency in one way, that does not provide us with sufficient information to conclude that his resistance is unreasonable altogether.

Out of love for that child—an extension of a general love for humanity—Ivan thinks it would be *wrong* to create such a world. But recall, Ivan confesses that he *believes* a perfectly harmonious universe—the one that God is actually bringing about—will ultimately be justified and will be best for that victim. That means that by rejecting that harmony, one rejects what is *best* for the victim. And that runs contrary to what it means for one individual to love another. So if Ivan is committed to loving the victim, if he is committed to the well-being of the victim, then it is inconsistent for him to oppose that result from coming about.

Additionally, I will briefly take another, more controversial route in arguing that Ivan is an inconsistent resister. To start, if someone says that the entire universe should not exist if it comes with the cost of a particular victim’s suffering, then (by implication) they *will* that the victim never comes to exist in the first place. And there is no plausible view that I am aware of that allows *willing what is best* for an individual to include bringing it about (or willing) that the individual *never* exists.<sup>12</sup> If an individual never exists, then she cannot be benefitted (she cannot gain any goods). That is, it seems clear to me that *non-existence* cannot be a benefit to a being that has been prevented from existing at any time. There simply is no such being to be benefitted by non-existence. To be benefitted *requires* that one exist at *some* point in time.<sup>13</sup> And so, in Ivan’s case, it is

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<sup>12</sup> Compare this claim to Benatar (2006), argues that “coming into existence is *always* a harm” (18). One might think that this somehow undermines my claim here. But suppose Benatar is right (I do not think he is, but suppose we go along with his claim). That is no problem for the present view. After all, *willing the good* for a person does not entail willing that they experience no harm. Nor does it (by itself) entail willing that they experience *minimal* harm. Thus, claims like Benatar’s are no real threat here.

<sup>13</sup> This is compatible with the idea that people who have died can, in some sense, be benefitted or harmed (see, for example, Aristotle *NE* 1101a.20–1101b.10). All I have

inconsistent to argue that—out of love for an individual—the whole universe should not come to exist. If the whole universe had never existed, this would mean that the victims in question would not exist either. And if they never existed, they would never receive any benefits or goods. But to love them is to will the good for them (and willing their total non-existence is incompatible with willing the good for them). Hence, if one’s opposition involves willing that an individual never exist at any point in time, then this conflicts with one’s commitment to that individual’s well-being.<sup>14</sup>

So, Ivan’s resistance fails to satisfy the virtue of consistency in both ways. What about the virtue of proportionality; Is Ivan’s resistance *proportional*? An agent’s resistance is *proportional* when the strength of the agent’s opposition is in proportion to how unacceptable she perceives the relevant object to be. If Ivan’s resistance fails to satisfy this requirement, that means the strength of his opposition is either too much or too little, relative to how unacceptable he perceives God’s plan to be. As it is, he appears to view God’s plan—assuming it requires the suffering of little children—to be *horribly* unacceptable. That is, Ivan perceives God’s plan to be monstrous: Unacceptable to a very high degree. After all, regarding the case in which a little girl is horribly abused and prays to God for protection, he states, “the whole world of

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claimed in this essay is that it is impossible for a being that *never* exists (at any point in time) to be benefited. And, obviously, if that is true, then non-existence itself cannot be a benefit to a being that never exists (since *nothing* counts as a benefit to such a being). Additionally, all of this is compatible with the truth of counterfactuals like “*were* the being to exist, she *would* be benefited by avoiding suffering.”

<sup>14</sup> Note that this *could* cause some problems for Dr. Rieux’s resistance as well. If, for example, the existence of those he claims to love *depends upon* the type of suffering that (in his mind) a loving God would *never* allow, then he *may* be in danger of violating consistency. An argument along these lines was made by Adams (1979) and Hasker (1981) and will be the primary focus of Section One in Chapter Seven (in the next chapter of this project).

knowledge is not worth that child's prayer to 'dear, kind God'!" (265). In short, the horrific suffering that makes God's plan unacceptable is *so bad* that the entire plan ought to be abandoned.

That this is Ivan's view is further evidenced by the Thought Experiment he presents to Alyosha, mentioned above. Alyosha's answer to the Thought Experiment is "no." That is, he would not consent to create a universe that brought about some great harmony for the human race if it meant a small child had to be tortured to secure that harmony. And it seems clear that this is the answer Ivan expected (and agrees with). But, Ivan notes, since God *has* (apparently) consented to these conditions, He must have done so for reasons that are so far beyond Ivan's understanding that he cannot begin to imagine them.

Now to proportionality. Ivan's opposition to God's plan takes form in his refusing to willfully participate in it. In comparison to the egregious wrong that he perceives within the plan, this may seem like a relatively weak form of opposition. And so, if anything, it might seem that Ivan's resistance is not proportional insofar as it is *too weak*. But Ivan is a finite creature. He cannot possibly undo the damage done by God's plan, nor is he in a position to go back in time and wipe the plan away. That he lacks the power to effectively oppose (undo, destroy, change) the object he resists does not automatically count against the strength of his resistance. He is, we might suppose, disposed to undo the whole plan *if given the power* (or, more specifically, he would never have consented to the plan had he been given the choice—and power—before the plan was initiated).

Returning to some of the basic ideas behind proportionality, we can look at what costs Ivan is willing to pay to oppose the object, how persistent he is in his resistance,

and the emotions (or strength of the emotions) that he is prone to experience when resisting the object. Regarding the first idea—cost—Ivan *is* willing to pay a *tremendous* cost to oppose God’s plan. He is willing to undo the entirety of God’s creation to prevent the suffering within the plan from ever happening. And he knows this will destroy whatever harmony and happiness God had in store for all creatures. As for his persistence, though he is too feeble to affect real change (it would seem), he has committed his life to living in a kind of resistant state (unwilling to participate in God’s plan). And he obviously becomes extremely angry and disturbed (outraged) when considering the object of his resistance. All of these signs point to his resistance being quite strong.

So it would seem that his extremely negative perception of the object—God’s plan is, or involves, some *incredibly* horrific and unacceptable evil—is matched by the great strength of his opposition. Thus, it may be that his resistance does satisfy the virtue of proportionality. And if that is correct, then his resistance would be excellent along that parameter.

There are a few considerations that would complicate this assessment, however. The utilitarian, for example, might argue that Ivan’s resistance is actually too strong (and, therefore, disproportionate). After all, on a simple utilitarian view, the happiness of the many often outweighs the suffering of the few. And in the scenario Ivan describes, only one creature would suffer for a finite period of time. The payoff, on the other hand, would be eternal bliss for all humanity (presumably even for the child!). And so, to throw away that happiness for the sake of preventing the child’s suffering will be *far* too extreme.

Ivan could respond by rejecting this type of utilitarianism, of course. Perhaps he thinks that the relevant suffering should not be permitted, no matter what good it might bring about (or contribute to). This pushes us back into the territory of a deontological argument. Perhaps the child's suffering is so horrific that it ought never be permitted, no matter what "costs" must be paid to prevent it. But even if an agent believes that some act (or decision) ought never to be permitted, that does not automatically mean that proportionality requires them to resist such an act to a maximum degree. To illustrate, consider:

Candy Store Theft: A three-year-old steals a piece of candy from a store. The shopkeeper notices and asks the child about it. The child lies and says he did not take anything.

Now suppose someone, call them Truthy, is convinced that lying is wrong, always and everywhere. It is universally unacceptable (in the Truthy's mind). So there is nothing that could justify lying. Truthy is then placed in the following scenario:

Candy Store Theft 2.0: A three-year-old steals a piece of candy from a store. The shopkeeper notices and asks the child about it. Truthy is watching the scenario unfold and perceives that the child is about to lie. Truthy, who opposes all lies whatsoever, has a choice: Let the child lie or push a button that will detonate a bomb so large the planet will be destroyed (but the lie will not occur).

In this case, Truthy is extremely opposed to lying—he thinks it is always and everywhere worthy of opposition; lying is universally unacceptable. But I doubt anyone would think Truthy ought to push the button in Candy Store Theft 2.0. To do so would be an incredibly disproportionate response. So despite being universally opposed to some act (like lying) that does not mean the resister ought to oppose it to the highest degree in all situations.

Returning to Ivan's case, he may hold that it is wrong, always and everywhere, to permit the torture of a child. But in the case he describes, he says he is willing to undo the entire created universe to prevent the event from occurring. And, if Ivan is like Truthy (in Candy Store Theft 2.0), then Ivan's resistance here may actually include a form of opposition that is *too strong*. There is no doubt that the torture of a child is an *incredibly* horrific act. I cannot emphasize that enough. Such acts ought to be opposed to a very high degree. But it is not clear that a single instance of such torture is so bad that a proportional response would be to undo the entire universe—including the future happiness of all human beings, the child among them—to prevent it. So, again, it may turn out that Ivan's resistance fails with respect to proportionality insofar as his opposition to God's plan may be *too strong*.

One may object that proportionality has to do with how unacceptable *the agent* perceives the object to be, rather than how unacceptable it actually is. And in Ivan's case, perhaps he really does perceive child torture as *so horrific* that a willingness to destroy the universe to prevent it is *not* an overreaction. In such a case, suppose we grant that Ivan's resistance is proportional. This would bring to the surface his conviction that child torture is just *that bad*. And by bringing that conviction to the surface, we could (as Ivan's interlocutor) begin to test how plausible it is. In short, if we grant Ivan proportionality in this case, he *might* thereby be committed to an indefensible view regarding the badness of torture.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This parallels what was said in Chapter Three about adjusting an invalid argument in ways that make it formally valid. Doing so sometimes comes at the cost of truth. That is, there are cases where, in order to fix an argument's validity, it would require the arguer to endorse false premises. So, in Ivan's case, by fixing proportionality, he might commit himself to some contentious moral claims, like "a single act of child

Lastly, we may ask: Does Ivan's resistance satisfy *acceptance-readiness*?

Acceptance-readiness pertains to the resister's willingness to accept whatever change her opposition aims to bring about (if it aims to bring about a change). Specifically, it consisted in satisfying two requirements: (i) The agent has a sufficient understanding of the costs that would follow were her opposition to succeed in bringing about the change it works towards and (ii) The agent does not balk or hesitate when offered the change she is working towards (at least, when it is offered on terms that she claimed or implied would be acceptable). Regarding the first requirement—that the agent know the costs that would follow—Ivan's opposition aims at undoing the entirety of God's "harmonious" plan for the universe (even if Ivan knows he cannot bring this about). If his opposition were allowed to "have its way," that is what would happen. Does he understand the costs associated with this outcome?

In one sense, yes. Ivan states that the eternal happiness of all is not "worth" a single child's suffering (265). He therefore recognizes that, were his opposition to have its way, the end result would undermine eternal happiness for all. Regarding condition (ii), would Ivan balk or hesitate if given the opportunity to affect the change his opposition aims at? Again, based on his testimony, it seems like the answer is "no." If we believe him, then were he in a position to prevent the creation of the universe (so as to prevent the child's suffering), he would do so. And so, it seems his resistance is acceptance-ready; it satisfies both requirements of that virtue.

The problem for Ivan, I will argue, is that in this particular case, by satisfying acceptance-readiness, Ivan's resistance becomes inconsistent. And should he fix the

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torture is not worth permitting even if it is required to secure eternal happiness for all humankind, the child included."

inconsistency, his resistance will no longer satisfy acceptance-readiness. This means that his resistance will fail to be perfectly reasonable in one way or another. As it is, it cannot satisfy all three virtues at the same time.

Given that Ivan's resistance is acceptance-ready, he is willing to sacrifice eternal happiness for all humans in order to prevent the temporary suffering of one child. When discussing consistency, it was noted that Ivan's opposition is being driven by his *love* for humanity (and his love for individual humans, like the suffering child). His love for humanity leads him to a position where he is ready to "pull the trigger" on undoing the universe so as to prevent an individual child from suffering. This is so despite the fact that such an action would undermine all humanity's happiness (the child included). This, I argued, implied that his resistance failed to satisfy consistency in two ways.

So, suppose Ivan attempted to fix his consistency problems. This would involve giving up (or adjusting) his opposition to God's plan in cases where this opposition works towards undermining the happiness of those he loves. Specifically, we are told to suppose that the child's suffering is required to secure the child's eternal happiness (269). We are also told (in effect) that the child, from the perspective of the afterlife, consents to this suffering (268-9). But, as argued above, if Ivan truly loves the child (or humanity generally) he should not continue to oppose what is best for them. And, at the very least, he should not will that their existence never occurred in the first place! Thus, for the sake of consistency, Ivan's love for the child should not lead him to oppose the child's happiness.

The point I wish to establish here is that by fixing his consistency problems, Ivan will sacrifice acceptance-readiness. This is because his ways of fixing the consistency

problem are limited.<sup>16</sup> Ivan could fix the problem by dropping his resistance altogether (or working towards doing so). If he does that, then obviously his resistance would no longer satisfy acceptance-readiness because *he would not be resisting God's plan anymore*. The other solution available to Ivan would involve his continuing to oppose God's plan for the universe. But then, suppose he were presented with his own Thought Experiment: Ivan is given the choice between not creating anything or creating a world in which all beings end up eternally happy, at the cost of one child being tortured to death.

Given that Ivan is consistent—he loves the child (and humanity) and so does not interfere with what is best for them—his decision regarding what to do is no longer obvious. He would want to prevent those he loves from suffering. But he would also be committed to not interfering with what is best for them. And given that he is facing a choice between creating a world where those he loves suffer but end up eternally happy or a world where those he loves never come to exist, it would *seem* that (if anything) he must favor the former type of world. Or, perhaps, he would simply not know how to proceed anymore. But in either case within the Thought Experiment—whether he favors the creation of the world with suffering or cannot decide which world to actualize—his resistance would violate acceptance-readiness.

In this revised scenario, Ivan is opposed to God's plan given that it involves suffering. But he is not opposed to it given that it brings about eternal happiness for those he loves. And this is a different state than the one he was in initially. Initially, he was clearly ready to accept an empty world over one with suffering. In the revised scenario, he may still understand the costs of his opposition. He may know what the world would

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<sup>16</sup> At least if we hold his beliefs about the afterlife fixed.

look like were his opposition to God's plan to bring about the change it works towards. But his love for humanity would make him balk at the offer to bring about such a world. And what is more, if his love leads him to favor worlds with suffering, then he cannot follow through with his opposition when given the chance. He cannot "pull the trigger" and erase all creation from existence if he truly loves those within it. But again, even if his love leads him to be *unsure* about which world to actualize, then he will have to put his opposition in check. Therefore, either way, his resistance (though consistent) has become less excellent given its violation of acceptance-readiness.

In sum, concerning the virtues of resistance, I have argued that Ivan's resistance (as presented in *The Brothers Karamazov*) violates both consistency and proportionality. It seems to satisfy acceptance-readiness. However, should Ivan's resistance be "fixed" to satisfy consistency, it then violates acceptance-readiness. Thus, it would appear that Ivan's resistance fails to satisfy at least two of the three virtues.

If we wanted to be entirely thorough here, we would also ask whether or not Ivan's resistance satisfies Rule 1 and Rule 2 of the logic of resistance. Rule 2 centers on whatever aspect,  $Q$ , the resister finds to be unacceptable about the object of their resistance.  $Q$  is the thing that drives the agent to resist the object. And Rule 2 requires that  $Q$  is something that the agent would think should be eliminated (all else being equal). Clearly enough, Ivan thinks that  $Q$  (the suffering of children) should be eliminated. So his resistance passes the test set by Rule 2.

Rule 1 requires that the agent have no attachment  $P$  such that the agent prefers  $P$  to its absence, deems  $Q$  to be a cost worth paying for  $P$  (or is unsure about the matter), and believes that  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ . Once again, Ivan's resistance seems to

satisfy the requirements. He is clear that there is *nothing*—including each of his attachments—that is worth the cost of *Q* (268-9). He thinks the universe is better left barren, if it means eliminating *Q*. So his resistance passes Rule 1 as well.

The complication for Ivan is that by taking such an extreme stance against *Q*—to say that all of his attachments, including the people he is defending, would be better off not existing—puts him in an awkward position. As I argued above, loving an individual cannot (rationally) lead an agent to will (or wish) that the beloved had never existed at any point in time. Ivan’s resistance is driven by his “love for humanity,” but his opposition aims, in effect, at destroying the object of his love. This, I have already argued, seems like quite an *unloving* thing to do.

If Ivan adjusts his position to avoid this issue, however, he may no longer satisfy Rule 1. That is, if he loves humanity and loving humanity requires willing that they exist, and it turns out that the suffering captured in *Q* is an unavoidable consequence of their existence (or their happiness), then his resistance may run into trouble with Rule 1. In such cases, he will be attached to certain members of humanity (*P*). He would also be resisting God’s plan on the basis of certain instances of suffering (*Q*). But, given certain assumptions about the connection between *P* and *Q*, it may turn out that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*.<sup>17</sup> In such a world, Ivan will either recognize that connection (and so fail to satisfy Rule 1) or will not recognize that connection (and so fail to satisfy the first criterion of *acceptance-readiness*). So, to sum up concerning the logic of resistance, even though Ivan’s resistance presently satisfies both Rule 1 and Rule 2, it comes at the cost of

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<sup>17</sup> I will have much more to say about these assumptions, and the plausibility of these assumptions in the next chapter. See especially Section One.

consistency. And by repairing the consistency problem, Ivan runs the risk of no longer satisfying Rule 1.<sup>18</sup>

With all of these considerations before us, we can ask, is Ivan's resistance *reasonable*? I have argued that it plausibly fails with respect to at least two out of three of the virtues. As presented, it appears to be inconsistent (in two ways) and disproportionate, though it does satisfy acceptance-readiness. On the other hand, if Ivan corrects his inconsistency, he will either have to give up his resistance *or* his resistance will no longer satisfy acceptance-readiness (or Rule 1). So his resistance (overall) seems fairly *unreasonable*. Not only does it have multiple shortcomings, but it seems irreparably defective in one way or another. There is something fundamentally wrong with the type of opposition Ivan exhibits, *given* what he has told us about his reasons for his opposition and his other commitments. And, furthermore, his resistance is inconsistent in two ways (and, arguably, to a substantial degree). With all of these results in mind, it seems fair to say his resistance is unreasonable overall.<sup>19</sup>

Having shown how the virtues of resistance can help evaluate an instance of non-doxastic resistance towards God (exemplified by Ivan Karamazov) I will now use them to

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<sup>18</sup> And this is similar to how Ivan's repairing the consistency problem will run the risk of his losing *acceptance-readiness*. After all, as I suggested in Chapter Four, acceptance-readiness and Rule 1 are closely related, though not exactly the same.

<sup>19</sup> To be clear, I take the overall assessment of reasonability to be somewhat less informative than our assessments of reasonability in terms of each parameter. So in my view, not much hangs on calling Ivan's resistance "unreasonable" overall. At least not relative to the assessments in terms of each virtue. By analogy, it is less informative to say, "your car is in bad shape" than giving a detailed assessment of each problem the car has. Similarly, by saying "Ivan's resistance is unreasonable," the speaker paints a general picture (and gives an overall assessment). But a more accurate (and informative) picture would focus on the particular ways in which an instance of resistance is (or is not) defective.

evaluate an instance of *doxastic* resistance (exemplified by Job). Recall that Job's resistance took the following form: Job opposes God because Job deems God's violation of certain principles of justice to be unacceptable. His opposition takes form in his demanding a chance to argue that God's management of the situation has failed in some way. Specifically, Job thinks that God has failed to *adequately attend* to Job's situation. Either God simply does not know what has happened or has mistakenly judged Job to be wicked when he is not. Furthermore, Job *believed* that his suffering was undeserved and must, therefore, be the result of some divine oversight. So it is Job's *belief* about himself and about the nature of divine justice (and providence) that form the basis of his resistance towards God.

To begin our evaluation, Job's resistance is consistent. To see why, if it is consistent resistance, then the form of his opposition does not conflict with whatever is driving his opposition. The form of the opposition, in this case, is Job's demand for an audience with God (so that he may argue his innocence). What drives Job's resistance (at least in part) are his beliefs about the requirements of justice and his belief that those requirements have not been satisfied in his case (due to an apparent oversight). But there is no conflict between that form of opposition and those reasons for resistance. To demand an audience with God does not undermine or run against Job's belief that God has made some kind of mistake.

So Job's resistance is consistent, but is Job himself a consistent resister? This question is a bit more complicated. If Job is an inconsistent resister, then the opposition he engages in is in conflict with his commitments. Again, the form of his opposition is his demanding a chance to argue his case with God. Suppose, however, that Job is committed

to the following: God is perfectly just and sees all things.<sup>20</sup> The act of demanding an audience with the divine to “correct” His error may conflict with that commitment. That is, if one were *truly* convinced that God is perfectly just (and sees all things), then to ask for an audience with God to defend one’s innocence is unwarranted. So if Job believes that God is perfectly just and sees all, then he has no grounds upon which to argue with God. God’s perfect justice implies that what is being done (in Job’s situation) is just. And God’s omniscience implies that there is nothing Job could say that would illuminate Him concerning Job’s innocence. Thus, assuming that Job is committed to the claim that God is perfectly just and omniscient, it follows that Job is an inconsistent resister.

Next, is Job’s resistance *proportional*? He has suffered immensely, as he experienced the total loss of his property, status, children, and health. It is hard to imagine things being much worse for an individual. If this loss were the result of an oversight on the part of a being that was responsible for preventing such events from occurring, then the oversight was massive. It is gross negligence on God’s part. But if that is what Job believed happened—God, a perfectly just, all-seeing being, responsible for the distribution of justice in the world—made that kind of mistake, then Job’s opposition *should be* quite strong. As it is, Job does not curse God, does not wish Him out of existence, or do anything that might symbolically represent the condemnation of God or a desire for His destruction. If anything, Job clings to His faith in God. He puts his faith in God’s fairness and power to set things right. For otherwise, a demand for an

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<sup>20</sup> That Job really believes these things fits well with the interpretation of Job I have offered in Chapter Five (see especially Section Two, A). There, I argued that Job’s lament is driven by his confusion concerning the clash between his belief in divine justice (as well as God’s governance of the world) with the “oversight” that God has made in Job’s case.

audience with God would be fruitless. (That is, it would do Job no good to have an audience with a malevolent, unjust being.) And Job's hope is that, upon being granted an audience with God, God will rectify His mistakes.

I suspect that many people will view Job's resistance as being *too weak*. The horror of what drives him to resist and the losses he incurred are tremendous. And so we should expect an equally tremendous show of opposition. But what we have instead is a simple demand for a fair trial. If anything, it seems like (given Job's perception of what happened), a fair trial is *the very least* God ought to do, in addition to setting things right (insofar as He can). Nonetheless, following Job's demand for an audience with God and God's questioning of Job, Job's resistance melts away, almost instantly. The tremendous oversight—the gross negligence—that Job thought made him a victim is erased within moments of God's appearance. Maybe this is further evidence that Job's resistance was *too weak* (and so, not proportional). After all, the strength of one's resistance can be measured in terms of persistence, as established in Chapter Three. And Job's resistance does not persist for more than a moment when he is faced down by the divine.

Wiesel (2005) criticizes Job along these lines (namely, that he resisted too weakly, for too short a time, and so on). Wiesel writes, "Job's resignation as man was an insult to man. He should not have given in so easily. He should have continued to protest, to refuse the handouts. He should have said to God: Very well, I forgive You, I forgive You to the extent of my sorrow, my anguish. But what about my dead children...?" (234). In other words, the alleged oversight on God's part was too great to be washed away so easily. Perhaps Job's resistance was simply not as strong as it ought to have been, given his perception of how terrible God's oversight was.

On the other hand, maybe an argument could be made that to stand up to the divine *is* a tremendous show of opposition. Perhaps any time a tiny, finite creature declares something like, “You have not done enough!” to God, this, by itself, constitutes an extreme form of opposition. Considering the cognitive distance between God and creatures (not to mention the difference in power and virtue between the two), it would be a bold move—maybe even an offense move—for a feeble human being to declare that the Almighty has failed in some way.<sup>21</sup> And so, given this line of thought, it may be that Job’s resistance is indeed proportional. It is, perhaps, the strongest type of opposition (short of sinful rebellion) that a finite creature can exhibit towards God. Job held nothing back. He had nothing to lose. His life (or preserving it) was no longer of any concern.<sup>22</sup> And he demanded that God see him, that God evaluate him and undo the cosmic mess for which He was responsible.

Thus, in contrast to critiques like those offered by Wiesel, Job’s opposition may be seen to be immensely powerful. But even such powerful opposition dissolved in the face of God’s glory. This is similar to an observation made by Marilyn Adams in her (1989) account of God’s defeat of evil. As she puts it, “the powers of darkness are stronger than humans, but they are no match for God” (309). In short, Job had experienced a horrendous evil. It was an evil so great that it threatened to crush his entire being, maybe even enough to make his life “not worth living.” But that evil was defeated by God. What is more, God was the only being *able* to defeat such an evil. In His speaking with Job directly, He personally assured Job that His providence extends to all

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<sup>21</sup> Wykstra (1984), for example, emphasizes the cognitive distance between humans and God in this sort of way (88).

<sup>22</sup> See Job, chapter 10.

matters and, therefore, that Job's situation had not gone unseen or ungoverned. And, given that Job's resistance was driven not by the pain nor by his losses, but by his *perception of an oversight*, God's unequivocal declaration that there are *never* any such oversights, was *exactly* the reassurance Job needed. So by dropping his opposition in that moment, Job illustrates that his opposition was, at the very least, not *too strong*. He surrendered his resistance when the reason for his opposition was removed. And that is exactly what a reasonable person would do.

In sum, concerning proportionality, *if* Job's resistance misses the mark, it is because his opposition towards God is too weak. Perhaps the horrors that befell him should have driven him to resist more radically, for longer, and so forth. But I have presented an argument that his resistance was *not* too weak. I have also argued that his resistance was not too strong. And so, I conclude that we have good reason to say that Job's resistance was proportional: Neither too weak nor too strong.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, we must ask, was Job's resistance *acceptance-ready*. To satisfy acceptance-readiness, Job's resistance must satisfy two conditions: (i) Job has a sufficient understanding of the costs that would follow were his opposition to succeed and (ii) Job does not hesitate when offered the change he sought. Regarding the second criterion, Job

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<sup>23</sup> There is obviously another objection here: Job's resistance was *too strong*. Neither myself nor objectors like Wiesel think this. But an argument could be made to that end, particularly if the one believes that Job *sinned* in the course of his opposition towards God. (After all, maybe opposing God in a sinful way is *always* a type of opposition that is "too strong.") Though I will not provide any in-depth response to that view here, I do find it hard to believe that Job was sinning in his resistance, especially given God's declaration that Job has "spoken rightly" concerning God, whereas Job's friends—the "defenders" of God's justice—did not (Job 42:7). If anything, in the course of opposing God, Job came to the *correct* conclusion that God's providence does not work in the overly simple, legalistic ways described by his friends. And, I think, this is partly why God affirms Job, rather than condemns him.

does not seem to show any signs of hesitation concerning his demand for an audience with God. Not only is he convinced it *will* happen, he actually looks forward to it, as he believes he will “come out as gold” (see 19:26 and 23:10). Regarding the first criterion, there is some question as to whether or not Job had a sufficient understanding of what an audience with God would mean.

On one hand, he seems aware of his insignificance and powerlessness in the face of God’s judgment (9:2-19). On the other hand, his reaction when he encounters God—immediate surrender, declaring that he has spoken of things he did not know, etc.—suggests that he had not fully anticipated what an audience with God would entail. So, if we were to fault Job at all (in terms of acceptance-readiness) it would be because at the time of his resistance, he did not possess a sufficient understanding of the costs that would follow should his opposition succeed. He did not fully understand what he was asking for. But this strikes me as a relatively minor defect in Job’s resistance. At least, relatively minor compared to the failures of the agent in the Factory Boycott case from Chapter Four, who had *entirely* overlooked the costs of his resistance (including how it would affect his loved ones if successful).

Regarding the logic of resistance, like Ivan, Job’s resistance clearly satisfies Rule 2. Job thinks that the “divine oversight” that befell him should not have occurred. As for Rule 1, is Job attached to anything *P* such that the divine oversight *Q* is required to secure *P*? It appears not. The divine oversight is not—from Job’s perspective, at the time of his resistance—a prerequisite for any of his attachments. *This may change*, of course, if Job eventually *embraces* the ordeal as an integral part of his relationship with God (and even as an integral part of his identity). For example, suppose Job’s experience (of the divine

oversight) eventually leads him into a deeper unity with God in the afterlife.<sup>24</sup> From the perspective of the afterlife, there may indeed be some attachment *P* (like his deepened unity with God) that Job believes could not be obtained without *Q* (the “divine oversight”). And in that case, he would no longer be able to satisfy Rule 1. But as it stands, from his perspective, at the time of his suffering, his resistance does indeed satisfy Rule 1.

To sum up our assessment of Job’s resistance, his resistance is consistent though he is an inconsistent resister. I have argued that his resistance is also proportional and acceptance-ready (at least for the most part). As such, though his resistance is defective in certain ways, it is not as defective as, say, the resistance exemplified by Ivan Karamazov. In positive terms, we can say that Job’s resistance is *more reasonable* than Ivan’s, even if Job’s resistance is not *perfectly* reasonable.<sup>25</sup> Should Job fix the problems with his resistance (without changing the nature of his opposition), it would require at least two things. First, that he abandon whatever commitments cause him to be an inconsistent resister (e.g. his commitment to the claims that God is perfectly just and sees all things). Second, that he gain a deeper understanding of what an audience with God would entail. Of course, were he to fix the latter problem—were he to truly understand what being in God’s presence is like—he might abandon his resistance altogether. But obviously even

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<sup>24</sup> Stump (1996) argues that St. Thomas defended a view like this. Additionally, Adams (1989) proposes that this is just *one way* in which God can “defeat” horrendous evils in creatures’ lives (specifically, by using the creature’s experience of those evils to draw him or her into deeper unity with Christ (307-8)).

<sup>25</sup> And note, this has nothing to do with the fact that Job’s resistance was based in his own suffering, whereas Ivan’s was based in the sufferings of others. Nor does it have anything to do with the fact that Ivan’s resistance is non-doxastic whereas Job’s is doxastic in nature.

if that were to occur, it is still the case that he would no longer be resisting God in a defective way (given that he would no longer be resisting God *at all*).

### 6.3b Resisting Theism

Having provided an evaluation of two test cases of agents resisting God, I shall now consider a few cases in which agents resist *theism* on the basis of some evil. In Chapter Five, I discussed at least six different cases of such resistance, as developed (or exemplified) by Mackie, Rowe, Hume's character Philo, Voltaire, Wiesel, and Dawkins. For the sake of space, I will focus on just one case: Hume's (2007b) character, Philo.

In the previous chapter, I characterized Philo's resistance as an instance of non-doxastic resistance towards theistic belief on the basis of evils that have befallen others. Opposition towards theistic belief can take many forms. It can shape one's lifestyle, conversations, dispositions towards theists, and so forth. In Philo's case, suppose his opposition simply consists in *arguing against theists*. Specifically, Philo argues that by observing the distribution of goods and evils in the world, it should just *strike* the observer that this world is *other than what we would expect* an infinitely good and powerful creator to produce. As I said above, the mere *appearance* of our universe—that it is “full of vice and misery”—is sufficient to render theistic belief untenable.

So, is Philo's resistance consistent, proportional, acceptance-ready, and does it satisfy the requirements of the logic of resistance? For this particular assessment, I will start with the logic of resistance. To see if Philo's resistance satisfies Rule 1 and Rule 2, we need to say a bit more about it. His resistance is towards theistic belief (*Z*) on the

basis of some evil(s) of the world ( $Q$ ).<sup>26</sup> I see no reason to think that his resistance fails to satisfy Rule 2. That is, it seems fair to say he thinks that  $Q$  should be eliminated. As for Rule 1, we must ask, does Philo have any attachment  $P$  such that he prefers  $P$ 's existence to not, deems  $Q$  to be a cost worth paying for  $P$ , while believing that  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ ? Answering these questions will require that we make some assumptions about Philo, given the lack of information available to us about him.

To begin, let  $Q$  be the conjunction of the following bases of resistance:

$Q_1$ : Creaturely capacity for pain.

$Q_2$ : That the world is governed by regular laws, rather than divine intervention.

$Q_3$ : The limited resources (and virtue) that are naturally available to creatures.

$Q_4$ : Damaging extremes in the natural world.

Jointly,  $Q_{1-4}$  are said by Philo to be conditions that enable a significant amount of evil (51-2). He claims that had all four factors been omitted from creation, "all or most natural evil" would be eliminated. And so, the presence of the four together, makes theistic belief less tenable. After all,  $Q_{1-4}$  jointly enable all (or most) natural evil, and a world containing such evil is not the kind of world God would create. In other words, each factor is a surprising aspect of the world on the assumption that the world was created by God. And for that reason, each serves as an appropriate basis for opposition to theistic belief.

The important question here to ask is: Does Philo have any attachment  $P$  that cannot be obtained without  $Q_{1-4}$ ?<sup>27</sup> We are not really in a position to give a definite

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<sup>26</sup> And recall my discussion in Chapter Five, where I argued that the appropriate basis (in Philo's case) is indeed the presence of evil of the world, as opposed to an *inconsistency* between theism and the presence of those evils. Though, again, the latter may indeed serve as the basis of an individual's resistance to theism. And in that case, our assessment may provide different results than the ones described here.

<sup>27</sup> If there is such a connection, then Philo will have to *know about it* to be in violation of Rule 1. But that is no matter for the time being. For now, I just want to

answer to the question, unfortunately. But suppose, as just *one* example among *many*, we stipulate that Philo is attached to human virtue—he thinks that human virtue is extremely valuable and prefers its presence in the universe to its absence.<sup>28</sup> Can creaturely virtue exist in a world without  $Q_{1-4}$ ? If an argument (or set of arguments) were to persuade Philo that “no, human virtue cannot exist without  $Q_{1-4}$ ,” then Philo would face a problem.<sup>29,30</sup> Either he would need to commit himself to the view that human virtue ( $P$ ) is not worth the cost of  $Q_{1-4}$  or he would have to give up his resistance (at least, his resistance on the basis of  $Q_{1-4}$ ). Additionally, were he unable to assess whether or not  $P$  is worth the cost of  $Q_{1-4}$ , he would have to surrender his resistance on the basis of  $Q_{1-4}$ . So what would it mean to give up one’s resistance to theistic belief in such a case? Not necessarily that one adopts theistic belief. But one would not be in a position to *oppose* it on the basis of  $Q_{1-4}$ .

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establish the plausibility of the relevant connection. If there is such a connection and Philo does *not* know about it, he will indeed satisfy Rule 1, but his ignorance regarding the costs of his resistance will likely cause him to violate the first condition of acceptance-readiness.

<sup>28</sup> This seems like a safe supposition to make, given, as one example, Philo’s insistence that so many evils would be avoided if only human beings naturally possessed the same virtues (like diligence) that some people work hard to cultivate (50-1). As he puts it, if only the human race were given virtue *naturally*, “the immediate and necessary result of this endowment would be the most beneficial consequences” (50). So he seems to think virtues are good things.

<sup>29</sup> For an argument that features like  $Q_{1-4}$  are required for the development of human virtue, see Hick (1973: 41-2), as well as Dougherty (2014b: chapters six and seven).

<sup>30</sup> Also, it need not be that the relevant arguments are *sound*. What matters, regarding Rule 1 is what Philo believes. So, if he *believes* that human virtue cannot be obtained without  $Q_{1-4}$ , that is sufficient to place him in violation of Rule 1.

So the result may be a sort of agnosticism.<sup>31</sup> So while Philo's resistance satisfies Rule 2, there is much more to be said before we can know whether or not it satisfies Rule 1.

Before completing our assessment, we still need to ask whether or not Philo's resistance is consistent, proportional, and acceptance-ready. In reverse order, if his resistance is acceptance-ready, then he is in a position such that were he given the opportunity to eliminate  $Q_{1-4}$ , he would do so. He sufficiently understands what the elimination of  $Q_{1-4}$  would entail and is prepared to "pull the trigger" on eliminating it. Does Philo—do *any* of us—have a sufficient understanding of what would happen to the universe were  $Q_{1-4}$  eliminated? I think the answer, pretty clearly, is "no." If  $Q_{1-4}$  were eliminated today, there is no telling what the world would look like a moment later. And if all of history were magically rolled back and creation began anew without features  $Q_{1-4}$ , there is no telling what type of universe would come to be.<sup>32</sup> So Philo's resistance is not acceptance-ready. Nor is *anyone's* resistance when it occurs on the basis of  $Q_{1-4}$ . There are no human beings that possess sufficient understanding of what would happen should  $Q_{1-4}$  be eliminated (either now or when the universe began). Thus, for creatures

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<sup>31</sup> This is just an implication of the claim, made in Chapter Two, that *being for* an object and *opposing* it are not exhaustive. One might be *neutral towards* an object (in which case, one is neither *for* nor *opposed to* it).

<sup>32</sup> van Inwagen (2006) makes a similar point (116ff). In that case, he considers an objector who claims that God could have created a regular world (functioning according to regular laws of nature), that also contained higher-level sentient beings (like humans) but dramatically less natural evil than our world. He challenges the objector to provide an in-depth explanation of what such a world would be like, what the laws would be, and so forth. Absent such an explanation, he argues, "one's statements about what is intrinsically or metaphysically possible—and thus one's statements about an omnipotent being's 'options' in creating a world—will be entirely subjective, and therefore without value" (117).

like us,  $Q_{1-4}$  do not form a promising basis of resistance (at least when it comes to our ability to satisfy the requirements of acceptance-readiness).<sup>33</sup>

The above discussion suggests that Philo's resistance fails pretty significantly with respect to acceptance-readiness. But is it proportional? If yes, then the strength of his opposition is in proportion to how unacceptable he deems the object to be. I think it is fair to say that he takes the object (theistic belief) to be fairly unacceptable given our observations about the world and absent any solid *a priori* proof for God's existence.<sup>34</sup> That said, Philo is also clear that were we to have a convincing, *a priori* proof for God, our observations of the evils within universe would be surprising but not enough to overturn theistic belief.<sup>35</sup> And so for Philo, even though theistic belief is pretty unacceptable, it is by no means the *most* unacceptable object. Thus, one form of

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<sup>33</sup> Maybe the problem could be avoided if, instead of resisting on the basis of  $Q_{1-4}$ , Philo resists on the basis of just *one* of those four. The issue is that for any member of  $Q_{1-4}$ , what we can know about a world without the relevant member will be extremely limited. Therefore, it would be difficult (if not impossible) to satisfy acceptance-readiness when resisting on the basis of some  $Q$  that is fundamental to the way our world functions.

<sup>34</sup> Two points to note here: First, at this stage in the debate, Philo has set aside the possibility of an *a priori* proof for God's existence. This is evident by how the conversation begins, as Cleanthes tries to defend God's existence on *a posteriori* grounds rather than *a priori* grounds (much to Demea's chagrin), and Philo just follows that trail where it leads (11-12). Second, Hume *does* seem to provide *some* reason to think *a priori* proofs for God's existence are doomed to failure later in the *Dialogues*. Specifically, in the voice of Cleanthes this time, Hume's argument basically goes like this: An *a priori* proof of God's existence would require that God is a being whose non-existence implies a contradiction. But there is *no* being whose non-existence implies a contradiction. And so all *a priori* arguments for God's existence will fail (39-40).

<sup>35</sup> See Hume (2007b: 47). Specifically, Philo thinks that if a person had a knock-down *a priori* proof for God's existence and later came to learn about the amount of evil and suffering in the world, he would become "aware of his own blindness and ignorance, and must admit that these phenomena of vice, misery, etc., may have explanations that he'll never be able to understand" (47).

opposition that Philo elects—arguing against theistic belief—seems appropriate enough. Comparatively, if he were to stab Demea (and any other theist he meets), that would constitute an obvious overreaction. For the sake of argument, therefore, let us grant that Philo’s resistance is proportional.

Lastly, is Philo’s resistance consistent? Arguing against theism (the form of his opposition) does not appear to conflict with the reasons driving it (Philo’s perception of  $Q_{1-4}$  and natural evils they give rise to). We might, then, grant that Philo’s resistance is, itself, consistent. Is Philo a consistent resister? The answer is unclear. Suppose once again that Philo is attached to human virtue. He wants to promote virtue in the world as best he can, we will assume. Suppose also—much more controversially—that he comes to believe that a great deal of human virtue will be undermined if theistic belief were eliminated in his community.<sup>36</sup> In such a case, he might turn out to be an inconsistent resister. The reason why is that his opposition would be working towards the undermining of something that he is attached to (namely, human virtue). But since this is only speculative, to get a true answer regarding whether or not Philo is a consistent resister, we would need to have a better understanding of what the elimination of theistic belief would lead to (in his community) as well as a better understanding of his attachments.

Before moving on to a general account of how the virtues and logic of resistance might be applied to individuals who resist God and theism, there is a major objection to dispel. The objector might respond to my assessment of Philo as follows: *This whole*

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<sup>36</sup> That belief in God should be preserved for the sake of promoting moral behavior is what someone in favor of “theistic preservationism” might argue. See Miller (2012) for a discussion (though not an endorsement) of that view (105).

*project is wrong-headed*.  $Q_{1-4}$ —or pretty much any  $Q$  in this context—is meant to count as *evidence* against theism. Even if Philo prefers  $Q$  over not- $Q$ , or Philo’s attachments cannot be obtained without  $Q$ , all of that is *irrelevant* to what counts as *evidence against* theism. In other words, for any  $Q$ , no matter how a person *feels* about it, whether or not they prefer it to its absence, whether or not it is required to secure their attachments, and so forth, that is all a separate issue from whether or not it counts as *evidence against* theism.

In response, there is a difference between *believing that a claim is false* (on the basis of some evidence) and *opposing* that the object of that claim on the basis of some  $Q$ . It may be that certain aspects of the world lead one to believe that theism is false. But even so, it is possible that those aspects of the world (let them be  $Q$ ) are not an appropriate basis of *resistance* for the individual in question. In short, to believe something *on the basis* of evidence is a different “on the basis” relation than the one I am working with here (which is “resistance *on the basis of* something”).

To expand a bit, there are other kinds of “on the basis” relations in the neighborhood of “resist *on the basis of* something.” We might try to develop an account of belief *on the basis of* evidence. So, returning to Philo’s case, perhaps Philo believes that theism is false *on the basis of* the data of good and evil. Whether or not Philo is *opposed* to theism (or resists it) is independent of this “on the basis” relation. As such, Philo may have no *opposition* to the truth of theism. He just thinks theism is mistaken. And that still seems like a problem of evil for theism.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> And to be fair, it may be that this is a better representation of Philo’s actual position than the one presented here and in Chapter Five. But even so, I will just rearticulate the point made in an opening footnote of Chapter Five: Whether I accurately

In response, I do not pretend to develop an account of belief *on the basis of* evidence in this project. So, in cases where someone believes theism is false but fails to resist theism, the present application of the virtues and logic of resistance may not apply as well. But this is not a problem, because the tools of evaluation I develop here are designed to evaluate the reasonability of instances of resistance. It is unsurprising that they do not provide an evaluation of a problem of evil that is independent of an agent's resistance. We should not expect them to provide an evaluation of phenomena other than resistance (e.g. belief that theism is false on the basis of some evidence).

If an objector argues further that much of contemporary philosophy involves *this* kind of problem of evil (as opposed to problems of evil based in agents' resistance to theism), I would first respond that the present project is primarily focused upon versions of the problem of evil that are usually *set aside* in contemporary debates. And second, I have argued in discussions of compound resistance that addressing one form of resistance may fail to address the other. Similarly, if an individual is resistant to theism and also believes that theism is false on the basis of some evidence, there will be cases where correcting the latter problem fails to deal with the problem of evil adequately (for them). And, *even worse*, their resistance may make them more impervious to arguments that aim to undermine their belief that theism is false.<sup>38</sup>

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represent characters in literary works or simply provide a retelling of them does not ultimately matter. So if my version of Philo is just a character "inspired by" the original, that is fine, since it still serves as an adequate illustration of a particular problem.

<sup>38</sup> Additionally, regarding the agent who does not resist theism but nonetheless believes that its claims are false (on the basis of some evidence): If it turns out that they cannot reasonably resist theism, then this does not require they *accept* theism.

So, in response to the charge that the present project is failing to address versions of the problem of evil that are central to contemporary philosophical debates, I have two points to emphasize: First, the objector is just reaffirming an observation made at the beginning of Chapter Five (we are currently engaging versions of the problem of evil that philosophers often label as “off limits”). Second, adequately addressing the problem of evil will—at least in some cases—require addressing agents’ resistance to theism *in addition to* their “non-resistant” failure to believe the claims of theism. So, the present account still has great relevance to contemporary debates, even assuming that the focus of those debates involves a different kind of “on the basis” relation when debating the problem of evil.

Having addressed those concerns, to summarize our observations of Philo: Philo’s resistance is consistent and seems to satisfy Rule 2 of the logic of resistance, as well as proportionality. But it is also in *severe* violation of acceptance-readiness (and, plausibly, Rule 1). The *magnitude* of these violations may be sufficient to render his resistance unreasonable (overall).

#### 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have applied the virtues and logic of resistance to particular instances of resistance towards God and theism. In doing so, I have engaged the problem of evil (at least some cases of it) without advancing a theodicy, defense, or antitheodicy. That is, the virtues and logic of resistance have provided a new way of engaging with the problem. But the present chapter only dealt with one very particular problem at a time. And even assuming this process was successful, one might hope for a response to the problem of evil that does not depend on such a detailed, case-by-case assessment. So, in the next

chapter, I will show how the virtues and logic of resistance can be used to form a much broader, general response to the problem of evil.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Responding to The Problem of Evil (A General Response)

Having discussed how the virtues and logic of resistance may help evaluate the reasonability of particular instances of resistance, I will now say a few *general* things about resisting God (or theism) on the basis of evil. There are several pitfalls when it comes to resisting either object on the basis of the evils of history. I will provide an overview of each, beginning with the logic of resistance before transitioning to the virtues of resistance.

#### *7.1 Violations of Rule 1*

Recall that Rule 1 of the logic of resistance says that if an agent ( $S$ ) resists God (or theism) on the basis of some evil ( $Q$ ) in a reasonable way, then the following is true for  $S$ :

Rule 1: There is no  $P$ , such that:

- (i) the agent prefers  $P$  to its absence,
- (ii) the agent deems  $Q$  to be a cost worth paying for  $P$  (or the agent is unsure whether or not  $Q$  is a cost worth paying for  $P$ ), and
- (iii) The agent believes that  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ .

Suppose that  $S$  is any random contemporary of ours and that  $Q$  stands for some set of major evils in the past (e.g. the events of WWII). Is there any attachment,  $P$ , that  $S$  is likely to have that will lead to her being in violation of Rule 1? Several authors, including Adams (1979) and Hasker (1981), have argued (in effect) that the answer is “yes.”

To start, Adams (1979) takes Leibniz to be saying something like this when he quotes Leibniz: “You will insist that you can complain, why didn’t God give you more

strength [to resist temptation]. I answer: if He had done that, you would not be you, for He would not have produced you but another creature” (53). The idea here (at least as Adams understands it) is simple enough: Whatever happens in the course of a person’s life (even her own suffering) is a necessary part of that person’s identity. Should *anything* have occurred differently, then the agent would be a different person.

So, returning to our consideration of *S*, I will suppose that in most cases, *S* is attached to her own identity (and to her loved ones). Yet, on the Leibnizian view, should *anything* in the past be changed, both she and her loved ones would not exist. Obviously enough, if we let *P* stand in for *S*’s identity (and/or the existence of her loved ones), then *P* cannot be obtained without *Q* (the evils of the past). So then the question is this: Is *S*’s attachment to *P* so strong that she deems *Q* to be a cost worth paying for *P*? If yes, then her ability to reasonably resist God (or theism) on the basis of *Q* is undermined. If no, she may yet pass the test of Rule 1. But even should she pass the test set by Rule 1, it remains to be seen whether or not she passes the tests set by the virtues of resistance.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is implausible that *every* event of the past is essential for *S*’s identity. So it would be best to avoid a commitment to that claim if possible. As such, I propose a weaker account of identity. My account is very much in the spirit of the one presented by Adams (1979), with some very important differences, which I will point out below.

Adams claims that “what we are attached to in ourselves, in a reasonable self-concern, is not just our bare metaphysical identity, but also projects, friendships, and at least some of

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<sup>1</sup> In response to this kind of consideration (as put forth by Adams and Hasker, especially the latter), Morrison (1982) argues that if our attachments entail the evils of the past, then “so much the worse” for our attachments (403). In other words, if, for *S*, *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*, then so much the worse for *P*. In such cases, *Q* is *clearly* not a cost worth paying to secure *P*. I will have much more to say about this objection below.

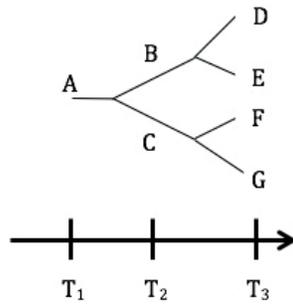
the most important features of our personal history and character” (60). In other words, for *S*, *P* will not typically be her mere existence (or “bare identity”), so much as a more particular version of it.

So here is a brief sketch of the type of “identity” that will serve our purposes. I will refer to this type of “identity” as a “personal story” (or just “story” for short). If personal stories serve the purpose I have set for them, then they should satisfy the following two requirements (where *P* is *S*’s personal story and/or the personal stories of *S*’s loved ones): (i) *S* is usually attached to *P* and (ii) *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*. If successful, *P* will put *S*’s resistance on the basis of *Q* in jeopardy, particularly when she *learns* of the connection between *P* and *Q* (or at least when *S* becomes *convinced* of such a connection).<sup>2</sup>

Personal stories consist of events (at least in part). Events are just things that happen to an individual (where “individual” picks out a being’s “bare metaphysical identity”). Events include: Creatures coming to exist, dying, marrying, having children, and so on. To illustrate the relationship between personal stories and events, consider an individual that whose story consists of three events total, each of which occurs at a different time ( $T_1 - T_3$ , respectively). Let us imagine that one of these events is unavoidable, but two are not. We might map the possible outcomes—the ways in which the story might unfold—as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> This is because Rule 1 requires that *S* believes that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q* (independently of whether or not there really is such a connection).



For this individual—where, once again, “individual” picks out something like one’s bare identity—there are four stories that might be told: ABD, ABE, ACF, or ACG. Suppose we apply the Leibnizian view of identity to personal stories. This would mean that everything that occurs is necessary to each story. As such, there will be four distinct, non-identical personal stories (even though they all share an “initial story segment”).<sup>3</sup> This would make stories *maximally fragile* in modal terms. If a story is maximally fragile, then a single change of any kind results in the loss of identity (i.e. the story is changed from one story to another). On such a view, an ABD individual would not be able to say, “It was possible for C to be part of my story” or “It was possible for G to be part of my story.” This is because (on the map before us) there is *never* an ABD story that includes either C or G.

On the other hand, suppose *no* events are essential to a story and that a story is identical with all other versions so long as the same individual—in terms of bare identity—is the one the story is about. In such a case, we have four stories (ABD, ABE, ACF, and ACG) that are all *the same*. Thus, an ABD individual *could* truthfully say “It

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<sup>3</sup> An “initial story segment” is analogous to what Plantinga (1974b) calls an “initial segment” of a possible world (175-6). For Plantinga two distinct possible worlds, *W* and *W\**, share an initial segment up to some time *t*, when they are “exactly alike” up to that time (175). And so, two possible stories, *S* and *S\** can be said to share an initial story segment up to *t* when they are exactly alike up to that time. More on this below.

was possible for C to be part of my story” or “It was possible for G to be part of my story.” After all, given present assumptions, the individual could have lived out stories containing C and G. I will call this type of story one that is *maximally durable*. If a story is maximally durable, then no matter what changes are made to the story (in terms of events), it remains the same story.

Neither the maximally fragile nor the maximally durable view of stories will be my focus. Instead, the type of personal story that will be relevant falls somewhere in-between those two extremes. On this view, the major events or components of a story are essential for its identity, whereas minor events are not.<sup>4</sup> Distinguishing between major and minor events will be difficult, as the line between the two is almost certainly vague in many cases. But, in practice, people draw this type of distinction all the time.<sup>5</sup> As such, I will rely on what I take to be intuitive examples to guide the way.

To start, suppose that Tolkien had written *The Lord of the Rings* exactly the same, minus one change: Frodo was named Bingo.<sup>6</sup> In this kind of case, *The Lord of the Rings*

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<sup>4</sup> Compare this idea to what Wallace (2013) says, when he argues that we might “classify some aspects of our lives as essential to them, such that the absence of those features would entail that the life no longer exists. Changes in other, peripheral features, by contrast, would be compatible with the continued existence of the life to which they belong” (146). Wallace rejects this view, however, given his assumption that “human lives are not individual substances, but rather distended events or series of events” (146). As such, Wallace does not add anything more on the matter.

<sup>5</sup> Think, for example, discussions where people compare the book version of a story to its film adaptation. People often complain that a story has been changed too much, or point out ways in which the story was preserved from book to film. They may argue that the story was changed so much that the original was destroyed, or that some changes were made but the overall story was preserved, and so forth.

<sup>6</sup> Apparently, this really was the case in earlier drafts of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, and “Frodo” was the name of the character that became Peregrin Took. See Tolkien and Tolkien (2000: 28-9).

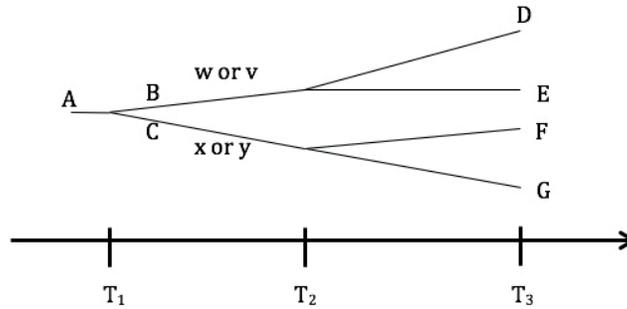
starring Frodo seems pretty clearly to be the same story as *The Lord of the Rings* starring Bingo. The relevant change is not *so substantial* as to change the story altogether. On the other hand, suppose Tolkien had written a story titled *The Lord of the Rings* that featured two children, Digory Kirke and Polly Plummer, who (inadvertently) use magical rings to leave London and travel across different worlds.<sup>7</sup> In that case, I think it would be clear that Tolkien would have written a different story. *The Lord of the Rings*, as a story, may survive minor changes—like alterations to Frodo’s name—but not major changes—like the total overhaul of its plot, characters, and setting. The question is: How many changes (and which changes) can a story like *The Lord of the Rings* survive? And again, I think there is no precise answer.<sup>8</sup>

Turning now to *personal stories*, we can accommodate the difference between major and minor events when charting the branching paths individuals may take. Let major events be dictated by uppercase letters. Minor events—which, individually, do not destroy identity when changed—will be represented by lowercase letters. Minor events are separated by “or” to imply that one event or the other (but not both) will be included in the story. The chart will now look like this:

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<sup>7</sup> These are the events of C.S. Lewis’ (1955b) book, *The Magician’s Nephew* from his *Chronicles of Narnia* series.

<sup>8</sup> Or if the reader wanted to argue the point, perhaps there is no precise answer *that we can give*. In other words, maybe there *is* a fact of the matter, but we are unable to discover it.



Given the possible events of this chart, we now have eight possible stories, but still four *unique* ones. We can group the stories like this (see Table 7.1):

Table 7.1 Stories

Unique Story	Variation
Story 1	ABwD
	ABvD
Story 2	ABwE
	ABvE
Story 3	ACxF
	ACyF
Story 4	ACxG
	ACyG

So, as one example, the ABwD story can be changed to ABvD without losing its identity.

But ABwD *loses* its identity should it change to ABwE. In that case, it becomes a different story.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This does complicate what it means for two distinct stories to share an “initial segment.” We said above that two stories, *S* and *S\** share an initial story segment up to time *t* when they are *exactly alike* up to *t*. Now we need to qualify that statement by changing “exactly alike” to “exactly alike with respect to major events.” Or even more precisely, “exactly alike with respect to major events and *a sufficient number of minor events*.” The latter claim is sensitive to the possibility that *enough* changes in minor events might, together, cause a story to lose its identity. The question then is “how many minor events are *sufficient*?” I expect that we will not be able to give a precise (non-vague) answer.

Now to return to the task at hand: The goal was to produce some  $P$  that satisfies the following two requirements: (i)  $S$  is usually attached to  $P$  and (ii)  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ .<sup>10</sup> So let  $P$  be  $S$ 's personal story and/or the personal stories of those people that  $S$  loves. I will take it that  $S$  will typically be attached to  $P$  to *some* degree. This is based on the assumption that people typically love themselves to some degree. And given that  $P$  may stand for the personal stories of the people that  $S$  loves, it seems obvious that  $S$  will be attached to those stories to some degree as well. So the first condition of Rule 1 will usually be satisfied.

The second condition— $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ —is much trickier to establish. At this point, we are letting  $P$  stand for  $S$ 's personal story and/or the personal stories of  $S$ 's loved ones. Each personal story will include the relevant agents' "bare" identity *plus* whatever major events make up their stories. With this in mind,  $Q$  will either be required for  $S$ 's bare identity or it will not. Suppose  $Q$  is in the category of things required for  $S$ 's bare identity. In this case,  $S$ 's bare identity cannot be obtained without  $Q$ . But since  $P$  just is  $S$ 's bare identity plus some other things, it follows that  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ . Thus, if the evils grouped under  $Q$  are required for  $S$ 's bare identity (or the bare identity of those  $S$  loves), then  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ . And so, the second condition would be satisfied.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> As a reminder,  $S$  refers to any random contemporary of ours and  $Q$  stands for some set of major evils in the past (e.g. the events of WWII).

<sup>11</sup> This is the basic idea found in Adams (1979) and Hasker (1981). Both authors aim to show that the major events of the past are accidentally necessary for one's bare identity (i.e. one's existence). But in doing so, they do concede that if the major events of the past were different, then *probably*  $S$  would not exist today. See, for example, Adams (1979: 54) and Hasker (1981: 427-8). I am uncomfortable with these claims. In my view, some event is accidentally necessary for one's existence or it is not. If "in all probability"

But suppose  $Q$  is *not* required to secure  $S$ 's bare identity. Even so, it may turn out that  $P$  (the relevant personal stories) cannot be obtained without  $Q$ . On a general level, major events in  $P$  will usually include information about  $S$ 's parents (or guardians or whomever raised  $S$ ). This will be so no matter what  $S$ 's attitude is towards her parents as well, since  $S$ 's own personal story will usually be significantly impacted by the role her parents (or guardians) play. So if  $Q$  is found among things required for  $S$ 's parents existing (and even their being the types of parents they are) then  $S$ 's personal story will be unobtainable without  $Q$ .

$S$ 's parents (or guardians) are not the only entities likely to have a major influence on  $S$ 's personal story (or the personal stories of those  $S$  loves). Other candidates for major influences include:  $S$ 's cultural setting, the economic climate that  $S$  is born into (and raised within), the political climate that  $S$  inhabits, the religious views and practices of  $S$ 's time, and even things like the laws of nature (physics, chemistry, etc.). And the impact these factors have on  $P$  is dramatically increased when one considers that  $P$  cannot be obtained without the personal stories of *whatever individuals* have had a major influence on  $S$ . That is, not only do things like the laws of nature play a major role in the

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I would not exist had the event been different (but it is nonetheless possible that I would exist), then *the event is not accidentally necessary for my existence*. Additionally, by asserting that the events of the past are necessary for one's bare existence, Adams and Hasker seem to be committed to denying certain accounts of identity that identify individuals with *souls* (e.g. Cartesian dualism). Hasker (1981) explicitly accepts this consequence (427). But when discussing this type of view with Richard Swinburne (in conversation) he rejected Adams' argument (and Hasker's by extension) on the grounds that it married to an incorrect view of personal identity. For these reasons, I found it imperative that my account of personal stories should operate independently of one's view of bare metaphysical identity. And I believe I have been successful in that way: Dualists and non-dualists can accept what I have to say about personal stories. If a personal story is one's bare metaphysical identity *plus* some other things, then (supposing  $Q$  is required for those other things) philosophers are welcome to fill out "bare metaphysical identity" as they see fit, and the results will not change.

development of *S*'s story, they also impact her parents' stories. And if her parents are (usually) a major part of *S*'s story, *P*, then *P* is doubly unobtainable without those laws. The same may follow for any of the other factors listed above. What is more, events of *recent* history are not the only ones relevant to *P*. Distant history plays a significant role when it comes to *P* as well.

After all, major events in recent history will almost always have some kind of major impact on *P*, whether they are required for *S*'s bare existence or the added details of *S*'s story itself. Depending on one's view of personal identity, for example, the major events of the past will be *extremely* likely to affect *S*'s bare existence.<sup>12</sup> If, for example, Kripke's (1980) version of origin essentialism (or something like it) is correct, then one thing that is required for *S*'s bare identity is *S*'s genetic history (113-14). And slight alterations in the distant past—even minor adjustments made to minor events—may destroy that history. But when considering *Q*, we are talking about *major* events in history. So, if slight alternations in the distant past threaten *S*'s bare identity, then certainly major changes to the distant past would do the same (and to a much greater degree).

But these suggestions run into two problems. First, as already mentioned, they rely on a particular view of personal identity, which is a commitment I wish to avoid.<sup>13</sup> Second, even if one's genetic history would *likely* be undone if the past were changed in

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<sup>12</sup> As Adams (1979) writes, "The farther back we go in history, the larger the proportion of evils to which we owe our being; for the causal nexus relevant to our individual genesis widens as we go back in time. We almost certainly would never have existed had there not been just about the same evils as actually occurred in a large part of human history" (54). But again, this depends on a particular account of personal identity.

<sup>13</sup> See the previous two footnotes.

substantial ways, that does not imply that it *must* be.<sup>14</sup> So, for example, suppose for a moment we let *P* be just *S*'s bare identity, and *Q* includes some set of major evils in the past. On the account of bare identity we are considering, it is *possible* for God to bring about *P* without *Q*. He just has to preserve *S*'s genetic heritage in one way or another. And so, if *S* resists God on the basis of *Q*, *S* will not be in violation of Rule 1 (assuming *S* subscribes to this particular account of personal identity or one relevantly like it). This is why letting *P* stand for *S*'s *personal story* (and the stories of *S*'s loved ones) has an advantage over letting *P* stand for *S*'s bare identity.<sup>15</sup> After all, personal stories include *more* than just one's bare identity. And while *S*'s bare identity may be obtainable without *Q* (even given origin essentialism), it does *not* follow that *P* (*S*'s personal story) can be obtained without *Q* as well.

At this point, the following objection arises. Here is a simple way for *P* to be obtained without *Q*: If God created the world five seconds ago and filled creatures' minds with false memories, the landscape with the false appearance of being much old, and so on.<sup>16</sup> We would have all contemporary creatures, including *S*, but none of the evils of history (including *Q*). The same could be said by the Cartesian dualist—who identifies persons with souls—since God could just place all of those individuals in a world without

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Morrision (1982: 404-5), which I will discuss in a moment.

<sup>15</sup> This is an important difference between my arguments and those offered by Adams (1979) and Hasker (1981), since they both rely on claims about bare identity.

<sup>16</sup> This is related to an objection raised by Morrision (1982: 404-5). There, Morrision responds to Hasker (1981) by arguing that major events of our history are “not logically necessary for” a given individual's existence. After all, says Morrision, given God's omnipotence, He could surely bring about the existence of contemporary agents without the actual past. Though I will offer a response to Morrision of my own, it is worth noting that the Leibnizian account of identity (mentioned above) denies the possibility that an individual who exists today could exist without the actual past.

our actual past (or, at least, a world with far less evil). So it does seem possible to obtain  $P$  ( $S$ 's personal story) without  $Q$ .

In response, even granting that  $S$ 's bare existence can be obtained without  $Q$ , that does not imply that  $P$  can be obtained without  $Q$ .<sup>17</sup> And, in the “five second world” case, I do not believe that  $P$  survives. By way of analogy, compare the following two stories.

Story 1: *The Lord of the Rings*, as written by Tolkien.

Story 2: A story written by Tolkien in which a supernatural being creates Frodo, his companions, and the world as we hear about it in *The Lord of the Rings*, but the first moment of this world is the one in which a hobbit named Frodo departs from a place called the Grey Havens for the Undying Lands. Everything else—the War of the Ring and all that came before—never really happened, but is a false memory shared by the characters of the world.

The question to ask here: Is Story 1 the same as Story 2? Obviously not in every way. But are the changes *so significant* that these are “non-identical” stories (in the *relevant* way)?

To me, the answer seems to be “yes.” That the War of the Ring loses all actuality—it is nothing but a dream of sorts in Story 2—is too big of a change for these to count as the same story. This is not to mention all of the characters who lived and died in Story 1 that never came to be in Story 2, many of which had profound effects on Frodo and the others. In Story 2, they cannot be said to have had the same impact, for they never existed. Instead, their whole existence, their sacrifices, the meaning they bestowed upon the world and others, is imaginary. And so, I think Story 2 is clearly a different story than Story 1, despite sharing certain similarities.

To complete the analogy, we were considering two worlds:

World 1: There is a particular agent,  $S$ , who exists in a world that has a long history.

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<sup>17</sup> And, again, we might actually have some reason to deny that  $S$ 's bare existence is preserved between these two worlds, especially if we take Kripke (1980) seriously.

World 2: There is a particular agent, *S*, who exists in a world that was created five seconds ago.

For the sake of argument, I granted that *S* in World 1 may be identical (in terms of bare identity) with *S* in World 2. But what about the personal stories of each agent? Are they the same, assuming the world, at present, *appears the same* to each respective agent? Here, if the *Lord of the Rings* example is properly analogous, the answer is “no.” In World 1, *P* connects in with actual events, it is affected by countless people and events that have come and gone. In World 2, all such connections are illusory. And that is a massive difference between the stories, too great to think identity is preserved. So, even though *S*'s bare identity may be preserved across those two worlds, *P* is not preserved in the same way. And that means that the objector's claim—that *P* can be obtained without *Q* if God were to create the world five seconds ago—is mistaken.<sup>18</sup>

Some readers may find the analogy argument to be less than convincing. In that case, there is another line of response we might take against the five second world objection. In order to be in violation of Rule 1, *S* must believe that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*. So, if *S* is convinced of the analogy argument, then they satisfy that criterion. And if *S* thinks that *Q* is a cost worth paying for *P*, then, subsequently, *S* is in violation of Rule 1. Suppose *S* has considered the five second world hypothesis and finds it plausible that, in a world created five seconds ago, *P* would be preserved. In this case, *S* is either

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<sup>18</sup> The same kind of argument can be given to the Cartesian dualist. We might imagine a group of persons (souls) living in a world with a long history versus those same souls dropped into a world that was made five seconds ago. Even though bare identity is preserved across worlds, personal stories are not. In short, if the reader finds the analogy arguments immediately above, they can accept them regardless of their view of personal identity. And again, this strikes me as a major advantage of my account over the ones developed by Adams (1979) and Hasker (1981).

right or wrong. If they are wrong, then even though they may resist reasonably according to Rule 1 (given that they do not meet the third criterion of Rule 1), they have made another kind of error (they have misunderstood the connection between  $P$  and  $Q$ ). This error would place them in violation of the first condition of acceptance-readiness, however, as they would have failed to understand the costs associated with their opposition (should it be allowed to succeed).

On the other hand, suppose that  $S$  believes that  $P$  can be obtained without  $Q$  (given the five second world hypothesis) and that they are *right* about that fact. In *that* case, they may be able to resist reasonably. But their work is cut out for them: They must establish (and be fairly confident) that  $P$  can be obtained without  $Q$  (in the five second world case), for example. If there is any real uncertainty in the manner—if  $S$  is unsure about whether or not  $P$  can be obtained without  $Q$  in the five second world scenario—then their resistance runs into problems with acceptance-readiness (even if it does not strictly violate Rule 1).

Lastly, if  $S$  is convinced that in the five second world scenario,  $P$  can be obtained without  $Q$  (and they are correct about that), then their resistance seems to amount to the following. God (or theism) are opposed on the basis of  $Q$ . Specifically,  $S$  thinks something like: A good God should have created a world five seconds ago that has the false memory of  $Q$  rather than  $Q$  itself, since this would preserve  $P$  but omit  $Q$ . But if God did create such a world, it would constitute an immense deception and would be massively irregular. One objection arises here: It is not clear that this level of deception would be compatible with God's perfect goodness. And second, as van Inwagen (2006) has argue, there are two other considerations to make: That (i) massively irregularities in

worlds constitute *defects* and (ii) we are not capable of making value judgments about which world is better, ones that are regular but contain the amounts of evil we see in this world versus massively irregular worlds containing far less evil (120-3). In other words, for *S* to think that God *should* have brought about the world that was created five seconds ago, *S* will need to argue against each of these points made by van Inwagen. Thus, if van Inwagen is right, *S*'s resistance still faces formidable obstacles.

To summarize so far, where *Q* stands for some set of major evils in the past (e.g. the events of WWII), we have many reasons to think that *Q* will affect *P* (*S*'s personal story) so significantly that a substantial change in *Q* will eliminate *P*. That is, it seems plausible that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*, at least generally. Supposing all of this is correct, what does this say about *S*'s ability to resist God (or theism) on the basis of *Q*?

Rule 1 requires that the following be true:

Rule 1: There is no *P*, such that:

- (i) the agent prefers *P* to its absence,
- (ii) the agent deems *Q* to be a cost worth paying for *P* (or the agent is unsure whether or not *Q* is a cost worth paying for *P*), and
- (iii) The agent believes that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*.

We have noted that *S* will typically be attached to *P* (her personal story and/or the personal stories of those she loves). We have also seen that in many cases, *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*. So supposing *S* discovers this connection (or even just comes to *believe* such a connection exists), whether or not she satisfies Rule 1 comes down to condition (ii). Is it the case that the typical agent will deem *Q* to be a cost worth paying for *P*? Or, at the very least, will most be *unsure* about whether or not *Q* is worth such a cost?

In response to a similar set of questions, Morrision (1982) argues that if our attachments entail the evils of the past, then “so much the worse” for our attachments (403).<sup>19</sup> In other words, it seems clear to Morrision that our existence (and the existence of our loved ones) is *clearly* not worth the cost of the evils of history. And so, “if our existence isn’t worth the price,” he asks, “why shouldn’t we blame God for paying it?” (404). To sharpen this objection a bit, we might take Morrision to be endorsing the view that it is *wrong* for *S* to satisfy the first disjunct of condition (ii). That is, if *S* deems *Q* to be worth paying for *P*, then *S* is blameworthy (morally or otherwise). For example, suppose *S* reasons as follows: “My personal story depends upon *Q* (the events of WWII). But my existence is worth that cost.” Here, Morrision thinks, *S* is *horribly* mistaken. Such thinking is “egocentric” at best (405).

One response that quickly derails Morrision’s objection is this (call it the “cheap” response). Rule 1 is concerned with what *S* is actually attached to, it does not make any judgment concerning the reasonability of those attachments themselves. All it tells us is that *if S* is attached to *P* and deems *P* to be “worth” the cost of *Q* (and takes *P* to be unobtainable without *Q*), then *S* cannot reasonably resist on the basis of *Q*. If Morrision responds by saying “*S* should not be so strongly attached to *P*!” That is just a different matter altogether. Again, the logic of resistance does not tell people what attachments they should or should not have.

Perhaps Morrision could press the point and claim that, given what *P* and *Q* stand for in the problem of evil case—*P* being *S*’s story and/or the stories of *S*’s loved ones, *Q*

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<sup>19</sup> Morrision (1982) is a direct response to Hasker (1981). I refer the reader to the introduction (specifically Chapter One, Section One) for an overview of the Hasker/Morrision exchange. As I noted there, in my view, Morrision wins the debate.

being some set of major evils in the past (e.g. the events of WWII)—most people will *not* be so attached to *P* that they will deem *Q* to be a cost “worth” paying. In response, I honestly do not know what most people would do if (*per impossibile*) they were given the following offer:

Reset Button: Push a button and it will prevent the events of WWII from occurring, but it will also erase you and everyone you love from existence. Otherwise, walk away, and the past will remain (as will you and your loved ones).

I take it that Morrision is saying this will be an *easy* decision for a typical agent (*S*). To refuse is “egotistical.” But I suspect it would not be an easy decision for *S*, even granting that *S* does not think her own existence is of such great value that it somehow offsets or justifies the evils of WWII. That is, *she* might value *P* so greatly that the decision is difficult, even though she agrees that the extrinsic value of *P* does not balance off the disvalue of *Q*. And Rule 1 only takes into consideration how *S herself* views *P* and *Q*.

But there are bigger problems for Morrision’s objection. Rule 1 does not require that *S* thinks *P* is “worth” the cost of *Q*. It may be that *S* is *unsure* about whether or not *P* is “worth” the cost of *Q*. So if *S* is unsure in that way, then it jeopardizes her ability to resist God (or theism) on the basis of *Q*. What is equally important is that we have allowed *P* to represent both *S*’s own story and the stories of *S*’s loved ones. And so, assuming that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q*, then *S* is faced with eliminating all of her loved ones when given the choice to eliminate *Q*. Is *that* an easy choice for a typical agent? That is, should it be *so easy* that *S* is not unsure at all in the matter? I doubt it. After all, even setting personal stories to the side, it is not at all clear to *S* what will happen if *Q* is eliminated. What will the world look like? Who will come to exist (that did not exist in the actual world)? *S* has no way of knowing. That is, the impact of *Q* on

the development of the present is far too pervasive for *S* to have any real idea of what the world would look like should *Q* be eliminated. And for that reason, when faced with the elimination of *Q* (and, subsequently, *P*), I suspect that *S* will generally be unsure about what to do. And if that is right, then her resistance on the basis of *Q* will violate Rule 1.

In response, Morrision notes, “The fact that scarcely anyone alive today would have existed had there been no [Second] World War seems irrelevant. Apart from my own personal stake in the matter, why should I prefer that just these people exist instead of those who would have existed had there been no [Second] World War?” (405). In other words, even though *S* does not know what would happen should *Q* be eliminated, it seems she has no legitimate reason to prefer her own existence (and the existence of her contemporaries) to the existence of whomever *would* exist, had *Q* been prevented.

Morrision’s objection here is serious enough to merit a somewhat lengthy response. There are two (independent) types of responses that I will make: A skeptical response and a non-skeptical response. I call the first sort of response “skeptical” in the same sense that “skeptical theists” are “skeptical.” The skeptical theist casts doubt on our ability to make reliable value judgments when considering the evils of the world and the goods that God might be working to bring about (by allowing those evils).<sup>20</sup> Our ability to make reliable value judgments in the present context will be the focus of this portion of my response to Morrision.

So, beginning with the skeptical portion, my response splits into three independent parts. First, in the relevant kinds of cases, there is good reason for us to doubt our ability to reliably compare the value of one group of individuals (personal

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Wykstra (1984) for a classical argument of this sort. Also, Dougherty (2016) offers an overview of the varieties of skeptical theism.

stories) against another. Second, we have good reason to doubt that we are reliable at predicting what the world would look like should some major events of history (e.g. the events of WWII) be significantly altered (or, in this case, prevented altogether). And third, we have reason to doubt our reliability when it comes to assessing the perspectives of the *victims* of those major evils, particularly when we consider the possibility of an afterlife and recent research into “posttraumatic growth.”<sup>21</sup>

First, if we grant Morrison’s claim that *S* has no legitimate reason to favor the existence of actual people to those that would exist had *Q* not occurred, then surely the reverse holds (at least, when *solely* considering the *people* in each group). That is, *S* is not in a position to evaluate which group of people to “bring about” (those whose existence depends on *Q* or whose existence does not depend upon *Q*). *Q* is, after all, not a strike against the lives of those whose existence depends upon it (via accidental necessity). In other words, we cannot reasonably *fault* individuals whose existence depends upon *Q* for being dependent on *Q* in that way. That *Q* is accidentally necessary for their existence does not undermine their value *as people*. And the problem for Morrison is that this just underscores the uncertainty that *S* would experience if given the chance to undo *Q* at the expense of *P*. When considering just the *people* in either group, there is no good reason to prefer the bringing about of one group over another. And if this just adds to *S*’s uncertainty about what ought to be done, then she is at greater risk for violating the second condition of Rule 1.

Maybe one could defend Morrison as follows. One can grant that the whole group of people whose existence depends on *Q* is comparable in value to the whole group

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<sup>21</sup> This third prong of the skeptical response will interact heavily with Dougherty’s (2014b) comments on the defeat of evil (108ff).

of people whose existence does not depend upon  $Q$ . But even so,  $S$  faces the following choice: Bring about one group of people plus  $Q$ , or bring about a different (but comparable) group of people *without*  $Q$ . And in *that* case, the choice seems clear: Eliminate  $Q$ , even if it means eliminating oneself and one's loved ones. Doing so has a net benefit: We end up with a comparable group of people but *without*  $Q$  (which is a tremendous evil).

My initial response will eventually lead to the second prong of my overarching “skeptical” response to Morrison. But first, I do not think  $S$  is even in a position to judge that one group of people is *comparable* to the other. In fact, the very act of comparing the value of groups (even if one is just assuming the value is relatively equal) strikes me as objectionable. Instead, when comparing the value of massive groups of people like this, I take it that the more reasonable approach is to say that the respective values of the groups are *incommensurate*. If that is right—and it is a big “if”—then  $S$  is really faced with a decision between bringing about ( $A$  &  $Q$ ) or ( $B$  &  $Q$ 's absence), where  $A$  and  $B$  are two incommensurate things. But that just obscures  $S$ 's ability to make a decision. That is, it becomes less clear whether or not  $P$  is “worth” the cost of  $Q$ . As such—for those that agree with me that the value of the groups is incommensurate—I would expect that the typical agent,  $S$  will be unsure of how to proceed here. And again, that is enough to place her in violation of Rule 1, condition (ii).

On the other hand, to begin the second prong of my skeptical response, let us grant for the sake of argument that  $S$  *can* compare groups of people in a way that leads her to (reasonably and reliably) believe that the set of actually existing people is *comparable* to the set of people who would have existed had the events of WWII never

occurred. There is still a major problem for Morrision. To see why, notice that he seems to present the dilemma as a choice between two options:

1. Contemporary people + WWII
2. Comparable group of people (to “contemporary people”) + no WWII

We have granted for the sake of argument that the groups of people described in 1 and 2 are comparable (or equal) in value. And so it seems like Option 2 is far better (overall) given the lack of WWII.

The problem is that this conclusion relies upon the assumption that “WWII” is far more negative in value than “no WWII.” The problem is: What reason do we have for thinking *that* is true? Even if WWII were prevented, *some* events would have occurred that would have “taken its place.” The question is: Would *those* events be significantly better (containing far less evil, less suffering, and so forth) or not? Morrision’s objection (and those like it) *must* assume that the “replacement events” would be significantly better. After all, if the events contained in the “no WWII” timeline are *comparable* to those in the “WWII” timeline, then (contra Morrision) *S* has no real reason to favor Option 2 over Option 1. And, obviously, if the events in the “no WWII” timeline are *worse* than those in the “WWII” timeline, then (contra Morrision) *S* should aim to bring about Option 1. So again, Morrision’s objection (and those like it) *require* the assumption that eliminating WWII would result in a timeline containing *far less* suffering, evil, etc. But again, what reason do we have for thinking *that*?

So, the burden is on the objector to provide us with some reason(s) for thinking the alternate timeline would contain *far less* evil and suffering than the actual one. “Far less” because the closer the two timelines come in the amount of suffering/evil they

contain, the less intuitive support the objector's view has.<sup>22</sup> The objector will, no doubt, argue that we are supposed to be considering two worlds where *all else being equal* one contains the events of WWII and one does not. But I see *no reason* to grant that all else would be equal. And until such a reason is provided, it remains unclear to me that Option 2 is *clearly preferable* to Option 1 (*even granting that the groups of people described in each option are comparable*). Thus, if Option 2 is "clearly preferable" to Option 1 from *S*'s perspective, it is very likely due to an unjustified, undefended assumption that Option 2 involves bringing about a world without the events of WWII where *all else is equal*. In the spirit of van Inwagen (2006) without concrete evidence that the timeline without WWII would—on the whole—contain far less suffering/evil than the one containing WWII, intuitions that this would be the case are "entirely subjective, and therefore without value" (117).<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the objector will take the following line of response, however: *Nothing* could be worse than the events of WWII! No matter which events "take its place," they would still be *better* than the events of WWII! As a reply, I am sympathetic to such a strong negative judgment (and perception) of the events of WWII. Those events really do contain some of the greatest horrors in history. But they cannot believably be regarded as the *worst possible* set of events. For one thing, as there is no best possible world, there is

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<sup>22</sup> Additionally, we might expect that the closer the two timelines come in terms of the evil and suffering contained therein, the less certain *S* will be regarding whether or not *P* is "worth" the cost of *Q*. And so, she will stand in greater violation of Rule 1, the more similar they are.

<sup>23</sup> In the quoted passage, van Inwagen is casting doubt on our ability to intuitively understand (without defense) "what is intrinsically or metaphysically possible," particularly in regard to "an omnipotent being's 'options' in creating a world" (117).

no worst possible world.<sup>24</sup> Relatedly, as there is no best possible state of affairs there is no worst possible state of affairs. We can always add something to good worlds (or good states of affairs) to make them better. We can always add something to the bad to the bad ones to make them worse. For example, the events of WWII might have claimed more victims, lasted longer, and so forth. And surely those would be changes for the worse. So the actual events of WWII cannot be regarded as *the worst possible* state of affairs.

A more reasonable objection might be to say that if we were to remove the events of WWII from our history, then *probably* they would not be “replaced” by equally bad or worse events. But if an objector takes up this line of response, I would ask that they provide a detailed explanation of the various paths history might have taken (without the events of WWII), a list of the relative probabilities of path, and an explanation for why the probabilities are distributed in that way and not some other. In the course of doing so, the objector will be required to show that the most probable paths all contain *far less* suffering and evil than the actual course of history. But until that sort of work is done, I do not see any reason to grant that history probably would have unfolded in a significantly better way. And that concludes the second prong of my skeptical response to Morriston.

So far, I have argued that we have reason to be skeptical of our ability to assess the relative value of two non-identical, massive groups of people.<sup>25</sup> I have also argued that we have reason to doubt our ability to reliably predict what events would unfold

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<sup>24</sup> For a defense of the claim that there is no “best possible world,” see Plantinga (1974a: 61), as well as Swinburne (2004: 115-16).

<sup>25</sup> Where, we might add, the *number* of people in each group is roughly the same.

were some major events in our history radically different.<sup>26</sup> That is, we lack good reason to think that the prevention of one set of major events (which contain a great deal of evil) would *automatically* result in significantly less evil occurring overall. This leads to the third prong of my skeptical response, which is independent of the other two. The general idea is that we have reason to doubt our reliability when it comes to assessing the perspectives of the victims of the relevant evils, particularly when we consider the possibility of an afterlife.

As Dougherty (2014b) puts it, when we consider evils that are “too great” to be overcome, we must mean something like “too much for a finite being to handle, so much that it could never be defeated (in *addition* to being counterbalanced) over the course of their total existence” (127). But as he points out, “we have almost no evidence at all that any being has ever suffered such an evil. All we know is that some people were losing at the time of their departure from this world. But that tells us very little about their eventual state of mind with respect to that suffering” (127). And for Dougherty, the afterlife is “a logical concomitant of theism in worlds with suffering” such that “there is no possible world in which creatures suffer and are not given full opportunity for compensation and recovery” (111). This opportunity given to creatures (in the afterlife) is entailed by God’s goodness towards His creatures (144-5).

Putting these pieces together, suppose Dougherty is right that we have “almost no evidence” that anyone has suffered an evil that could not be overcome *and* God’s

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<sup>26</sup> This does not require my claiming that we are *always* unreliable in this way. For example, suppose that in 2017, a renegade government worker detonated a nuclear device so devastating that it wiped out all life on earth. In that kind of scenario, we might be able to reliably predict what the world would look like in 2018: Barren of life, a wasteland, etc.

goodness implies that He will give *all* creatures sufficient opportunity to overcome the evils they have suffered (whether in this life or the next). This gets us to the conclusion that “evil never needs to be a soul-destroyer. It may temporarily – even if for an earthly lifetime – flatten someone, but it need not have the final word, no matter how potent” (117). That is, it is *possible* that every creature will overcome every evil they have suffered. Of course, this does not mean that all creatures *will* overcome the evils they have suffered. Some may fail to overcome the evils they have suffered despite having been given sufficient opportunity to overcome them.<sup>27</sup> But, in those cases, their failure to

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<sup>27</sup> Where “sufficient opportunity” fits with Dougherty’s suggestion that God, being good, “would only permit suffering which is objectively ‘worth it’ to any *well-functioning rational person* from their perspective” (115, emphasis added). From this, it seems that having a sufficient opportunity to overcome the evils one has suffered requires that (i) one be, become, or be given the chance to become a well-functioning, rational person, in addition to (ii) being given the *time* to sort through these issues. Obviously, regarding (ii), not all creatures have such time during this life. Hence Dougherty’s argument that God’s goodness guarantees there will be an afterlife. The first requirement is trickier. If God elevates all humans to the level of “well-functioning” and “rational” it may seem that *all* of them will overcome the evils they have suffered, which may imply a kind of universal salvation. But universal salvation is not widely endorsed by the Christian tradition. In response, however, I do not think that *having sufficient opportunity to overcome the evils one has suffered* requires that one be (or become) a well-functioning rational person. It may be enough that God gives all creatures the *opportunity to become* such a creature. If God allows that possibility but some creatures—by their own fault—refuse to be made anew (as well-functioning rational creatures), then God will have done enough. And so, such creatures may not overcome the evils they have suffered even though they were given *sufficient opportunity* to do so. And this possibility means that some creatures may not be saved. Following C.S. Lewis (1996) on these matters, we can expect that—when it comes to God’s giving a creature the chance to overcome the evils he has suffered and to be remade as a well-functioning rational being—God will give *as many chances* as might benefit the creature (127). But ultimately, there may come a point for some creatures where no more chances will make a difference. And we can trust “that omniscience knows when” that time comes (127). Additionally, if one thinks that even a well-functioning, rational creature will still have the freedom to refuse to overcome the evils they have suffered (and even the freedom to refuse salvation when it is offered), then that is another way to see how the present view does not commit us to universal salvation. Dougherty (2014b), for example, seems to think that creatures *will* retain that kind of freedom (127-8).

overcome the evils they have suffered will be something for which they are responsible (and even culpable). So how should this affect *S*'s perception of *Q* as a basis of resistance? Here, I will argue that this information should make *S* *less sure* whether or not *Q* is a cost "worth paying" to secure *P*. And this uncertainty, in turn, means *S* violates Rule 1.

To start, there is a kind of analogy that can be drawn between the principle that "forgiveness is the victim's prerogative" and a principle like "resistance is the *sufferer's* prerogative." Regarding the former, Govier and Verwoerd (2002) suggest that many people take the claim "no one except the victim is entitled to forgive a wrongdoer" to be "obviously true" (98). Indeed, there would be something odd if an agent were to steal from a restaurant and then be told by a passerby on the street (who has no connection to the situation), "I forgive you." The passerby is not in the position to offer forgiveness. But nothing would be odd about the restaurant owner offering forgiveness. Verwoerd and Govier explain this phenomena by arguing that forgiveness usually involves a "*releasing* element of giving up the moral claim against the perpetrator" (99).<sup>28</sup> That is, if we think of committing an offense as the incurring of some debt, it is generally the prerogative of the victim to release the wrongdoer of that debt. If an outsider—someone who is in no way victimized by the wrongdoing—releases the wrongdoer before the victim has a chance, then the outsider speaks out of turn. And in many cases, speaking out of turn will result in the outsider committing a different kind of moral offense against the victim.

Of course, there may often (or even usually) be a multitude of victims when a given offense occurs. A victim's family members are affected, as are his neighbors,

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<sup>28</sup> See also Volf (2005) for a similar account of forgiveness.

members of his city, etc. As such, we can follow Verwoerd and Govier as they distinguish between primary, secondary, and tertiary victims (102-3). If one agent (Perp) murders another (Vic), then Vic is the primary victim. Vic is, after all, the direct victim of Perp's wrongdoing. But no doubt, Vic's family and friends are also harmed in some way by Perp's actions (even if not *directly*). For that reason, they can be called "secondary victims." And secondary victims do indeed have the rightful power to forgive Perp for *certain aspects* of his misdeed. They cannot forgive Perp for "murdering me," as only Vic is in the position to do that. But they can forgive Perp for "murdering my loved one." Lastly, members of a community or society may be tertiary victims of Perp's crime. They might be able to forgive Perp for "murdering our fellow human being" or "murdering our countryman" even if they are not in a position to forgive Perp for "murdering my loved one."

With these tiers of victims in mind, Govier and Verwoerd argue that "*Other things being equal, it is the primary victim of a wrong who is entitled to offer or refuse forgiveness to the perpetrator who committed that wrong*" (105, emphasis in original). This principle allows for the possibility that sometimes, secondary and tertiary victims will be permissibly allowed to forgive a wrongdoer even though the primary victim has not done so. Primary victims may be unable to forgive for some reason (e.g. if they were murdered), may be unreasonably stubborn, and so forth. And in those cases, it may be permissible for secondary and tertiary victims to offer forgiveness even though the primary victim has not. But great caution is advised here: As a secondary or tertiary victim, one must not rush in and ignore the primary victim's perspective when offering

forgiveness (104). To do this may “wrongly pre-empt” the primary victim’s right to forgive (104).

Connecting this with resistance and evil, suppose we have something like the following case:

The Lost Child: A single mother gives birth to a baby girl, Kyla. It is soon discovered that Kyla has a rare genetic disorder in which Kyla’s brain slowly calcifies over time. This results in Kyla’s being less and less able to function independently. The mother works tirelessly to make sure Kyla has everything she needs, but after years have passed, the day comes where Kyla’s condition claims her life; her brain simply cannot function anymore. Kyla’s mother is brokenhearted for a very long time. But at some later point in time, Kyla’s mother comes to embrace her experience as part of her personal story. She says, “Nothing can take away the pain I suffered; nothing can change what happened. I miss Kyla every day. But I am grateful for having known her and having been given the opportunity to care for her. There were so many days where I wished she did not have that terrible genetic condition, but I eventually came to realize that if she had not had it, then she would not have been my Kyla.”

Suppose an outsider—someone who could not plausibly be classified as a primary or secondary victim of any of the evils in this story—learns of this story and takes up resistance against God on the basis of the evils described in it (the mother’s suffering, Kyla’s health problems and death, and so on). How might the mother of The Lost Child respond? Anger? Indignation? Would she be insulted? Would she ask, “who are *you* to complain?” Maybe she would actually be sympathetic and say, “I once felt that way” before explaining why she no longer does.

The mother’s (plausible) reaction supports the connection between forgiveness and resistance: Perhaps, in *some* way, victims that are closer to evils—more directly affected by them—have some kind of privileged relationship to them. The nature of this privileged relationship may support the following claim: Generally, there is something wrong about resisting an object on the basis of an evil when *all* of the direct victim(s) of

that evil would *not* wish it away. The direct victim(s) may maintain a negative perception of the evil; there is nothing here that requires they are *glad* for it, or that they think it was a *good* thing. But the point is: *They* would not undo it or prevent it, if given the chance. And then the question is: Who are *we* to aim at the undoing or prevention of that evil (which is exactly what we do if we resist on its basis)?

Now, all kinds of qualifications need to be made here. For example, it may be that there are many cases in which those who have suffered evils are not in their right mind when evaluating their experiences. Perhaps they are brainwashed, traumatized, etc., and so cannot reflect clearly on the evils they have suffered. It would be a very sorry state of affairs if, in those cases, outsiders were unable to oppose those evils (or defend those victims) simply *because* they are outsiders. In other words, sometimes victims are not the best judge of the “worth” of their own experiences. But, as Adams (1989) points out, “a major consideration in determining whether an individual’s life is/has been a great good to him/her on the whole, is invariably and appropriately how it has seemed to him/her” (300). Of course this consideration is defeasible. That is, there may be cases in which we judge that the sufferer is legitimately wrong to think a particular experience is “worth it” (299-300). But, if Adams is right (and I think she is) we need to take very seriously the perspective of victims when reflecting on our resistance.

Returning to The Lost Child case, however, perhaps the resister will respond like Ivan Karamazov: “Let the mother be glad for her own experience, but God should not have allowed that child to suffer! Who will avenge the *child’s* suffering? She dare not

embrace *that*, and God should have prevented it from ever occurring!”<sup>29</sup> In other words, the resister might continue to resist on the basis of the evil the *child* suffered even if she (the resister) does not resist on the basis of the evil the *mother* suffered. The resister might even think of the mother as *selfish*, since (in effect) the mother wills that Kyla suffers because this suffering was constitutive of the relationship she had with Kyla.

But, if the arguments I made above (concerning personal stories) are sound, then the resister’s resistance aims (in effect) at the elimination of Kyla from existence. We might put it this way: The genetic condition described in *The Lost Child* is far too “pervasive” in Kyla’s story to be removed without the destruction of Kyla’s story. And so, in some sense, to will away the condition is to will away Kyla.<sup>30</sup> But if so, as I argued in Chapter Six, to will someone out of existence is incompatible with loving them.<sup>31</sup> So the resister, if they take something like Ivan’s approach to *The Lost Child*, will be acting in a thoroughly *unloving* manner towards Kyla. And the problem here is that the resistance—at least in Ivan’s case—is explicitly motivated by a professed *love for the*

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<sup>29</sup> Compare this objection to Ivan’s words concerning forgiveness: “I don’t want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother’s heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive...” (268).

<sup>30</sup> This is not to *identify* the individual, Kyla, with her condition. Instead, it is an assertion that Kyla’s *story* could not survive if her condition were entirely removed from it.

<sup>31</sup> This argument was presented in response to the resistance of Ivan Karamazov. See Chapter Six, (Section Three, A).

victims of evils (e.g. Kyla). And this, we saw in Chapter Six, implies that resisters like Ivan resist in an inconsistent (and, therefore, unreasonable) manner.<sup>32</sup>

We can go further, if we take into account Dougherty's argument that God's goodness entails the existence of an afterlife (in worlds like ours). Suppose, for example, that we modified The Lost Child case as follows:

The Lost Child (Afterlife): The events of The Lost Child play out as described above. But after the mother passes away, she is reunited with Kyla in the afterlife. Kyla has been healed of her condition and "raised" as a well-functioning, rational being. She is aware of all that her mother did for her, and she thanks her mother for the care and sacrifices that were made on her behalf. Kyla comforts her mother and embraces her, which, from her mother's perspective washes away the whole sea of suffering her mother experienced during her earthly lifetime. She has Kyla and Kyla has her.

Suppose now that an outsider learns of *this* story and takes up resistance against God on the basis of the evils described in it (the mother's suffering, Kyla's health problems and death, etc.). How might the mother—how might *any* of us—respond to the resister now? Personally, I tend to feel a kind of outrage. The pointed question, "How *dare* you?" springs to mind. I also begin to question the resister's ability to recognize and appreciate value generally. But in any case, the point is this: If one thinks that the resister does

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<sup>32</sup> What about resisters who do not profess to love Kyla (or, generally, the victims of evils), but resist on the basis of the evils such people have suffered? We would need to look into what it is about those evils they find objectionable, their methods of opposition, etc. But as I have defined it, loving a person just means willing their good. And it will be pretty unusual, I think, to resist God (or theism) on the basis of certain evils while *not* willing the good of the victims of those evils. But, again, assuming that *can* happen, we would need to learn more about the resister, her resistance, and subject it to the tests set forth above before we could say more.

something wrong (by resisting) in The Lost Child case, then the resister's misstep in The Lost Child (Afterlife) case is *far* worse.<sup>33</sup>

So how does this somewhat lengthy journey support the idea that *we have reason to doubt our reliability when it comes to assessing the perspectives of the victims of the relevant evils, particularly when we consider the possibility of an afterlife*. Well, on Dougherty's account, the afterlife is a guaranteed result of the goodness of God, as is each creature being given sufficient opportunity to overcome the evils they have suffered. It is, therefore, *possible* that all creatures will come to embrace their suffering just as Kyla and her mother do in The Lost Child (Afterlife). It is also possible that whatever creatures that do *not* overcome the evils they have suffered will be *at fault* for this failure. Because of these possibilities, we should be cautious when engaging in resistance that

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<sup>33</sup> Suppose an objector responds by arguing that the basis of resistance one may adopt here is that God has violated certain principles of justice by allowing His creatures to suffer, *even if* those creatures embrace their suffering as is illustrated in The Lost Child (Afterlife) case. If that is reasonable, then God has, in a sense, at least two hurdles to clear: He must ensure that suffering that occurs is defeated in the lives of each creature, and second, He must ensure that His allowance of evil never violates any "outside," or "independent" standards of justice. And it seems as though the present account is only really effective at engaging resistance towards God (or theism) when it occurs on the former sort of ground. So, again, the resister may still have a case against God if the evils He allows violate the relevant type of justice. There are at least two ways to respond to this type of charge (a concessive response and a direct one). First, here is a concessive response: At the outset I noted that the present way of engaging with the problem of evil is not designed to thwart or overturn *every version* of the problem. So versions of the problem that are based on the relevant kind of justice may be less susceptible to the difficulties I raise for other versions of the problem of evil. And it may be that those versions of the problem are better dealt with by theodicies and defenses described at the beginning of Chapter Six. As for a more direct response, I think something like the following is plausible: When an individual defeats the evil they have suffered—as in The Lost Child (Afterlife) case—this defeat is sufficient to swamp whatever other "injustice" might be said to have occurred by God's allowing the individuals to suffer that evil. That is, the defeat is so significant that no charge of "injustice" against God (or His actions) will plausibly stick. Though I heavily favor something like the direct response, I will not defend it in detail here (and I recognize that to many readers, its plausibility would indeed require a much more elaborate defense).

aims at rearranging the evils of the past. From the perspective of the afterlife, the people who have actually suffered these evils may embrace them in a way that makes our resistance seem unwarranted (if not offensive).

I anticipate an avalanche of objections at this stage, so let us consider some. First, one may object as follows: From the perspective of the afterlife, *every* evil that occurs on this earth is accidentally necessary (assuming the afterlife is to occur after this world has passed). As such, if we have good reason to be cautious in resisting on the basis of past evils (given the possible perspectives people adopt in the afterlife), we have equal reason to be cautious in resisting any present (and future) evils. In response, I must emphasize that *none of what I have said* implies that we must be equally cautious in resisting present (or future) evils. Those evils are not accidentally necessary for any of our contemporaries' stories, after all.<sup>34</sup>

So, from our perspective, we are still “writing our stories” when it comes to present and future events.<sup>35</sup> And all along, I have said that what one can resist

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<sup>34</sup> It might be argued that this view assumes a kind of libertarianism about free will, as well as an “A-Theory” of time. But on a deterministic, “B-theory” of time—where individuals exist with temporal parts at particular times—present and future events may indeed be accidentally necessary for the individual's identity. One response to this kind of argument, however, is that even on a B-theory of time, our *knowledge* of which events are necessary for an individual's identity (or story) is what matters. And our knowledge will be indexed to the present. So, from the perspective of the present, I know that the many past events are accidentally necessary to my loved ones' stories. But suppose I attempt to prevent my sister from being murdered. On the relevant kind of B-theory, whatever events happen to her (across all time) comprise her story. But from my perspective, only the past events have been “written in” to her story so far. So given that knowledge (and my lack of knowledge concerning what events will occur in the future), it is still reasonable for me to resist the inclusion of negative events in her story that occur in the present (or future).

<sup>35</sup> Something like this is quite literally true on “open future” views. For an example of such a view, see Hasker (2004) and (2008).

(reasonably) may indeed *change with time*. What one can reasonably use as a basis of resistance may change with time as well. Hence, there is nothing to stop the theist from adopting the following stance: “We desperately strive against evil in this world. We work with every fiber of our being to oppose it. But when we lose the fight, when evils are allowed to occur, we hope—and maybe even *trust*—that they will ultimately be defeated (i.e. that they will be woven into some greater good that we do not now see or understand).” And, given the possibility of the afterlife as I have described it, there may come a day in which *no* creature is justified in resisting God on the basis of *any* evil that has occurred in our history.

Note also: The possibility of the afterlife as I have described it just gives reason to think that *S* will be *uncertain* regarding whether or not *Q* is “worth” the cost of *P*. If those who have directly suffered due to *Q* take (or are given every reasonable chance to take) the perspective on *Q* that Kyla and her mother take on their own suffering (in *The Lost Child (Afterlife)*), then *S*’s resistance is subject to serious criticism. And, for all *S* knows, she *is* in just that position when she resists God (or theism) on the basis of *Q*. If *S* continues forward with her resistance and ignores the perspectives of those directly affected by *Q*, she is, I think, radically egocentric (in a morally offensive way).

On the other hand, if she takes seriously the possibilities I have described—even if she is unsure whether they will be actualized or not—then I think she will be *less certain* about whether or not *Q* should be eliminated, changed, etc. And this uncertainty will potentially put her in violation of Rule 1 because she will not know whether or not *Q* should be changed, given the possible perspectives of those who were directly affected.

*She* might like to see *Q* changed, but she does not speak for those who have directly suffered as a result of *Q*.

Alternatively, if she does not realize that undoing *Q* will have the costs of undoing the stories of those affected, then she will be in violation of the first requirement of acceptance-readiness. And, furthermore, if she *does* understand those implications of her resistance and becomes hesitant when given the chance to eliminate *Q* (given that, potentially, she will be undoing the stories of countless individuals like Kyla and her mother) then she will be in violation of the second requirement of acceptance-readiness. And whatever the case, whether she violates Rule 1 or either of the two conditions of acceptance-readiness, this renders her resistance less reasonable.

This concludes the skeptical branch of my response to Morriston's objections. Given our limited insight into relevant matters—the comparative value of groups of people, alternative courses history might have taken, and the ultimate perspective of sufferers on their suffering—resisters of theism (who resist on the basis of some major evils of the past) will often be unable to judge whether or not the evils contained in *Q* are “worth” the cost of preserving *P* (where *P* contains the stories of all contemporary persons and, perhaps, the stories of persons directly affected by *Q*). And so, when these considerations are brought to *S*'s attention, there will be *many* cases where *S*'s resistance towards God (or theism) will fail to satisfy Rule 1, which renders it *unreasonable*.<sup>36</sup>

Now for the “non-skeptical” part of my response to Morriston's objection. Specifically, I *do* think (contra Morriston) that there are some legitimate (and non-

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<sup>36</sup> And again, where *S* fails to attend to these matters (or does not know about them), her resistance will be at risk for violating the first condition of *acceptance-readiness*.

egotistical) reasons for *S* to prefer the existence of actually existing individuals to the existence of whomever would take their place, had *Q* been eliminated.<sup>37</sup> And this is not to say that actually existing individuals are *more valuable* than others. Nor is it to say that *S* has legitimate reason to *think* that such individuals are more valuable than others. Instead, this response just relies on how attachments typically work.

To illustrate, the vast majority of parents no doubt have a stronger attachment to their actual children than children they might have had (but did not). If we apply Morriston's question to this case, it might read: Why should I prefer that just my actual children exist instead of those who would have existed had my life gone differently? I expect most parents will be unimpressed by Morriston here. A parent's obligations, attachments, relationships, etc., are simply different concerning their actual children when compared to their possible (but non-actual) children. And we do not even need to argue that parents *should* be more attached to their actual children than to their non-actual children (though I think this is obviously true). All we need to do is point out that most parents *do* have greater attachment to their actual children than merely possible ones.

So how does this help with a response to Morriston? It just points out that when (*per impossibile*) *S* is given the choice between bringing about two groups of people—those that are actual or those that would take their place had history been different—*S* does not have an easy choice. *S*, being actual and maintaining countless relationships with other actual people (including being *attached* to many of them, having *obligations* to them, etc.), would almost certainly be unsure of how to proceed. And *even if S is not*

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<sup>37</sup> I take this response to Morriston to be the most controversial of all. Fortunately, whether or not it is successful will not affect the efficacy of the skeptical responses offered above.

*unsure*, her attachments and obligations would (I think rightly) push her towards favoring the existence of actual people to non-actual ones.

In sum, recall Morriston's objection. He thinks that *S* should not deem *Q* to be a cost "worth paying" to secure *P*. In his mind *P* is obviously not "worth" the cost of *Q*. We have seen that agents who disagree with Morriston—agents who do think that *Q* is a cost "worth paying" for *P*—but who resist God (or theism) on the basis of *Q* will be in violation of Rule 1. Additionally, people who resist God or theism on the basis of *Q*, but are *unsure* about whether or not *Q* is a cost "worth paying" for *P* will be in violation of Rule 1. And, I have argued, we have good reason to expect that *S* will be *unsure* in that way (at the very least). I say "at the very least" because *S* no doubt has a greater attachment to actual people. The general catch here is this: The more *S* is attached to *P* (the personal stories of actual people), the more likely she is to be in danger of violating Rule 1. It can, I think, be argued a step further, that the more one loves *actual people*, the less reasonable one's resistance towards God (on the basis of the evils of the past) may become.

Turning now to one final objection before moving on to a discussion of Rule 2: Perhaps Rule 1 sets the bar far too high for reasonable resistance. If *S* believes that *P* depends upon *Q*, and is at least *unsure* as to whether or not *Q* is a cost "worth paying" for *P*, then *S* cannot resist *anything* on the basis of *Q*. Here is why that might be a problem. Suppose *S* wants to resist Nazism (*Z*) on the basis of the events of WWII (*Q*). But given the lengthy discussion above, *S* is *unsure* whether or not the personal stories of her loved ones—and the personal stories of virtually all of her contemporaries—(*P*) are "worth" the cost of *Q*. It follows that for any *Z* (including Nazism), *S* cannot reasonably resist *Z* on

the basis of *Q*. But it seems *absurd* to say that *S* cannot resist Nazism on the basis of the evils of WWII!<sup>38</sup>

In response, suppose that *S* really is unable to reasonably resist *anything* on the basis of *Q*. It does not follow that she cannot reasonably resist *Z*. Nor does this mean that she must judge that *Q* is acceptable (morally or otherwise). She may continue to judge that *Q* is a horror, that it is morally abhorrent, or that it is undesirable in some other serious way.<sup>39</sup> She may hate *Q*, and wish *per impossibile* that she could live in a world where *P* is preserved and *Q* is eliminated. In the particular case mentioned above, she might resist Nazism (*Z*) on ideological grounds or given its promotion of murder, genocide, slavery, etc. *S* might also fight tirelessly in opposition of any present or future iterations of the Nazi movement (or related movements). Therefore, if the objector is concerned that *S*'s inability to reasonably resist *Z* on the basis of *Q* cripples her ability to resist *Z* or forces her to embrace *Z* (or *Q*), the worry is unfounded.

In terms of the problem of evil, should it turn out that *S* is unable to reasonably resist God (or theism) on the basis of certain evils of the past (*Q*), that does not imply that she cannot resist God or theism on some other grounds. Nor does it mean that *S* must

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<sup>38</sup> This objection is related to another charge that Morrision (1982) levies against Hasker (1981). Though in that case, Morrision focuses on Hasker's account of gladness and regret. Specifically, the objection to Hasker's view is that it implies one must be *glad* that the events of WWII occurred and *must not judge them to be wrong or blame the perpetrators* for committing those crimes. That seems entirely absurd. As it is, with my account of resistance, there is nothing to be said about whether or not *S* must be *glad* about *Q*, nor is there anything forcing her to give up moral condemnation of *Q* (should it turn out that she cannot reasonably resist anything on the basis of *Q*). That is, *S* may still *hate Q*, even if she cannot reasonably resist an object on its basis. So by and large, the present account avoids the *specific* objection Morrision makes. Nonetheless, I now consider an objection in the same spirit as Morrision's.

<sup>39</sup> And this claim is runs contrary to what Hasker (1981) says, when he explicitly argues that *S* would not be able to reproach or blame *anyone* for *Q* (434).

judge that *Q* really is not so bad. The theist might worry that this undermines the general response to the problem of evil being made here. The response articulates difficulties people might commonly face when trying to reasonably resist God (or theism) on the basis of certain *major* evils of the past. But now, it seems like all the atheologian must do is resist God (or theism) on some other basis. Perhaps they will resist on the basis of relatively *minor* evils of the past or individual horrors or even major events that are not required for *P*.

In response, I have provided a general method of testing the reasonability of one's resistance. It would be too big a task to subsequently test *every possible basis* a person might have when resisting God or theism. And I have not attempted to show that *all* resistance towards God or theism is unreasonable (or in violation of Rule 1). I have just attempted to describe several general obstacles that resisters of God (or theism) *might* face, with respect to the standards set by Rule 1.

Additionally, I argue that the bar for reasonable resistance needs to be set high. And I have argued that it is not "too high." That is, it is not set so high that it becomes impossible for agents to resist in reasonable ways. Like virtue generally, hitting the right target in the right way at the right time is difficult. There are an infinite number of ways to go wrong and only a "finite" number of ways to get things right (Aristotle *NE* 1106b.29-35). So, like virtue generally, to resist in an excellent way is a difficult task, but not an *impossible* one. The way is narrow, as is the case with any virtue. The fact that many people may—it turns out—resist in less-than-excellent ways is no more surprising than the observation that many people fail to exhibit perfect (or near perfect) virtue. Such perfection (or near perfection) is a rarity. But it is a standard worth striving towards

nonetheless. And in any case, thus far, we have just focused on one means by which we might test resistance for reasonability: Rule 1. But, of course, Rule 1 is not the only standard of reasonable resistance. I will turn to the others now, beginning with Rule 2.

## 7.2 *Violations of Rule 2*

According to Rule 2 of the logic of resistance, if an agent reasonably resists  $Z$  on the basis of  $Q$ , then when all else is equal (or equal insofar as is possible),  $S$  thinks worlds in which  $Q$  does not occur/exist should be actualized over worlds in which  $Q$  does occur/exist. I noted in Chapter Four that this rule should not be surprising, since I stipulated that  $Q$  is some negative feature of the object ( $Z$ ) that is being resisted. In a typical case, it is because of  $Q$ —and  $S$ 's negative perception of it—that  $S$  resists  $Z$  (or finds it objectionable, worthy of opposition, etc.). With this in mind, it is unsurprising that  $S$  thinks worlds without  $Q$  should be actualized over worlds with it (where, again, all else is equal).

When applied to certain forms of the problem of evil, suppose once again that  $Q$  is some set of major evils in the past (e.g. the events of WWII). If  $S$  opposes God (or theism) on the basis of  $Q$ , but fails to satisfy Rule 2, then that means that  $S$  thinks that worlds *with*  $Q$  should be actualized over worlds without it (all else being equal) or  $S$  is unsure in the matter. Consider both options. First, imagine  $S$  thinks that worlds with  $Q$  should be actualized over worlds without it (all else being equal). At the same time,  $S$  would deem God (or theism) to be unacceptable (and worthy of opposition) given presence of  $Q$ . This runs parallel to the Corporate Corruption case in Chapter Four. In Chapter Four, I argued that the problem in such cases—that is, regarding the problem of evil example and the Corporate Corruption case—is that the resister is not resisting in a

*genuine* manner. The resister says (in effect), “Overall, I think that *Q* should remain (rather than not), but since *Q* is a negative thing, it should be undone.” So in resisting on the basis of *Q*, she both fights against *Q*, but also does not want to see *Q* undone. And, generally speaking, that is not reasonable.<sup>40</sup>

What about the second option: Where *S* is unsure whether or not worlds with *Q* (as opposed to worlds without) should be actualized? Here, an agent who resists God on the basis of *Q* takes the following kind of stance: “God should not have allowed *Q* to occur, but it is unclear to me whether or not *Q* should be part of the actual world.” This *sounds* a bit contradictory to me, though I am sure intuitions will differ. Assuming *S* is not flatly contradicting herself, her failure to think that *Q* should be eliminated (all else being equal) puts pressure on her ability to satisfy acceptance-readiness (which requires that she not balk at the chance to bring about the change her opposition aims at and that she has a sufficient understanding of the costs of her opposition’s success). After all, if she is *unsure* whether or not *Q* should not be eliminated, but resists in a way that aims at the elimination of *Q*, then she is aiming to bring about a change that she does not sufficiently understand.

In sum, whether *S* thinks that worlds with *Q* should be actualized over worlds without it (all else being equal) or *S* is unsure in the matter, her resistance on the basis of *Q* violates Rule 2. And this counts against the reasonability of her resistance (in some way).

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<sup>40</sup> For the complete argument that this is unreasonable, see Chapter Four (Section Two, B).

### 7.3 Violations of Acceptance-Readiness

Turning now to the virtues of resistance and how they connect with the problem of evil, the virtue of *acceptance-readiness* is extremely important. As I have already stated several times, if an agent's resistance satisfies acceptance-readiness, then (i) the agent has a sufficient understanding of the costs that would follow were her opposition to succeed in bringing about the change it works towards and (ii) the agent does not balk or hesitate when offered the change she is working towards (at least, when it is offered on terms that she claimed or implied would be acceptable). Applying this to the problem of evil, when *S* resists God or theism on the basis of some set of major evils of history, acceptance-readiness requires that *S* has a sufficient understanding of the costs that would follow were *Q* (and, possibly, *Z*) eliminated and *S* does not balk when offered the relevant changes.

To the first condition: Does *S* have a sufficient understanding of the costs associated with the elimination of *Q* (e.g. the events of WWII)? In response: Almost certainly not. As I argued in the first section of Chapter Seven, *S*—being one of our contemporaries—is unable to predict what the world would look like had *Q* been eliminated. For all *S* knows, the world could, for example, be dramatically worse (as was the case in the Alien Overlord example in 3.2a). Furthermore, as I argued in Chapter Seven, Section One, even if *Q* stands for a *minor* event in the course of the world's history, the elimination of *Q* will often have unpredictable effects (and costs)—particularly when *Q* occurs in the distant past. So, at least *prima facie*, if *S* resists God (or theism) on the basis of *Q*, *S* is going to have trouble satisfying the first requirement of

acceptance-readiness. Human beings simply know too little about what the world would be like, absent the major events of our world's history.

A series of responses might be made here. First, acceptance-readiness does not require that an agent have infallible knowledge or complete understanding regarding what would happen were her resistance allowed to bring about the change it aims at bringing about. Agents like *S* may not know exactly what the world would be like were *Q* eliminated. But that is no objection to the present view. All that acceptance-readiness demands is that they have a *sufficient* understanding. *S* might suppose that had *Q* been eliminated, she has pretty good evidence that the world would be in a state comparable to ours at present. I gave reason to be skeptical of this supposition in Chapter Seven. But putting it aside, *S* would know for sure that if the events of WWII had not occurred, something else would have. So would that "something" have been better or worse? Many answers (if not all) will be highly speculative.

But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that nothing equally bad or worse would occur were *Q* eliminated and that *S* somehow knows this fact (or has sufficiently good evidence for it). If *Q* were eliminated, it would still result in the loss of virtually all personal stories (if not bare identities) of *S*'s contemporaries. The world would be populated by mostly (if not entirely) different people. If *S* were ignorant of this implication of her resistance, she would be in violation of the first condition of acceptance-readiness. That is, should she fail to realize that the elimination of *Q* would mean the elimination of virtually all personal stories of her contemporaries (if not their existence as well), then she lacks sufficient understanding regarding the change her resistance aims to bring about.

After all, it is likely enough that the things *S* is *most* attached to include or involve her personal story, as well as the personal stories of at least some of her contemporaries. So if she fails to understand how her resistance affects what she cares about *most*, then she cannot be said to have an adequate grasp of the situation. The problem is that once *S* *does* understand that her resistance aims at bringing about this kind of change, it may be increasingly difficult for her to satisfy the second condition of acceptance-readiness.

Consider the second condition of acceptance-readiness: That *S* does not balk or hesitate when offered the change she is seeking (at least, when it is offered on terms that she claimed or implied would be acceptable). In the present case, were *S* given the opportunity to eliminate *Q*, she would not balk or hesitate. So suppose *S*—a random contemporary of ours—were (per impossibile) given the opportunity to push a button that would lead God to rewind time, prevent the events of WWII, and let the world develop from there.<sup>41</sup> Would *S* push the button without any real hesitation?

I suspect that an agent who satisfies the first condition of acceptance-readiness—who realizes that pushing the button will eliminate virtually all personal stories (and probably bare existence) of all of her contemporaries, including herself and her loved ones—will hesitate at the offer. The choice would be an agonizing one for most agents. It would require giving up one's own life, as well as the lives of all of one's family and friends, in exchange for the prevention of certain horrific events but *no guarantee* that the world would be any "better off." That is, whatever events would occur in the world without *Q* might be just as bad as *Q* or worse. And even if these events would *probably* be better than *Q*, they may not be *much* better. So the question is, would *S* unhesitatingly

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<sup>41</sup> This is just the Reset Button thought experiment from Chapter Seven, Section One reiterated.

trade her existence (and the existence of so many others) for a blind chance at a better world?

Once again, I suspect that relatively few agents would go through with pushing the button (and even fewer would do so without great hesitation!). And that is so *even if* Morriston is right to say that *S*'s hesitation would be driven by egocentric concerns. After all, the second condition of acceptance-readiness deals with whether or not *S* is hesitant, not *why* she is hesitant. That is, if *S* is hesitant for an immoral reason, she is still hesitant (and so, would be in violation of the second condition). But to be clear, I do not think that all hesitation in this kind of situation is driven by selfish concern. *S* is, after all, being asked to trade the stories of *all* of her contemporaries for an entirely different set of stories. And I think hesitation might actually be *prudent* given those stakes and given her attachments and *obligations* to *actual* people. The power to bring about a change of that magnitude should be paralyzing to *any* reasonable human.

To complicate matters, however, perhaps someone will point out that the second condition requires that *S* does not balk when offered the change she is seeking *on terms that she claimed or implied would be acceptable*. So maybe these are the only terms on which she would accept the elimination of *Q*: God bring it about that people (including herself and loved ones and victims of WWII) be allowed to live in a world without *Q*.<sup>42</sup> But the problem here is that the vast majority of *S*'s contemporaries have personal stories

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<sup>42</sup> For reasons discussed in Chapter Seven, Section One, the Cartesian dualist—or those who identify persons with souls—might be in a better position to make this demand than those who think personal identity depends on one's genetic heritage.

that *cannot* be obtained without *Q*.<sup>43</sup> And besides, in all probability, *S*'s contemporaries cannot exist—in terms of bare identity—without *Q* (or comparable events).<sup>44</sup> So if *S*'s demands are that God brings about a world that preserves the personal stories of *S*, her loved ones, and that God eliminates *Q*, then *S* has demanded that God do the impossible. But demanding that a person—divine or otherwise—do the impossible is unreasonable, if not outright irrational. It is beyond the pale of what a reasonable agent would do.<sup>45</sup> Thus, whatever terms are “acceptable” to *S*, they must include the elimination of *S*'s personal story, as well as the elimination of the personal stories belonging to virtually all of *S*'s contemporaries (if not the bare *existence* of those people as well). As soon as *S*'s terms require that some of those stories be preserved, *S* begins to “ask for” the impossible.

In sum, to satisfy the first condition of acceptance-readiness, *S* must understand how the elimination of *Q* would affect her personal story (and, perhaps, her existence) as well as how its elimination would affect the personal stories of her contemporaries (and, perhaps, *their* existence). But by fulfilling the first condition of acceptance-readiness—by gaining the relevant understanding—meeting the second condition becomes all the more difficult (and, I have argued, *rightfully so* given the stakes). So when it comes to the

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<sup>43</sup> And this can be argued even on the Cartesian dualist's view of personal identity!

<sup>44</sup> Given the assumptions of Kripke's (1980) origin essentialism and related views.

<sup>45</sup> Objection: It is not unreasonable to demand that a person do the impossible *if* the one making the demand does not *realize* that the thing being asked is impossible. Response: In the present case, if *S* fails to recognize that the change she aims to bring about would require God to actualize an impossible world, then she does not sufficiently understand the implication of her resistance. As such, she fails to satisfy the first condition of acceptance-readiness—she does not sufficiently understand what she is “asking for.”

problem of evil and resistance, agents who resist God (or theism) on the basis of some major evils in the past will have great difficulty in satisfying the demands of acceptance-readiness.<sup>46</sup>

#### 7.4 Violations of Proportionality

To satisfy proportionality, the *strength* of an agent's opposition should be in proportion to how unacceptable she perceives the relevant object to be. And the strength of her resistance can (in part) be measured in terms of the costs she is willing to pay to oppose the object (or undo it, eliminate it, etc.). In the present case, it is safe to assume that *S* takes *Q* to be *extremely* bad; *Q* is among the worst things that have happened. As such, we should expect her opposition (on the basis of *Q*) to be very strong. We might ask, what costs is *S* willing to pay that *Q* be eliminated, undone, etc.?<sup>47</sup> How persistent is she in her resistance? And so forth.

The previous section pointed out some of the actual costs that came with eliminating *Q* (e.g. the elimination of *S*'s personal story). With those actual costs in mind, we can begin to ask questions about whether or not *S* thinks they are acceptable costs, given how bad she perceives *Q* to be. To start, if *S* resists *Z* on the basis of *Q* in a proportional way, we might expect that *S* is willing to pay extremely high costs

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<sup>46</sup> Maybe this points to an objection: Acceptance-readiness sets the bar too high! After all, the above argument seems to imply that *S* will have difficulty resisting *anything* on the basis of *Q* in a reasonable manner. In response, this is essentially the same concern that arose and was addressed at the end of Chapter Seven, Section One. So my response here would basically be the same.

<sup>47</sup> Technically, her opposition towards *Z* should be appropriately strong. But since it is *Q* that makes her resist *Z*—*Q* is the negative feature that makes *Z* worthy of opposition in her mind—it seems fair to say that it is *Q* that she aims to undo. This would follow if she aimed to undo *Z*, given that *Q* is some feature or aspect of *Z*. And for all we know, *Z* (without *Q*) is not objectionable to her.

(including her own life) to undo  $Q$ . But given the number of stories that depend upon  $Q$ , there is a sense in which the costs of  $S$ 's resistance may actually be *too* extreme.  $Q$  would have to be *so bad* in her mind that its elimination is “worth” the loss of virtually all of her contemporaries. It is as though she would have to say: “I would destroy all human beings that exist today (at least, *as* they exist) so that I might undo the horrible events of the past” (e.g. the events of WWII).

Again, there is no doubt that the events of WWII (and the other major evils of the past) are incredibly horrific. But does  $S$ —the typical contemporary agent—view  $Q$  as *so bad* that she would aim at bringing about the non-existence of billions of actual people—their lives, their stories—to eliminate those past evils? I do not think the answer is “obviously, yes.” And the answer does not seem obvious even assuming that  $S$  believes the billions of people who are alive today would be replaced by a comparable number of people in the world without  $Q$ . This may be because  $S$  does not know of any straightforward way to compare the “worth” of one group of billions of stories against another. I have argued that the values in play—the relative “worth” of each group—seem incommensurate (or, at least, very difficult to calculate).

If  $S$  thinks that eliminating  $Q$  would be “worth” the cost of the elimination of the billions of stories that cannot be obtained without  $Q$ , then her opposition may indeed be proportional. But it is doubtful that agents like  $S$  will typically (if ever) be in a position that would plausibly allow them to conclude that eliminating  $Q$  is “worth” the loss of  $P$ . As I noted above, van Inwagen (2006) argues in a related context, “for all we know, the value-judgments that people are inclined to make about cosmic matters unrelated to the concerns of everyday life are untrustworthy” (122). In other words, we have reason to be

skeptical concerning human beings' assessment of the comparative value of things like one group of a billion stories against another. And the same seems to apply when comparing the value of one group of a billion stories against the disvalue of some set of events like those contained in *Q*. These just are not the kinds of evaluations we are equipped to (reliably) make. As such, no matter how bad *S* thinks *Q* is—except in the most extreme cases—aiming at the total elimination of all contemporary stories (and, perhaps, persons) might actually be an *overreaction* (a form of resistance that is too strong).<sup>48</sup>

In sum, if *S* truly takes *Q* to be *so bad* that *S* is willing to pay the cost of eliminating all contemporary stories to undo *Q*, then *S*'s resistance on the basis of *Q* seems proportional (in some way). But there is reason to suspect that *S* cannot reliably make that kind of assessment. Suppose, on the other hand, that *S* takes *Q* to be extremely bad, but not so bad as to justify the elimination of all contemporary stories (*P*) in the process of undoing it. In this case, there will be problems related to acceptance-readiness. *S* either fails to recognize the connection between *P* and *Q* (and so fails to satisfy the first condition of acceptance-readiness) or she does recognize the connection, but cannot “pull the trigger” when given the opportunity to bring about the change she aims at (and so,

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<sup>48</sup> This problem would be greatly compounded if, instead of focusing on the *major* evils of the past, we instead focused on one (or a few) *minor* or “local” evils in the past (particular in the distant past). I noted above that minor adjustments to the distant past will, in all likelihood, have tremendous impacts on *S*'s story (and the stories of her contemporaries), if not their existence altogether. If that is right, then opposition that involves the undoing of all contemporary stories as a means of eliminating these minor evils seems fairly disproportionate. At the risk of trivializing relatively “minor” evils, it is as though one burns down one's house to kill a spider inside. There is no doubt that particular events—what I am calling “minor evils”—may be incredibly horrific and intense. But it is a long jump from observations about the events' badness to the view that they are *so bad* that preventing them would justify (in *S*'s mind) the total elimination of all of her contemporaries as she knows them.

fails to satisfy the second condition of acceptance-readiness). So, in this case—where she does not take *Q* to be so bad that she would give up *P* to prevent *Q*—she may find a way to resist in a proportional manner, but will not satisfy acceptance-readiness. And so her resistance will be doomed to be unreasonable in one way or another. Thus, to have a chance at meeting the standards set by both virtues (acceptance-readiness and proportionality), *S* really has to think that *Q* is *so bad* that the elimination of *P* to prevent *Q* is “worth it.”

### 7.5 *Violations of Consistency*

Consistency is the last virtue to consider and comes in two forms. We might assess *S*'s resistance for consistency and we might assess *S* for consistency as a resister. To start, consistent resistance is when the form of opposition that *S* engages in does not conflict with the reason(s) that are driving *S*'s resistance. As a short example, people that oppose the government's killing of innocent people cannot (reasonably) kill innocent people as a form of opposing the government. Determining the *form* of *S*'s resistance to theism cannot be done on a general level. There are simply too many forms that her resistance might take. As such, we will not be able to say much about whether or not *S*'s resistance is consistent until we learn more about her particular methods of opposition.

We can make at least one general statement, however: If *S* opposes God (or theism) on the basis of the evils of the past, then whatever form her opposition takes it must not bring about (or promote) those same types of evils. So, for example, if *S* resists organized religion on the grounds that it led to the widespread persecution and imprisonment of people who held uncommon beliefs, then *S* cannot reasonably persecute and imprison those who hold uncommon beliefs (nor can *S* support such practices as a

means of opposition). But whatever the case, consistency (in terms of resistance) works like a formula: To get a result, we need to “plug in” information about the basis of *S*’s resistance (what drives her resistance) and information about her methods of opposition.

Now consider the second aspect of consistency: Whether or not *S* is a consistent *resister*. Here, the concern is whether or not there is a conflict between the form of *S*’s opposition and her own commitments. Again, we will need more information about both of those things before we can make a judgment about the reasonability of *S*’s resistance (along this parameter). But generally, whatever *S* does as a means of resisting God or theism (on the basis of evil), she cannot (reasonably) act in a way that undermines her commitments.<sup>49</sup> So, as an extreme example, suppose *S* is committed to the idea that parents should be free to raise their children to believe whatever religion the parents choose. But, in opposition to theism, *S* votes in favor of a public policy that would totally outlaw freedom of religion.

Here, there is a conflict between what *S* does in opposition to theism (vote for the policy) and her own commitments (to religious freedom). Of course, perhaps there is some overriding reason why *S* acts in this way. That may provide a justification for her action *all things considered*. But even such an overriding reason does not change the fact that—in terms of the consistency parameter—*S*’s resistance is unreasonable. In any case, when assessing resisters for consistency, we must carefully assess the methods of opposition they adopt and we must learn more about their particular commitments.

There is one more complication to consider regarding consistency and the Reset Button case discussed above. Suppose that *S* takes herself to have special obligations to

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<sup>49</sup> At least not without an overriding reason for doing so. See Chapter Three (Section Two, B and Section Seven) for a discussion of overriding reasons.

promote the flourishing of her family members ( $P$ ). Next, imagine she resists God (or theism) on the basis of  $Q$  (some set of major evils in the past). God then (*per impossibile*) gives her a choice to push a button or not. If she pushes the button, it will undo  $Q$  but will also undermine the existence of  $S$  and all of her family members. If she does not push the button, nothing changes. Suppose  $S$  pushes the button. This would make her an inconsistent resister, because her actions—her method of opposing  $Q$ —would be in conflict with her commitments (the special obligations she has to promote the flourishing of her family). Again, perhaps there are overriding reasons that justify  $S$ 's action, should she push the button.<sup>50</sup> But that does not magically make her a consistent resister. Now, should she refuse to push the button, she would not be an inconsistent resister (given what we know about her). But she would (*at the very least*) stand in violation of the second condition of acceptance-readiness.

### 7.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, reasonably resisting God (or theism) on the basis of some set of major evils in the past requires navigating some tricky terrain. Rule 1 focused on  $S$ 's attachments as they relate to her resistance. There, I argued that there is some attachment,  $P$ , such that  $S$  (a random contemporary of ours) is usually attached to  $P$ , and that  $P$  cannot be obtained without the relevant evils of the past  $Q$ . If  $S$  is unaware of this connection, it will be easier for her to satisfy Rule 1, but impossible for her to satisfy acceptance-readiness. If she *is* aware of the connection, she may satisfy the first condition of acceptance-readiness, but will have a much more difficult time satisfying both Rule 1 and

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<sup>50</sup> For example, maybe an agent has some overriding obligation to prevent the suffering of thousands of others, even when doing so requires her to violate her obligations to her family members.

the second condition of acceptance-readiness. Additionally, it may be difficult for resistance on the basis of *Q* to satisfy proportionality given that *P* cannot be obtained without *Q* and the typical agent's limitations when it comes to evaluating the comparative value/disvalue of *P* and *Q*. And lastly, problems arise for consistency as well, given that *S*'s resistance—if successful—will usually come into conflict with her commitments.

This all points towards a major claim I have been advocating: Resisting in a reasonable manner is difficult. The standard is set high. I have defended the account against the view that the standard is *too* high. It is indeed difficult to resist in a reasonable manner. But that fact is connected with the claim that virtue—excellence in general—is difficult to reach. As Aristotle points out, there is but one way to go right and an infinite number of ways to go wrong (*NE* 1106b.29-35). Reasonable resistance, much like the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, requires “getting things right” along a series of parameters. When it comes to virtue, it is important the agent acts at the right time, in the right way, for the right reason, etc. (*NE* 1106b.18-24). The virtues and logic of resistance provide analogous parameters for achieving excellence in resisting some object.

In the case of resisting God (or theism) on the basis of evil, now that we know how to identify reasonable resistance (and distinguish it from unreasonable resistance). But there is more to be said about how the theist might *engage* the unreasonable resister.<sup>51</sup> To that sort of question, we now turn.

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<sup>51</sup> There are general points about engaging unreasonable resisters made at the end of Chapter Three (Section Seven). But there is more to be said about doing so in this particular context.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Resistance and Faith

The previous chapter left off with the question of how the theist might engage resisters of God (or theism), particularly in cases of *unreasonable* resistance. As I will show in this chapter, finding an answer to that question drives our inquiry into a discussion of faith. Specifically, I will argue that an agent's faith—whatever we take faith to be—tends to generate a kind of resistance in that agent. And, second, we have seen that when it comes to unreasonable resisters of God or theism, the virtues and logic of resistance provide a way to expose the unreasonable aspects of their resistance. But that forms only a negative sort of response. It only shows how the resister goes *wrong*. Thus, this chapter is aimed towards a more *positive* sort of response. Specifically, I will describe ways in which the resister might (rationally) be led to reshape her perception of the data of good and evil in ways that are more favorable towards theism. As we will see, this is especially useful as a way of responding to *non-doxastic* resistance towards God or theism (i.e. a version of the problem of evil that is usually taken to be “off limits” to the philosopher).

#### *8.1 Faith Generates Resistance*

There is an ongoing debate over the nature of faith. What Howard-Snyder (2013) refers to as “The Common View” is that faith is a kind of belief (357). Christian faith, on this account, is then something like belief in “some vague but important subset of the truths that constitute the Christian faith” (Kvanvig 2018: 9). In contrast, there have been a

wave of recent accounts of faith that reject The Common View. Kvanvig (2018) lists some of these alternatives (where he describes The Common View as a kind of

“cognitive approach” to faith): “In place of cognitive approaches” he states,

others have claimed that faith is a feeling, that it is an attitude or affective state of a certain sort (Clegg 1979), that it is a special kind of trust (Audi 2011, Schellenberg 2009), that it can be a special kind of hope (Pojman 1986, Sessions 1994), that it is a preference of a certain sort (Buchak 2012), or that it is a kind of practical commitment or disposition toward certain patterns of action (Tennant 1943, Kvanvig 2013). (9)

But despite such a wide variation in these accounts, there is nothing regarding the connection between faith and resistance that requires us to endorse one account of faith over another. Nor is there any requirement that one of these authors has given us a successful account of faith. And so, in what follows, I will not endorse one account of faith over another.

That said, for the sake of simplicity, Kvanvig’s (2013) account of faith lends itself most easily to the task at hand (showing how faith generates resistance).<sup>1</sup> For Kvanvig, faith is:

...an orientation of a person toward a longer-term goal, an orientation or disposition toward the retaining of the goal or plan or project in the face of difficulties in achieving it, one prompted by affections of various sorts and involving complex mental states that are fundamentally affective even if they involve cognitive dimensions as well. (111)

To illustrate, he describes a young Little Leaguer who is “despondent after giving up a game-winning home run” and resolves to “never to let that happen to him again” (2018: 108). The Little Leaguer spends “days, weeks, months, and years ... practicing diligently,

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<sup>1</sup> See also Kvanvig (2018) for a lengthier discussion of this account of faith. Additionally, even if the reader thinks that Kvanvig’s account of faith is a failure—that it does not capture the true nature of faith, that it describes some other kind of creedal attitude but not faith, and so on—that is fine. I am not endorsing Kvanvig’s account. I am just using it as an example of how faith might be said to connect with resistance.

focusing his routine—exercise, sleep, diet, etc.—around the project of being a better pitcher, and in the process expresses the kind of faith that involves a disposition to act in service of an ideal” (108). None of this says much (if anything) about the Little Leaguer’s beliefs. His being faithful to his goal involves his disposition to act towards the goal he has set, not that he *believes* his goal is obtainable, likely to be completed, or anything of that sort (2018: 16-17).

So how does this connect with the present account of resistance? I have argued that most generally, if an agent *S* resists some object *Z*, then *S* opposes *Z* because *S* deems *Z* to be unacceptable. In the Little Leaguer case, the state of affairs that he resists is his ever giving up a game winning home run again. That is an unacceptable state of affairs in his mind (whether or not he has consciously thought of it in those terms). And so, he opposes that state of affairs and works to prevent it from ever occurring again (by practicing, altering his diet, and so on). So Kvanvig’s Little Leaguer is indeed resistant in some way.<sup>2</sup>

There is one concern here: Perhaps it is a coincidence that this particular Little Leaguer exhibits both faith and resistance. That is, perhaps faith does not *always* generate resistance, even if many individuals that are faithful also (coincidentally) resist some object. On Kvanvig’s account of faith, however, faithful agents will always be resistant to some degree towards the failures of whatever goal (or projects) they are disposed to work towards. This is made especially clear in his adding that faithful agents will work towards the “retaining of the goal or plan or project in the face of difficulties” (111). Those

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<sup>2</sup> More carefully, we might say that his actions, practice, etc., exemplify resistance towards the relevant state of affairs, and he is *resistant* insofar as he is *disposed to resist* the relevant state of affairs. This follows from Chapter Two, where I described the difference between *resistance* and being *resistant*.

difficulties are *part of* what faithful agents oppose. The difficulties, presumably, would lead to “unacceptable” result that the agent’s project fails. And failure of the project is *primarily* what the faithful agent resists. Thus, the faithful agent will oppose whatever difficulties stand in the way of her failure *or* she will lose her faith—her commitment to the project—and she will be overcome by those difficulties.<sup>3</sup> But the faithful agent will, in each case, stand in opposition to what she deems to be unacceptable: The failure of her goal or project and, by extension, the difficulties that increase the probability of her failure. And that kind of opposition just is resistance, on the present account.

Now, simply because faith generates resistance in this way, that does not mean that faith and resistance are just different descriptions of the same phenomenon. An agent might be resistant without aiming at a particular goal in the way Kvanvig describes. That is, some agent could be resistant but would not exhibit (or possess) faith. After all, for Kvanvig, faith means continuing towards (and being disposed towards) the furthering of some “ideal,” an all-encompassing goal of some kind. Generally speaking, resisters need not have such all-encompassing goals or projects. They might simply deem objects to be unacceptable and so work to oppose them, without having any kind of unifying life goal or project. So, given Kvanvig’s account of faith, faith and resistance are not the same thing, even though faith generates a kind of resistance.

Similar stories can be told about the other accounts of faith on offer (as listed above). To support this claim, recall that in Chapter Two I described how one’s doxastic

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps there are difficulties that are not so severe as to threaten the success of the agent’s project. I will bracket that possibility here, and simply stipulate that “difficulties” just refers to whatever obstacles are significant enough to threaten the success of the agent’s project. And the agent’s faith disposes her to oppose them (whether or not she actually encounters them).

resistance (which is belief-based resistance) might impact one's non-doxastic resistance (or vice versa). So even if (contra Kvanvig) faith is a kind of *belief* (or is belief-based), it can still generate resistance of each kind (doxastic, non-doxastic, or compound). That is, there is nothing being said here that rules out the possibility that faith is a purely "cognitive" state (e.g. identical with a kind of belief), which may affect one's perception of the world in ways that generate non-doxastic resistance to certain objects. And the opposite kind of story can be told too, where faith is taken to be a "non-cognitive" state or disposition that nonetheless generates doxastic resistance in the agent (or affects her beliefs in some other way). So, pretty much regardless of what one takes faith to be, a story can be told about how faith generates a kind of resistance in agents.

### *8.2 Faith-Generated Resistance at Work*

So how might this kind of resistance work? Continuing with Kvanvig's account of faith, the resistance generated by faith insulates the agent from giving up her goal or project. An agent who has faith—who is committed to the bringing about of some ideal or goal—but who *lacks* any real measure of resistance will be prone to losing her faith at the first sign of difficulties.<sup>4</sup> Kvanvig's Little Leaguer, for example, might faithfully pursue his goal of never giving up a game-winning home run again. But without his having some non-negligible level of resistance to failure (and difficulties that threaten to bring it about) he might quit this pursuit as soon as he encounters hardship. As I argued in

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<sup>4</sup> I say "any real measure" of resistance because I have already argued that having faith is sufficient for an agent to be resistant to *some* degree. But it is possible for faithful agents to be minimally resistant to failure (as would be the case of an agent who commits herself to a task, but gives up at the first sign of hardship). We might describe this agent as having extremely *weak* faith. So by some "real measure" of resistance, I mean to focus on agents that do not have such frail faith.

the previous section, when difficulties threaten to bring about failure, the *faithful* agent deems such failure (i.e. the state of affairs involving her failure) to be unacceptable (whether in a doxastic, non-doxastic, or compound way) and works against it. The *non-faithful* agent, who either had faith but lost it or never had faith to begin with, does not.

To illustrate how this works, I will focus on cases of compound resistance that are generated by an agent's faith (so as to deal with both the doxastic and non-doxastic elements of such resistance). For example, suppose an agent is committed to living her life in accordance with virtues like honesty. She is faithful insofar as she is committed to this path. Second, we will suppose that she is resistant (in a doxastic way) to deviating from that path—she believes that such deviations are unacceptable. And lastly, suppose she is also resistant in a non-doxastic way to failure; she construes her failure—her deviation from the path of virtue—as unacceptable.

These different forms of resistance may often work together to further her pursuit of her goal (in this case, a life of virtue). For example, in cases where she is led to *believe* that a particular deviation is not unacceptable—perhaps via the deception of another person—her non-doxastic resistance may prevent her from *seeing* that deviation as anything but unacceptable. In that sort of case, she may be convinced to believe that a particular act is not a deviation from her path, but will still be resistant to acting in that way, given her inability to *see* the action as anything but unacceptable.

Imagine the agent in question is led to believe that lying is consistent with her commitment to living virtuously. In the relevant type of case, she will be unable to construe lying as acceptable, even though she *believes* it to be acceptable. This may make her participation in such behavior difficult to some degree, because despite having the

belief lying is acceptable. Her non-doxastic resistance still “gets in the way” of her telling lies. As such, she remains faithful to her pursuit of the virtuous life, despite a change in her beliefs. This case is something like the case of a bungee jumper who believes leaping off of a platform is perfectly safe, but cannot help but see the plunge as a threat to her safety. There, she may struggle to jump because her non-doxastic resistance—her *seeing* the fall as a threat—inhibits her ability to act, even though (again) she believes she is perfectly safe.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, in cases where an agent is faithfully pursuing a path to virtue, but loses her non-doxastic resistance to deviations from that path (failures), her doxastic resistance may “kick in” to preserve her faithfulness to her goal. Regarding our seeker of virtue, we might imagine that she *sees* a vicious activity (like stealing) as acceptable, but firmly believes it to be unacceptable. This may be what occurs in certain instances of temptation, where a vicious act appeals to the agent—it seems like a good, worthy of pursuit—but the agent *knows better*. She believes that it is wrong, despite being drawn to do it and *seeing it* as appealing. And if her doxastic resistance is strong enough, her faith will (likely) endure the temptation. That is, if she firmly holds to her belief that stealing is wrong, she will be more likely to continue her faithful pursuit of virtue.

Up to this point, the focus has been on faith generally, not exclusively on faith in a religious context. I will now consider how we might apply the above lessons about faith and resistance to a religious context, especially when the faithful agent encounters hardships generated by their encounters with evil.

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<sup>5</sup> One major difference between these two cases is that the agent who is faithfully seeking to live virtuously wrongly believes that lying is consistent with that pursuit. But she rightly *construes* lying as unacceptable. In contrast, the bungee jumper rightly *believes* that she is safe, but wrongly *construes* jumping as a threat to her safety.

### 8.3 Faith-Generated Resistance in a Religious Context

Suppose an agent possesses faith in Christ—she is faithfully committed to the pursuit of whatever path Christianity sets before her. Then she encounters serious evil, whether in her own life, the lives of those she knows and loves, or even as she learns about the history of this planet. We have seen that many authors have argued that this kind of encounter *should* be devastating to her religious faith (if she is rational). That is, by encountering evil—by discovering, without question, that evil pervades creation—many have argued that the theist should give up her belief in an all-powerful, loving God. But what *happens* to the faithful agent when such encounters occur?

In the language of faith and resistance, here is one possible story. The agent is faithful to following Christ. But her encounter with evil affects her in ways that challenge her commitment to that path. In doxastic terms, she may be led to believe that evidence from evil undermines the probability of God’s existence (and, subsequently, a major reason for her continued commitment to the path she walks). In non-doxastic terms, she may be led to *see* the world as one that could not possibly have been created by a God like the one posited by Christianity.<sup>6</sup> As such, she may be pressured to give up her commitment to following Christ (i.e. her faith), given that a major motivation for her following through on that commitment (i.e. her belief that God exists) has been threatened. But in either case, the resistance generated by faith may make her less prone to surrendering her commitment to her path, even in light of the difficulties that arise as

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<sup>6</sup> And this kind of resistance is tied to what was labeled the “common-sense” problem of evil, described in Chapter Five.

she encounters evil. And all else being equal, the “stronger” this resistance is, the more likely she will be to maintain her faith.<sup>7</sup>

Suppose, as just one kind of case among *many*, that she begins to surrender her faith on doxastic grounds—it becomes apparent to her that Christianity is likely false, given the data of good and evil.<sup>8</sup> Should her faith survive, it might be in light of the non-doxastic resistance her faith has generated. Specifically, despite giving up her belief that God exists (given the data of good and evil), she may nonetheless stay committed to (faithful to) the Christian path.<sup>9</sup> She may continue to *see* (construe) the world as one governed by God, even though she cannot reconcile her beliefs about good and evil with

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<sup>7</sup> Whether or not it is *rational* for the agent to maintain faith in light of her encounter with evil is a question I shall consider shortly.

<sup>8</sup> By “data of good and evil” I mean to follow Draper (2014)—and, Hume (2007b)—in understanding these data to include the distribution of pain and pleasure, flourishing and floundering, virtue and vice, and triumph and tragedy in the world. Draper argues that we see far more evil than good in each case (e.g. more floundering than flourishing) and that this is a predictable result on naturalism but *not* on theism (71-4). In the same vein, Hume (in the voice of his character, Philo) thinks that our observations of the relevant data will come as a great surprise to the theist, and better support the idea that the world is governed by some force that is indifferent to good and evil, rather than a being that is perfectly good (47-8 and 52-3).

<sup>9</sup> Here, the same might not be true for “The Common View” of faith, which equates faith with a kind of belief. After all, if faith is a kind of belief and Christian faith requires a belief in God’s existence, then abandoning that particular belief is akin to losing one’s faith. So on Kvanvig’s account of faith (and those like it), a theist may remain faithfully committed to Christianity despite losing their belief in God’s existence, whereas on The Common View, that may be impossible. Of course, advocates of the Common View (or something like it) will think that this case forms the basis of an argument *against* Kvanvig’s account. They might, for example, say that staying committed to the Christian path *requires* believing that God exists. And so, it is a kind of contradiction to “stay committed” while surrendering one’s belief in God. But these points simply represent a clash between competing accounts of faith. And I am unable to adjudicate between them here. Lastly, note that these points do not imply that Kvanvig’s account allows for the possibility that an *atheist* could be faithfully committed to a Christian path, since a loss of (or absence of) theistic belief is not the same as atheism (belief that God does *not* exist).

her beliefs about God. That is, her non-doxastic resistance may be (partly) what preserves her faith. And so, we might describe her as a kind of “faithful agnostic.” Faithful because she has continued with her commitment to the Christian path, agnostic because her belief in God’s existence has been undermined by her encounter with evil.

On the other hand, suppose that she is struck by something like the common-sense problem of evil and suddenly cannot help but *see* the world as one incompatible with the existence of the God of Christianity. It may be that her doxastic resistance is what preserves her faith. Specifically, she might cling to her belief that God exists despite being unable to *see* it when looking upon creation. And so, she remains faithful along the Christian path, despite being unable to see (or construe) the world as a place governed by God. Here, she might be like the bungee jumper described above, who cannot help but *see* herself as threatened by the fall before her, yet leaps anyway in the belief that she is indeed safe.

This latter type of case is highly relevant to discussions in which faith is taken to be a kind of belief. After all, it describes people who remain committed to a particular path or project *despite* appearances that undermine their reasons for pursuing that path. They leap, though they cannot see. And such behavior will strike many as foolishness or worse. But questions of rationality aside, the main point is this: The language of resistance and the connection I have drawn between faith and resistance provides an explanation for this kind of phenomenon. The agent’s commitment to their project (their faith) leads them to become resistant to deviations from that path. And, in the present type of case, this resistance manifests itself in a doxastic way. The faithful agent believes that surrendering her religious beliefs would be an unacceptable deviation from her path,

and so opposes the giving up of those beliefs (even though she cannot *see* how they could be true). And so, she remains faithful. The lingering question in this discussion, however, is whether or not this kind of faith (and resistance) is ever rational.

#### *8.4 Is Faith-Generated Resistance Rational?*

A small army of authors have argued that faith—especially religious faith—is irrational or unreasonable.<sup>10</sup> Kvanvig (2018) points out (rightfully, I think) that many of these criticisms target particular accounts of faith, *especially* the Common View, which equates faith with a kind of belief. And so, the typical criticisms of religious faith may not stick very well to “less common” accounts of faith. But rather than adjudicate between accounts of faith and criticisms facing each, I will focus on the *resistance* generated by faith and whether or not *it* is ever rational (or reasonable). This will go some distance in isolating the objections that people raise against faith, as well as answering the question of whether or not such faith is ever rational.

Given that we are dealing with cases of resistance, we can use the tools developed in previous chapters—the virtues and logic of resistance—to assess whether or not each instance of resistance is reasonable. For example, returning to our agent who is faithful to the Christian path and encounters evil, we might ask if her resistance—whether doxastic or not—is reasonable in terms of our parameters. In what follows, I will focus primarily (but not entirely) on the virtue of consistency, rather than proportionality, acceptance-readiness, or the logic of resistance. I do this partly for the sake of brevity but especially

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<sup>10</sup> In recent times, this includes the “belittlers” of faith, as Kvanvig (2018) calls them (109). According to Kvanvig, the belittlers are “critics of religion such as Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and Richard Dawkins” (108, n.18).

because consistency seems to be most closely connected with common arguments *against* the rationality of faith.

#### 8.4a Does Faith-Generated Resistance Satisfy Consistency?

With that in mind, a major objection against the rationality of faith, put into our terms, might generally go like this<sup>11</sup>:

1. Agents who cling to their beliefs despite powerful evidence against it (which the agents know about) cannot *consistently* be epistemically responsible agents.
2. All rational agents ought to be committed to being epistemically responsible (on pain of irrationality or some other grave epistemic defect).
3. So, agents who cling to their beliefs despite powerful evidence against it (which the agents know about) are either *inconsistent* or irrational (i.e. not epistemically responsible).

A few clarifiers are needed here. First, there are many ways to understand the term “epistemically responsible agent.” For example, we might understand epistemically responsible agents in terms of Clifford’s (1999) well-known principle, “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence” (77). The epistemically responsible agent, therefore, does not believe anything without adequate evidence. Or perhaps the epistemically responsible agent is one that “proportions his belief to his evidence.”<sup>12</sup> Whatever the case, I do not wish to enter into a debate about what the “epistemically responsible agent” is. For the time being, let us

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<sup>11</sup> Compare this argument, for example, to Sam Harris’s (2008) claim that “faith is nothing more than the license religious people give one another to keep believing when reasons fail” (67) or Mark Twain’s oft-quoted, “faith is believing what you know ain’t so” (as quoted in Kvanvig 2018: 2). Countless others have echoed the same criticism. And that criticism is at the heart of the argument seen here.

<sup>12</sup> Following Hume (2007a: 80).

suppose that to be epistemically responsible means something like always “believing something in proportion to one’s evidence” (i.e. “following the evidence” where it leads).<sup>13</sup>

Returning the argument outlined above, the conclusion follows from the first two premises because agents that cling to their beliefs in the relevant ways will either claim to be committed to following the evidence where it leads (and thereby violate the virtue of consistency) or they will give up a commitment to following the evidence (and so, will fail to be epistemically responsible agents).<sup>14</sup> The same type of objection can be applied to religious belief and the data of good and evil. It would then go something like this:

- 1\*. Agents who cling to theistic belief despite encountering the data of good and evil cannot *consistently* be committed to the practice of “following the evidence” wherever it leads (i.e. being epistemically responsible agents).
- 2\*. “Following the evidence” (i.e. being epistemically responsible) is a practice to which all rational agents ought to be committed (on pain of irrationality).
- 3\*. So, agents who cling to theistic belief despite encountering the data of good and evil are either *inconsistent* or irrational.

In this case, to “cling to theistic belief” is just shorthand for saying that the agent maintains theistic belief *and* is resistant to giving up the belief that God exists.

The typical response to this kind of argument will be to reject Premise 1\* (even while endorsing Premise 1). This is because Premise 1\* contains implicit assumptions,

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<sup>13</sup> Dougherty (2012) provides an overview of recent discussion concerning epistemic blame and responsibility (534-5). Additionally, if the reader is unhappy about my supposition concerning the meaning of “epistemically responsible agent,” I will discuss an alternate way of understanding the term shortly.

<sup>14</sup> If someone wanted to add that inconsistency, in this particular case, results in *irrationality*, not simply unreasonableness, I would not argue with them. On that view, the agent in question would come out as irrational either way. But given my account of the virtues of resistance (like consistency) violations in terms of consistency just imply that the agent’s resistance is *at least* unreasonable in *some* way.

like “the data of good and evil are powerful evidence against theistic belief.” And many authors have argued that the data of good and evil do *not* constitute powerful evidence against theism.<sup>15</sup> In fact, some have even argued that theism predicts the data *better* than non-theism, and so the data of good and evil actually count in *favor* of theism rather than against it.<sup>16</sup>

Alternatively, Kvanvig (2018) provides some reason to question Premise 2 (and 2\*, given that they amount to the same thing, given our present assumptions). Specifically, premise 2 seems to come close to endorsing a kind of “epistemic fetishism” that Kvanvig argues against (78). But I will pursue a different kind of response than these. The trick (for the theist) will be to argue that she can retain her resistance (and, subsequently, her faith) without surrendering consistency or her commitment to being an epistemically responsible agent (i.e. following her evidence where it leads).

To start, imagine a child who is told by her (reliable) parent that a nearby park is full of thieves. The child, we will suppose, is faithful to her parent’s instructions (in Kvanvig’s sense of “faithful”). One day, when the child wanders into the park, she encounters a friendly man asking for help with his car. Everything the child observes about the man’s behavior and demeanor suggests that he is trustworthy. That is, all of the data the child gathers during this encounter seem to support the man’s being trustworthy. The child may even begin to *believe* that man is trustworthy (or, at the very least, may

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<sup>15</sup> As another form of response, one might defend the faith of theists who are *not aware* of the data of good and evil. Their belief in God might be rational, given that they do not know any better. But our concern is with the theist who is faithful to Christianity and then encounters evil (i.e. becomes aware of the data of good and evil). So being unaware will not help here.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Dougherty (2014b: chapter seven).

give up the belief that he is not). However, suppose the child continues to *construe* the man as a threat. Thus, she feels fear in his presence (despite her *belief* that the man is safe).<sup>17</sup>

In this case, the child would be retaining a particular construal of the man, due to her parent's advice, even though the construal of the man does not align with the data she has gathered about him, nor does it align with her beliefs about the man. The reverse sort of story can be told as well, in which the child continues to *believe* that the man is a threat, despite being unable to *see* him as a threat (given the data she has gathered about him). And the question, in either case, is this: Is it rational for the child to continue to construe (or believe) that the man is a threat? After all, this construal (or belief) conflicts with the all of the data the child has gathered (firsthand) about this particular man. Should not the epistemically responsible child follow that evidence where it leads?

I think the answer—in either case—is that child is perfectly rational in continuing to construe (or believe) that the man is a threat, even though this conflicts with all of the data she has gathered about him firsthand. To help illustrate why, one more example is in order. Consider the words of Aslan—the savior and Christ-figure in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*—as he instructs a young girl, Jill, in Lewis's (1953) book, *The Silver Chair*. For some context, Aslan has just given Jill an important mission and has explained a series of signs that she must follow if she is to succeed (and survive). He then instructs her:

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<sup>17</sup> That fear is the emotion the child experiences fits with Roberts (2013) general account of fear (46-7). To put Roberts' account roughly, fear occurs when an agent construes some object as a threat (in some way) to something she is concerned about. And in the present case, the child construes the man as a threat to her safety and is concerned for her own safety. And that may occur whether or not she has consciously thought through all of that.

...remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And *whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs*. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to *know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances*. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters. (27, emphasis added)

By comparison to the length of her journey, this explanation of the signs is a mere glimpse.<sup>18</sup> Yet it is this glimpse that is given precedence over the observations Jill makes throughout her journey. That is, Aslan is clear that the environment Jill is about to enter will be one of confusion: She must commit the signs to memory and let that memory guide her, rather than her observations of the world throughout her journey.

To relate this to previous cases, suppose that Jill is *faithful* to Aslan's commands (i.e. the completion of the mission she has been given). Suppose also that she heeds his instructions in the quote above. This means that she will be *resistant* to surrendering her beliefs concerning the signs, despite strong evidence that threatens those beliefs (e.g. appearances that obscure what she rightly believes to be true). No doubt her construal of the signs will be negatively affected by the environment she is about to enter (hence Aslan's insistence that she "pay no attention to appearances"). And so, if her mission is to succeed—if she is to remain faithful—she must maintain some level of doxastic

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<sup>18</sup> I mean "glimpse" in the sense described by Anderson (forthcoming). Anderson explains that glimpses "provide the viewer with a partial vision, a glance" and "are often momentary...usually not available on demand or at all times" (13). This fits very well with Jill's experience. She encounters Aslan for mere moments, gains a great deal of information that she is told will soon be obscured in the world below, and is explicitly told that she will not have access to Aslan or reminders from him (at least not on demand) for most of the time.

resistance to preserve her knowledge of the signs. She must, in a way, discard whatever data she gains on the basis of appearances and cling to her beliefs about the signs. Is this reasonable (or rational) for her to do?

A straightforward response is: Yes, of course. But why? It may be because the evidence she gains from Aslan's testimony carries far greater *weight* than the evidence she will gather throughout her journey. After all, *that* evidence is gathered from a reliable source<sup>19</sup> *and* is gathered in an environment that is especially conducive to clear thinking and perception (whereas all the evidence she gathers in the world below is known by her, in advance, to be misleading, unreliable, etc.).<sup>20</sup> And all else being equal, whatever evidence is gathered in that sort of context will be weightier—more trustworthy, dependable, etc.—than evidence gathered from less reliable sources, in a less accommodating environment.

So when there is a conflict between that sort of evidence and evidence gained from less trustworthy sources, in less accommodating environments, “following one’s evidence” may just mean letting the weightier evidence outweigh other sets of less weighty evidence, and acting/believing accordingly. So, on this view, Jill’s clinging to her beliefs about the signs—even in the face of vast amounts of evidence that undermines

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Lewis writes, “It never occurred to Jill to disbelieve the Lion—*no one who had seen his stern face could do that*” (23, emphasis added). And by now the reader knows that Aslan is a perfectly reliable source.

<sup>20</sup> For one thing, the environment is described by Aslan as being especially conducive to clear thinking, especially in comparison to the world of Narnia below (27). Additionally, I recognize that this language may seem like an implicit endorsement of *externalism*. Evans (2006), for example, describes externalism as centering on a claim like this: “when we are rightly connected or linked” to the external world “through perception, memory, [and] reason, . . . then we gain knowledge of that world” (205). But with that said, I do not wish to enter into a debate over externalism or internalism here.

them—is consistent with her “following the evidence” (i.e. being an epistemically responsible agent). She is simply letting a small amount of extremely weighty evidence override a large amount of less-weighty evidence, and that seems perfectly rational (even *required*) if she is committed to following the evidence where it leads.<sup>21</sup>

One potential problem is that the difference between sets of evidence in this case does not seem to be a mere matter of *weight*. That is, in Jill’s case, what she learns on the mountain does not simply seem to be “weightier” evidence than evidence gathered in the world below. After all, it seems fair to say that there is no *amount* of evidence in the world below that would (or *should*) *outweigh* the evidence Jill gains on the mountain. As such, what Jill learns on the mountain works as a kind of “trump card” to anything she learns in the world below whenever there is a conflict between the two. “Lower world” evidence (of any amount) is discarded whenever it conflicts with “mountaintop” evidence. But since no amount of “lower world” evidence could ever outweigh what she learned on the mountain, it seems as though what she learns on the mountain is qualitatively a different *kind* of evidence altogether (it is not simply *weightier*).

A simple response to this problem is that evidence gathered in the world below is assigned *no* weight. And any amount of weighted evidence will still outweigh whatever amount of weightless evidence that Jill gathers in the world below. Furthermore, Jill has great reason to assign zero weight to evidence in the lower world, given Aslan’s testimony (and the environment in which she receives it). So “following one’s evidence”

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<sup>21</sup> And the same can be said for the child in the previous cases who maintained her belief (or construal) of the man in the park as a threat, despite having gathered a lot of evidence that he is not.

does not require that all evidence is weighted equally, nor does it even mean that all evidence is given weight.

But if the reader is dissatisfied with that sort of story, an alternative story could be told here as well, based on Evans' (2006) description of Kierkegaard's account of faith.<sup>22</sup> For Kierkegaard, faith is not something that human beings can hope to generate on their own, nor is it something that can be produced through an analysis of historical evidence. Instead, as Evans puts it, faith in God "is produced by a firsthand *encounter* with the incarnate God" (140, emphasis added). Additionally, this encounter profoundly reshapes the believer's perception and understanding of what is true and what is possible. As Evans writes, the believer "now has good reason to mistrust her earlier ideas about what is true, as a result of an encounter with reality" (130). This transformation allows her, for example, to understand that her understanding—her power of reason—is limited and is inhibited by sin in ways that (previously) prevented her from seeing truth (e.g. the possibility and actuality of the incarnation) (124-6). Evans notes that Kierkegaard's view does not imply that this transformation makes objects of one's faith (like the incarnation) *understandable*, but it does at least overturn the "fallen reason that pridefully insists that whatever it does not understand must be absurd" (125).

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<sup>22</sup> Evans draws heavily from Kierkegaard's (1985) *Philosophical Fragments* and (1992) *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In what follows, when I talk of "Kierkegaard's view," I mean Evans' (2006) description of Kierkegaard's view. I take it that Evans' view of Kierkegaard's account is correct, but thought it prudent to make this point explicit, in the event the reader thinks otherwise. Additionally, Evans argues that Kierkegaard's account is "a version of what Plantinga has termed 'Reformed Epistemology'" (173). Thus, it seems that a similar story to the one I am telling can be told given other varieties of Reformed Epistemology. That is, we need not focus just on *Kierkegaard's* view here (though I do so for brevity). For an overview of Reformed Epistemology, see Bolos and Scott (2018). For a classical articulation of the view, see Plantinga (2000).

So how does this help in the present context? Well, it is not a matter of obtaining evidence that leads to a transformation in one's perception and understanding.<sup>23</sup> In fact, "the transformation is qualitatively different, since what is being transformed is precisely my confidence in those standards of evidence and past beliefs" (128). And there is no conflict between faith and being an epistemically reasonable agent. After all, the faithful agent is one who has been reshaped by an encounter with reality, and has recognized the limits of her reason; her reason has set *itself* aside, in light of the encounter (126). As Evans remarks,

...the encounter could be understood as transforming the individual, giving her the proper perspective from which to view the evidence, or even as giving her the capacities she needs to appreciate its force. It may be important to have evidence, but the evidence does not need to be of the type that would convince any 'sane, rational person,' but rather be such as to appear adequate to a person of faith. (161).

In short, I think it is fair to say that the transformation a believer undergoes upon encountering God in time does not merely provide them with evidence for God's existence, but instead reshapes their perception of what counts as evidence, how evidence is weighed, and so on.

Compare this account with Jill's change in perception given her encounter with Aslan. Previously (prior to her encounter with Aslan), she might have entered into Narnia (the world below) and would have taken a very different perspective on the data she gathered there. She would not have had any real reason to doubt the veracity of appearances, for example. But her encounter with Aslan has changed all that. Now, with her transformed perspective, what counts as evidence, what weight to assign it, etc., has

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<sup>23</sup> At times, Kierkegaard himself seems to suggest that "evidence is simply irrelevant to faith," but Evans makes the case that evidence can play *some* important role with respect to certain individuals' faith, even on the Kierkegaardian model (160-1).

been reoriented. And in both cases—Kierkegaard’s story about how faith is acquired and the transformation that results, as well as Jill’s experience—agents do not simply gain some important piece of evidence that later outweighs other sets of evidence.

The question, then, is whether or not this is ever *reasonable*. From the perspective of those who have *not* undergone such a transformation, the answer (for Kierkegaard at least) is “no” (203). To the outside world—the unbelieving world—the believer’s claims will seem “improbable” to say the least.<sup>24</sup> But *that* world—the outside, unbelieving world—is the world obscured by sin and an improper understanding of human faculties of reason, perception, and understanding. The unbelieving world is, in a sense, out-of-touch with reality in a way the believer is not. So the fact that the believer appears to be *unreasonable* to the unbelieving world is not an indictment at all. As Evans puts it,

...the offended consciousness will proceed to denounce Christianity as “improbable.” However, Kierkegaard says that faith calmly replies as follows: “It is just as you say, and the amazing thing is that you think that it is an objection” (PF 52). The objections of offense that Christianity is “irrational” are not really objections at all, but echoes of what Christianity itself proclaims. (203)

In other words, the believer’s claims fail to live up to standards established by fallen human reason, but that is exactly what the believer should expect. Belief—in, say, the incarnation—requires going *beyond* fallen human reason.

Returning now to Premise 1\*, the premise states that: Agents who cling to theistic belief despite encountering the data of good and evil cannot *consistently* be committed to the practice of “following the evidence” wherever it leads (i.e. being epistemically responsible agents). But having encountered God, the believer’s perception (and

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<sup>24</sup> And this seems to echo the view of Hume, for instance, who held that “even the best and strongest evidence imaginable for a miracle would only serve to balance and could never overcome this strong a priori improbability” (Evans 2006: 162).

understanding) has been transformed in such a way that she does not evaluate evidence in the same way as the non-believer. And so, it might simply mean something different for her to be “epistemically responsible.” In other words, being *epistemically-responsible-qua-believer* seems to be different than *epistemically-responsible-qua-non-believer*. And that the believer fails to live up to the latter standard is entirely unsurprising (and cannot even be counted as an objection!). Additionally, if *anyone* is mistaken in all this, it is those who measure according to the non-believer’s standard, since that standard is the result of sinful pride, which is both out of touch with reality and mistakenly takes reason to be “a godlike ‘view from nowhere.’”<sup>25</sup>

So, to tie all these strands together: An objection was made against the faithful theist. Her faith (often enough) generates a kind of resistance to the surrendering of her belief (or construal) that God exists. The question was whether or not this kind of resistance was reasonable. I entertained an objection that it is *not* reasonable on the basis of *consistency*: The agent cannot *consistently* be resistant in that way *and* stay committed to following her evidence (as an epistemically responsible agent would do).

In response to this objection, I presented two types of cases: One involving a child being faithful to her parent’s instructions, one in which C.S. Lewis’ character, Jill, was faithful to the instructions of Aslan. In each of these cases, agents’ resistance led them to discard large amounts of data (pieces of evidence) as irrelevant or weightless. And I argued that in those sorts of cases, this is *perfectly consistent* with the agents “following their evidence.” In fact, we can demonstrate the consistency whether we opt for an “evidentialist” route, in which some pieces of evidence simply outweigh others (and

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<sup>25</sup> See Evans (2006: 8, 124-5).

following the evidence means respecting that fact) or we opt for some route opened by Reformed Epistemology. If all of that is correct, then it is *possible* for the theist to retain her resistance (and her faith) without violating the virtue of consistency *or* giving up her commitment to being an epistemically responsible agent.

This helps to show that Premise 1\* is false, even if we grant that the data of good and evil favor atheism over theism. Recall the premise: Agents who cling to theistic belief despite encountering the data of good and evil cannot *consistently* be committed to the practice of “following the evidence” wherever it leads (i.e. being epistemically responsible agents). And let us grant for the sake of argument that the data of good and evil do favor atheism over theism.<sup>26</sup> That is not enough to show that Premise 1\* is true. The above cases suggest why. The theist may have some evidence for God’s existence that outweighs the negative effect of the data of good and evil (or provides sufficient reason to think that those data are *misleading*).<sup>27</sup> In that case, the theist *could* cling to her belief throughout her encounter with the relevant data and could remain consistently committed to being epistemically responsible. And that possibility is enough to show that Premise 1\* is false.

Of course, we might ask: On the evidentialist route, what could count as the relevant kind of evidence that is powerful enough to outweigh or neutralize the negative

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<sup>26</sup> And to be clear, I think there are a lot of good reasons to doubt this. See, for example, Dougherty (2014a) and Dougherty (2014b: chapter seven).

<sup>27</sup> Hume (2007b) is sensitive to this point. He notes (again, via Philo) that if the theist had a sound, *a priori* proof for God’s existence, then subsequent observations about the distribution of good and evil in the world would *not* be sufficient to overturn the theist’s belief (47). But at this stage in the *Dialogues*, Hume is aiming to undermine a kind of natural theology that holds God’s existence can be proved via observations about the world, so the possibility of an *a priori* proof is bracketed intentionally.

effect had by the data of good and evil? Hume (2007b), as one example, thought that if the theist had a sound, *a priori* proof for God's existence, then subsequent observations about the distribution of good and evil in the world would *not* be sufficient to overturn the theist's belief (47). Or one might try to appeal to religious experience as providing the relevant type of evidence.<sup>28</sup> Alternatively, if one follows the Reformed Epistemologists, then defending the believer's faith is not a matter of locating powerful enough evidence to outweigh the evidence against theism coming from the data of good and evil. Instead, as we have seen, theistic belief is defended on some other ground. But either way, we have shown that the theist has a number of ways to rebut the charge that she cannot maintain her theistic belief in the face of the data of good and evil *while* being committed to being an epistemically responsible agent. In short, in the face of the data of good and evil (which, we are assuming, count heavily against theism) the theist can *reasonably* resist surrendering her faith.

Lastly, concerning the objection from consistency, notice that the theist's evidence for God's existence can be captured in a mere glimpse. That is, the above cases—especially the Aslan/Jill case—make it clear that there is no requirement that the theist have *lots* of evidence for God's existence in order to outweigh the vast amounts of evidence to the contrary. In Jill's case, what she learned on the mountain was a momentary glimpse compared to the many things she observed in the world below. But that glimpse was sufficient to neutralize whatever conflicting data was gathered in the world below. And this just drives home the idea that the quantity of evidence available

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<sup>28</sup> See Webb (2017) for an overview of religious experience.

for a particular view is not the only relevant consideration. One must also consider the *quality* of all available evidence.

#### *8.4b Does Faith-Generated Resistance Satisfy Proportionality and Acceptance-Readiness?*

Shifting gears, we have been considering an objection against the faithful theist's resistance based on *consistency*. What of the other virtues of resistance (and its logic)? I will now briefly describe possible objections that may be levied against the theist in terms of those other parameters. "Briefly" because none of them presents a challenge so difficult as the objection from consistency dealt with above.

Regarding proportionality, supposing that the faithful theist takes her faith to be a very serious matter—one that makes the difference between eternal life and eternal damnation—we should expect them to be *extremely* resistant to the surrendering of their faith. So, for virtually any obstacle that threatens their faith, we should expect them (if they are resisting in a proportional manner) to oppose the obstacle. So, consider cases in which faithful theists are persecuted for their faith and threatened with death if they do not renounce their faith. It turns out that those who die for their faith (martyrs) resist in a proportional way, whereas those who do not (apostates) fail to resist in a proportional (i.e. reasonable) way. If one thinks that surrendering one's faith will result in eternal damnation, then we should expect the reasonable agent to resist surrendering her faith, even when her earthly life is threatened. So assume the theist does take faith to be such a

serious matter, the only criticism (in terms of proportionality) that may stick to her occurs in cases where she does not oppose the loss of her faith *strongly enough*.<sup>29</sup>

In terms of acceptance-readiness, we could assess the faithful agent's resistance in terms of their understanding of the costs of their resistance or their willingness to "pull the trigger" on bringing about the changes their resistance aims at. In the former case, is the typical faithful theist sufficiently informed of the costs of her resistance? Her resistance aims at the preservation of her faith (so if it were allowed to succeed, she would maintain her faith). What are the costs of maintaining her faith? In extreme cases, it could mean death. But in more common cases, perhaps it means being limited in with respect to: the lifestyles she might adopt, the relationships she might seek or promote, the hobbies she might take up, careers she might pursue, and so forth. So, if the theist is open to criticism on these grounds, it will be because she does not recognize what a commitment to a life of faith requires.

Regarding the second condition of acceptance-readiness, we might ask if the faithful agent is willing to "pull the trigger" when given the opportunity to bring about the state of affairs their resistance aims at. In this case, the relevant state of affairs is the retention of their faith (which will come with certain costs). So again, assuming the agent

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<sup>29</sup> The suggestions made here may fit well with the rationale behind "Pascal's Wager." The basic idea there is that if one maintains faith in Christ, then either one is right to do so, and so inherits eternal life, or one is wrong to do so and nothing happens after death. On the other hand, if one rejects a life of faith, one is either right to do so, and so nothing happens after death, or one is wrong to do so, and one is eternally damned. Given those stakes and the possible outcomes, a life of faith seems to be more reasonable than not. In the present case, we are concerned with people who are already faithfully committed to Christianity. To these individuals, surrendering one's faith is taken to have eternal consequences (or likely to have such consequences). And in light of the agent's perception of the unacceptability of the consequences of surrendering her faith (even if those consequences are not guaranteed, in the agent's mind), we should expect her to resist the surrendering of faith with a great deal of strength.

understands the costs, she will be open to criticism (in terms of acceptance-readiness) only if she balks or hesitates at accepting the relevant outcome. But the relevant outcome (at least on the Christian picture) is ultimately one in which the faithful follower is rewarded with eternal life and unity with Christ. So whatever the costs are that come with the maintaining of their faith, their disutility seems *relatively* insignificant in comparison to utility of maintaining her faith. Of course, this is not to say that maintaining one's faith will always be easy (in a *practical* sense) or pain-free. The sacrifices required by a life of faith may be *immense*. But when one has sufficiently understood the difference in outcomes between maintaining one's faith and surrendering it (again, on certain versions of the Christian view, where faith is the difference between salvation and damnation), the reasonable agent is one we can expect to "pull the trigger" maintain their faith (even in the face of tremendous costs).

#### 8.4c Does Faith-Generated Resistance Satisfy the Logic of Resistance?

Regarding the logic of resistance, Rule 1 requires that the agent has no actual attachment  $P$  such that:

- (i) the agent prefers  $P$  to its absence,
- (ii) the agent deems  $Q$  to be a cost worth paying for  $P$  (or the agent is unsure whether or not  $Q$  is a cost worth paying for  $P$ ), and
- (iii) The agent believes that  $P$  cannot be obtained without  $Q$ .

Let  $P$  be for something incredibly valuable to  $S$ , like  $S$ 's life or the lives of  $S$ 's loved ones.  $Q$ , we will suppose, is the loss of  $S$ 's faith. Some agents, no doubt, have been in horrific circumstances in which  $P$  cannot be secured without  $Q$ . If the agents' resistance on the basis of  $Q$  is unreasonable (in these cases), then that means they are willing to sacrifice their faith to preserve their lives (or the lives of their loved ones), or they are

unsure of how to proceed in the matter.<sup>30</sup> And so, in those cases, to be a reasonable resister requires the agent to sacrifice *P* for the sake of preventing *Q*. This, once again, suggests that the resistance of the martyrs was reasonable in a way the resistance of apostates was not.

Lastly, Rule 2 simply requires that when all else is equal (or equal insofar as is possible), *S* thinks worlds in which *Q* does not occur/exist should be actualized over worlds in which *Q* does occur/exist. That is, *S* thinks that worlds in which she remains faithful to Christianity should be actualized over worlds in which she is not faithful in that way. And the typical (faithful) theist should have no problem satisfying that requirement.

And so, in terms of the virtues and logic of resistance, there are no obstacles that the theist's faith-generated resistance cannot overcome. This is not to say that all such resistance *is* always reasonable in every way. But it does show that one major criticism often aimed at religious faith—namely, the claim that it is always unreasonable (or irrational)—does not stick to the *resistance* generated by faith.

### 8.5 *Reconstruing the Data of Good and Evil*

The previous section showed that the faithful agent's resistance—resistance that aims at the preservation of her faith—can satisfy the requirements of reasonability set by the virtues and logic of resistance. To conclude my discussion of the connection between faith and resistance, I will argue that faith—and the resistance it generates—may form a kind of response to resisters of God and theism, particularly in cases where those resisters

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<sup>30</sup> Where “unsure” and “hesitant” are two different things. Hesitancy, in these types of cases, is more relevant to the second condition of acceptance-readiness than Rule 1.

are shown to be resisting in an unreasonable way. So, to start, suppose that the theist has shown that a resister of God (or theism) is resisting in an unreasonable way. The resister is faced with a few options: Surrender her resistance to that particular object (which, to be clear, does *not* imply she must be *for* it) or resist it on some other basis. If she chooses the latter option, then the next step would be to run her resistance through the tests set by the virtues and logic of resistance once more. Suppose this continues happening until all (or virtually all) of the bases upon which she might reasonably resist God (or theism) are apparently eliminated. As far as the virtues and logic of resistance are concerned, they have run their course.

But there is more to be said about the connection between faith, resistance, and the movement *from* resisting God *to* a neutral position and beyond. Agents who resist theism in a doxastic way may be led to theism (to be *for* theism) via argumentation, the presentation of evidence for theism (and its value), and so forth. So an agent who *believes* that theism is unacceptable (epistemically or otherwise) may be led to give up this belief. They may even be led to develop theistic belief. This has been the primary focus of philosophers who take on the problem of evil—they aim to undermine the *belief* that theism is epistemically unacceptable, to show that theism is epistemically acceptable, and so forth. One potential problem, however, is that knocking down an agent's *doxastic* resistance to theism does not always eliminate their resistance towards theism. Non-doxastic resistance may linger.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> By analogy, consider the duck-rabbit illustration. One agent may believe that the image is a picture of a duck only. He may then become convinced by someone else that there is a way of seeing the image as a rabbit as well. And he may still be unable to see it. So he may *believe* the claim that the image can be seen as a rabbit while being unable to see it himself. The same sort of thing occurs when someone has their doxastic

### 8.5a Responding to Non-Doxastic Resistance

In the following passage, C.S. Lewis (1952) seems to capture an instance in which non-doxastic lingers even when doxastic resistance has been eliminated (or is absent):

[S]upposing a man's reason once decides that the weight of the evidence is for [Christianity]. I can tell that man what is going to happen to him in the next weeks. There will come a moment when there is bad news, or he is in trouble, or is living among a lot of other people who do not believe it, and all at once his emotions will rise up and carry out a sort of blitz on his belief. Or else there will come a moment when he wants a woman, or wants to tell a lie, or feels very pleased with himself, or sees a chance of making a little money in some way that is not perfectly fair: some moment, in fact, at which it would be very convenient if Christianity were not true. And once again his wishes and desires will carry out a blitz. I am not talking of moments at which any real new reasons against Christianity turn up...I am talking about moments where a mere mood rises up against it. (140)

In this case, using the terms we have developed, a person has surrendered his doxastic resistance to theism and has *also* been led to believe the claims of Christianity. But he *still* faces a kind of resistance to theism. And this resistance is driven not by any “reasons against” theism; that is, it is not *doxastic* resistance that suddenly reignites. Rather, the agent is struggling to overcome a kind of non-doxastic resistance that was not dealt with when his doxastic resistance was overcome. And this is certainly not the only type of case where non-doxastic resistance lingers. In other cases, non-doxastic resistance may be powerful enough (by itself) to prevent an individual from believing the claims of theism, even when the individual judges that the evidence is “for it.” In that case, they may see the claims of theism as false (they just *strike* the individual as false) and so, when considering the evidence that they believe favors theism, they maintain that they must have been tricked or misled. The point here is that examples abound when it comes to

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resistance to theism eliminated, but their non-doxastic resistance lingers. For example, they may no longer believe that theism is epistemically unacceptable, even though they cannot *see* it as true.

individuals who lose their doxastic resistance to theism without losing their overall resistance to theism.

Now, it is those who are resistant to theism in a non-doxastic way that will concern me for the remainder of this chapter (as well as those who resist it in a compound way, insofar as compound resistance always has a non-doxastic component). As I suggested in Chapters Six and Seven, this is the type of resistance that has often been described as “off limits” to the philosopher. Better to let pastors and psychologists deal with that kind of problem, so they say. But using by using the philosophical devices that have been developed in this project, I will show how Christian philosophers do indeed have some very important things to say in the face of non-doxastic resistance to theism.

The first major response to non-doxastic resistance that the theist can make to the agent who resists God (or theism) on the basis of evil, in a non-doxastic way is to work with the resister to help them *reconstrue* the data of good and evil. This sort of response is not without precedent in discussions of the problem of evil. The idea that we need to work to perceive the data of good and evil differently, for example, is (arguably) at work in Augustine’s writing on the subject:

All have their offices and limits laid down so as to ensure the beauty of the universe. That which we abhor in any part of it gives us the greatest pleasure when we consider the universe as a whole. ... The very reason why some things are inferior is that though the parts may be imperfect the whole is perfect, whether its beauty is seen stationary or in movement...The black color in a picture may very well be beautiful if you take the picture as a whole. (Quoted in Hick 2010: 83)

So the basic idea is this: Evils are indeed evil, but when viewed in the context of the whole universe, it makes sense why they occur as they do. Their occurrence contributes to the beauty of the whole. And so, we might be encouraged to widen our gaze; to shift

our perspective from particular events in themselves to how they fit into creation as a whole. This change in perception—looking at the “big picture” rather than particular events in isolation—will change our attitude concerning the data of good and evil. It does *not* require that we say “evil is not truly evil,” but it does orient us in ways that make evils of the world seem “fitting” in some important way. Of course, finite creatures cannot perceive the universe as a whole. But the lesson is still present here: The data of good and evil “look different” depending on the perspective one takes.

A much more recent instance of this line of thought appears in Dougherty’s (2014b) discussion of evil. There, he describes what he calls “the relevant data regarding human suffering” (EH) as follows:

EH: Since very near the beginning of human existence, there has been an abundance of intense human suffering. That is, wherever there has been human life, very significant levels of human suffering have been quite common. (123)<sup>32</sup>

But the data need not be described or “viewed” in just this way. Instead, we might view EH through a different kind of “lens”—keeping the *data* the same, but *construing* it differently (to use my sense of “construe”). A change in construal—to view it “through the lens of God’s plan”—changes our perception of EH to EH’:

EH’: Since very near the beginning of human existence, suffering has come with a frequency and intensity which falls into the relatively narrow band with enough magnitude to foster saints but not so much as to widely overwhelm people or make struggle futile. (124)

Dougherty asserts (without defense) that there is no “shift in the *facts* under consideration in this case” (123, n.7, emphasis added). And the language of construal developed and

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<sup>32</sup> Note that this is just a subset—albeit a very important subset—of “the data of good and evil” as I (and Draper 2014) have understood it. It is a subset given that it includes only *human* suffering, rather than the suffering of other creatures and whatever other evils there are beyond human suffering (not to mention all data concerning the good).

described in Chapter Two provides Dougherty's assertion with a defense: It sets the precedent for this very type of change in construal from EH to EH' (without a change in the data or "facts" of the case).<sup>33</sup> And so, even though we will need to tell a different story than Dougherty if we are to account for *all* of the data of good and evil (of which EH is just a subset), his suggestion here will be very helpful along the way.

Now, to be clear, I do not intend to take on the assumption that all evils fit into a grand, cosmic scheme in ways that make those evils "fitting."<sup>34</sup> That is, I leave open the possibility that there are some evils that do not (by themselves) contribute in any important way to the universe as a whole.<sup>35</sup> As such, my response to the non-doxastic

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<sup>33</sup> Tweedt (forthcoming) attempts to explain this sort of phenomenon as well. He appeals to a difference in "perspectives" between the theologian and the atheologian. But it is clear that what Tweedt refers to as "a change in perspective" is not the same as a change in *construal* (the latter being central to my project). For Tweedt, a change in perspective means focusing on certain data as "prominent" over others, or "highlighting" different data while spending less time focusing on others (1, 6). If we return to the duck-rabbit case and applied Tweedt's account, he would suggest (in effect) that a person who sees only a duck is focusing on different parts of the picture than the person who sees only a rabbit. But surely that is not what is occurring (at least, it is not the *only* thing that is happening). It is not as though the person who sees only a duck is looking really hard at some of the image's lines but not others. To echo Roberts (2003), "The fact that the figure can be seen (experienced) in the two very different ways, yet without change of sensory character, suggests that construal is subjective: The organization of the lines is not just in the lines, but is imposed, with the encouragement of the lines, by the viewing subject" (71). So clearly, the person who sees only duck (compared to one who only sees a rabbit) is not simply highlighting (or focusing) on particular parts of the image. Instead, the two individuals are *conceptualizing* the data in different ways (as described at length in Chapter Two). Thus, the issue is not a matter of "focus" or "highlighting" or what have you. The issue is a matter of organizing the data according to different concepts. And this comes much closer to Dougherty's suggestion that the same data may be viewed under different "lenses."

<sup>34</sup> I part company with Augustine's view here.

<sup>35</sup> On this point, I agree with the general point made by van Inwagen (2006) that God may indeed allow some evils to occur that (individually) serve no greater purpose (99ff).

resister *cannot* be summarized as follows: “You are simply viewing evil wrongly, but if you changed the way you view it—your construal of it—you would see that it is not so bad!” But I *will* argue that in response to unreasonable resisters of God (or theism), part of the theist’s task is to help re-orient these agents to see the data of good and evil differently. Great caution must be taken, however, to avoid becoming *insensitive* to the badness (and *harm*) of evil.

One type of insensitivity I have in mind is the perception that “everything that happens is exactly as it ought to be.” As van Inwagen (2006) points out this is the kind of view often ascribed to Leibniz and Pope, where the latter claimed that “whatever is, is right” (59).<sup>36</sup> van Inwagen argues that this view amounts to denying that evil exists at all (59-60). After all, on this view evil is only truly *bad* when viewed in a certain way, and to view in that way (to construe it as bad) is to view it in a *distorted* (shortsighted, limited) way. These views do not seem to give proper weight to the *badness* of evil. And that is why I have referred to them as “insensitive.” They fail to display adequate sensitivity to the fact that the evils of this world are horrific, truly bad, and perhaps even irredeemable in some cases. I will, therefore, disregard any construal of the data of good and evil that results in seeing evil as anything other than truly *bad*.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> To be fair, van Inwagen qualifies his inclusion of Leibniz in this category as follows: “Let’s say that by ‘Leibniz’ I mean Leibniz as he has commonly been understood. Even if this Leibniz is a fiction, he has been an influential one” (59).

<sup>37</sup> Another problem with the view that evil is only bad when viewed in a distorted way is that even if it were true (and all evils contribute in some important way to the perfection of the universe, or something like that), to *see* how all the pieces fit together requires a God-like perception of the data. And I do not think that any human being can maintain that sort of construal. It is simply beyond our ability to take such a wide perspective. As Evans (2006) puts the matter, “The world actually is the way God sees it, though we must never lose sight of the fact that we are not God” (9). So anyone who

So how might we construe the data of good and evil (in a way that avoids insensitivity)? We have two resources from Chapter Seven (Section One) to help answer that question. First, there is the account of “personal stories.” Second, we have the discussion concerning sufferers’ perspectives on their suffering.

### *8.5b Personal Stories and the Sufferer’s Ultimate Perspective*

Regarding personal stories, one may rightly come to believe that many of the evils of history are integral to the personal stories of herself and her loved ones.<sup>38</sup> Should she be resistant towards God (or theism) on the basis of these evils, I have argued that her learning of this dependence between those evils and the relevant stories will potentially put her in violation of Rule 1.<sup>39</sup> Morrision (1982) argued that this should not happen because the relevant evils are so bad that if the agent learns her existence depends upon those evils, then so much the worse for her: She cannot reasonably believe that her existence (or the existence of her loved ones) is “worth” the cost of those evils (405). I argued against Morrision’s objection at length and in several ways. In one response, I argued that given the possibility of a certain kind of afterlife—an afterlife which Dougherty argues is entailed by God’s goodness—we cannot be confident in our

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claims to construe *all* evils in the world as having a fitting place—in that they claim to truly *see* how every evil contributes to the perfection of creation—is either a liar or is simply mistaken. And note, to claim that one can see how *all* evils contribute to the perfection of creation is different from claiming that one can see how all evils *they have observed* contribute to the perfection of creation. The former view is the one I explicitly reject. The latter is *highly* suspect, but not the main target of my criticism here.

<sup>38</sup> And, obviously, whatever evils of history are required (e.g. accidentally necessary) for the agent’s “bare existence” (if any) will be included in the relevant set of evils.

<sup>39</sup> And her failing to know about the relevant dependence potentially puts her in violation of acceptance-readiness.

assessment of how sufferers will ultimately perceive their suffering.<sup>40</sup> This will help illuminate a different way of construing the data of good and evil in a way that avoids insensitivity, while undermining non-doxastic resistance towards God (or theism).

As Dougherty (2014b) puts it, when it comes to people being overcome by the evils they have suffered,

All we know is that some people were losing at the time of their departure from this world. But that tells us very little about their eventual state of mind with respect to that suffering. ... We know there are people who are bitter or broken or both until the end of their earthly lives. But this tells us little to nothing about the permanence of their perspective. It is like inferring that your birthdate does not appear in the decimal expansion of pi because it doesn't occur in the first thousand digits (you have to go nearly half a million digits out to get to mine). (127-8)

And so, if we look at the earthly lives of all human beings as just the very beginning of a much longer story, “the most we can say about those whose earthly stories did not end in triumph is that they have not *yet* triumphed. Whether they eventually will is something about which we have very little evidence” (129). As an example of how this kind of “eventual” triumph might look, I proposed the following case:

The Lost Child (Afterlife): A single mother gives birth to a baby girl, Kyla. It is soon discovered that Kyla has a rare genetic disorder in which Kyla's brain slowly calcifies over time. This results in Kyla's being less and less able to function independently. The mother works tirelessly to make sure Kyla has everything she needs, but after years have passed, the day comes where Kyla's condition claims her life; her brain simply cannot function anymore. Kyla's mother is brokenhearted for the rest of her earthly life. But after the mother passes away, she is reunited with Kyla in the afterlife. Kyla has been healed of her condition and “raised” as a well-functioning, rational being. She is aware of what her mother did for her and thanks her mother for the care and sacrifices that were made on her behalf. Kyla comforts her mother and embraces her, which, from her mother's perspective washes away the whole sea of suffering her mother experienced during her earthly lifetime.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dougherty (2014b: 127-9).

As an outsider in The Lost Child (Afterlife) case, I suggested that there is something terribly wrong with the agent who learns of this story and nonetheless resists God on the basis of the evils that Kyla (or her mother) suffered.

For one thing, it is (arguably) not the outsider's place to work towards the undoing of those evils when those directly affected have defeated them. This point is captured in something like the following (lengthy) conditional: If a person suffers a tragedy, and in a rational state of mind (at some later point in time), construes that tragedy (accurately) as an integral part of their own personal story (or the personal stories of their loved ones) *and* holds that they would not change that part of the story if it meant a loss of who they (or their loved ones) are, then an outsider—a third party, who is not directly affected by that tragedy—cannot reasonably use that tragedy as a basis of resistance against God or theism. That is, just as it is not the place of an outsider to offer forgiveness for a wrong that in no way affects them, there is something wrong about resisting on the basis of an evil the direct victims have defeated.

Tying these points with Dougherty's, we might ask the resister to consider: What if *all* creatures will one day (in the afterlife) be in the same kind of position as Kyla and her mother? This is possible, given theism. After all, I have agreed with Dougherty that theism implies an afterlife of a certain kind, in which creatures are given sufficient opportunity to defeat the evils they have suffered. And, I suggested, failure to defeat the evils will, ultimately, be a result of creaturely free will (insofar as—in Lewis's words—we can expect a good God to give each creature “as many chances” to defeat evils they have suffered as might do them good).<sup>41</sup> So if the resister comes to believe that these

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<sup>41</sup> See C.S. Lewis (1996: 127).

events will all come to pass, then there is something wrong with her resistance (just as there was something wrong with the resister involved in The Lost Child (Afterlife) case).

Now, in support of the possibility that all creatures *could* one day overcome the evils they have suffered, recent work on “posttraumatic growth” (PTG) suggests that we have good reason to think that *any* agent can overcome *any* trauma.<sup>42</sup> As Berger (2015) describes it, posttraumatic growth involves “benefits (growth) or positive changes that can be gained from struggling with a highly stressful event” which “include strengthening of individuals, families, and communities, discovering abilities and talents not previously recognized, and tightening relationships and solidarity” (13-14). Further, when PTG occurs, it goes “beyond mere survival, resistance to damage, adaptation, or simply returning to the pre-stress baseline. It implies that those exposed to trauma undergo a transformational change *beyond* pre-trauma levels” (14). In other words, individuals who experience PTG are often made better (e.g. stronger) or gain some very valuable benefit from struggling with trauma. And these are not goods they had (or had access to) prior to the trauma.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Werdel and Wicks (2012: 20).

<sup>43</sup> One interesting application of PTG findings (that I will sketch, but cannot pursue in detail here) is this: A person will be unlikely to experience PTG if she is too unable *or* too *able* to cope with trauma. As Werdel and Wicks (2012) write, “if a person has too few coping abilities, he or she may be too weak to experience growth. However, if one has too many coping abilities, he or she may be resistant to growth after stress and trauma” (21). Here is why this is interesting: Dougherty (2014b) argues that the actual world contains a fairly ideal distribution of evil (in terms of frequency and intensity) for the development of virtue (121-2). But if PTG is the mechanism by which great goods are brought about (including the development of virtue in some cases), then on theism, we should expect to find *creatures* that are neither too weak to cope with trauma *nor* too strong. The argument could be made that theism predicts the actual world will be populated with creatures that can be wounded, that can *really* be damaged and have difficulty coping (again, if PTG is an important means of bringing about certain great

Werdel and Wicks (2012) give the example of a victim of sexual assault who, after processing through the trauma she experienced, “may come to believe new things about herself such as she is a stronger person than she thought she was before the trauma, or hold a new belief that she can handle many more life experiences than she ever thought she could before the event” (63). *None* of this suggests that we should promote or allow more trauma to occur as a means of setting the stage for more posttraumatic growth. Nor does it suggest that we should not prevent evils when given the chance. All it does is provide evidence for the claim that people are resilient and able to overcome (defeat) a great many evils. And this supports the idea that there *could* be a point in the future (given the afterlife) in which all creatures do indeed overcome the evils they have suffered.

In terms of prevalence rates, the frequency of PTG varies considerably across studies (ranging from 3% – 40% in some studies and as high as 99% in others).<sup>44</sup> But one thing is obvious: Some people experience PTG after trauma, and some do not. What of those people that do *not* undergo PTG after trauma? Is it always their fault? In short, no. It would be foolish (and, I think, insensitive) to fault all people who fail to overcome evil during their earthly lifetime. And this statement is compatible with thinking that

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goods that are otherwise unachievable). The lesson is this: If Dougherty is right, then given theism, we should expect to see an ideal distribution of evil for the promotion of virtue. But if I am right, we will *also* expect to see *creatures* with “coping abilities” that are neither too weak nor too strong. And so, roughly speaking, if the world does indeed contain creatures that *can* cope, but are not immune to trauma, then theism is supported by our observations. The next question is: Does naturalism (non-theism) predict the same result? And if so, why? If naturalism cannot answer these questions as effectively as theism, then observations about the types of creatures that populate the actual world might actually support theism over naturalism.

<sup>44</sup> Werdel and Wicks (2012: 20-1).

*sometimes* people who fail to overcome trauma are to blame (in some way) for failing. It is also compatible with thinking that anyone who fails to overcome trauma in the afterlife *is* at fault in some way or another.

Regarding this latter point, as Werdel and Wicks (2012) suggest, important factors that usually *enable* posttraumatic growth include having enough *time* to work through one's trauma (106-8), as well as developing (or having) an "effective cognitive process" (104) and helpful character traits (such as a general willingness to "being around other people") (113ff). It has already been noted that we can expect that, in the afterlife, time will be given to those who need it. And in terms of developing the right sorts of cognitive processes (or abilities), as well as character traits that will facilitate PTG, we might assume that each of these also requires time (among other things). And so, a *major* roadblock to PTG—perhaps the greatest one—is that people often do not have enough time to defeat the evils they have suffered. But the afterlife (as I have described it) solves that issue: God gives to those who need time the time they need. But He also knows when no more time will help. And so, the theist has only to explain *those* cases in terms of a rebellious free will of creatures who, by their own choice and power, refuse to seek what is good. Hence, Lewis's (1996) well-known assertion that "the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end" for "the doors of hell are locked on the inside" (130).

### *8.5c The Reconstituted*

To draw everything together, the above considerations invite us to see all evils that befall creatures as *defeasible*, as an *integral* part of creatures' stories, and as part of the *beginning* of creatures' stories. These are the central concepts by which the data of good and evil can be reconstrued. I have said enough regarding the defeasibility of evil

(given findings concerning post-traumatic growth, for example). I have also spoken at length regarding how evils one suffers (especially serious traumas) plausibly form essential parts of one's personal story (and the personal stories of others). And, in terms of the *beginning* of the story: Persons, if they survive into an afterlife that goes on forever, obviously experience an extremely small fraction of their lives on this earth. This observation is nothing new or surprising on theism. So all three concepts—involving defeasibility, integrity, and the beginning—can appropriately be applied to the data.

With this in mind, consider a particular construal of evil which is captured beautifully in Tolkien's (2012) *Return of the King*, in a moment where Frodo and Samwise are in the heart of Mordor (a kind of Hell on earth). Tolkien writes:

There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tor high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach. . . . Now, for a moment, his own fate, and even his master's, ceased to trouble him. He crawled back into the brambles and laid himself by Frodo's side, and putting away all fear he cast himself into a deep untroubled sleep. (211)

When we dwell on the possibility of an afterlife, particularly as described in cases like *The Lost Child (Afterlife)*, I think we are invited into *seeing* evil, suffering, pain, as a passing shadow. The beauty, the goodness of those stories—even if we think of the defeat of evil within them as *merely possible*—can lead us to see suffering as fleeting and temporary. Evil need never have the final say and cannot reach or tarnish that “light and high beauty forever beyond its reach.”

To be clear, the brevity of one’s earthly life—or the evils therein—does not imply that suffering is unimportant or trivial or “not so bad.”<sup>45</sup> If anything, throughout this project, I have emphasized its tremendous *importance* and our need to avoid *insensitivity* when considering the suffering of creatures. What happens in one’s earthly life shapes one’s character, attachments, and even identity in eternal ways, especially when identity is understood as a *personal story* rather than “bare existence.” Evils one suffers are built into such stories. And evils others have suffered are accidentally necessary for the stories of those who come after them. But all evils, being just a part of the beginning of the story, can be defeated. It is at least *possible*, given theism. And not only is it possible, it is also possible (and, perhaps, even predicted by theism) that failures to defeat evil will ultimately be due to creaturely free will.

So suppose an agent begins to see evils in this way: Defeasible, but an integral part of the beginning of each person’s personal story. Does this affect her non-doxastic resistance towards God (or theism); her construal that the world cannot be one in which an all-powerful, loving God is in command? That is, can she, like Samwise, come to *see* the evils of this world (construe them) as a passing shadow? And if so, what might this do to her non-doxastic resistance?

In *The Lost Child (Afterlife)*, Kyla’s embracing of her mother was enough to wash away the ocean of despair her mother dwelt in on earth. For Samwise, a glimpse of starlight allowed him to perceive the evils of his world as a passing (temporary) thing. In

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<sup>45</sup> Here, we would be wise to heed the warnings of C.S. Lewis (1947) concerning the temptation to confuse “size” and “importance” (82-5). In sum, it would be a mistake to think that relatively small or short things are therefore relatively unimportant. And so, even though one’s earthly life may represent a tiny fraction of a person’s life, that in no way implies that it is unimportant or trivial. Additionally, regarding the importance of one’s earthly life despite its relative brevity, see Lewis (1996: 126-7).

both cases, the sufferers of evil came to see their suffering differently. So what about our resister, who resists God (or theism) in a non-doxastic way? She sees the evils of the world as being incompatible with the existence of God, or that God is to be blamed for allowing the evils of the world. But what if she imagines that each person who has suffered—maybe even each *sentient being* that has suffered if Dougherty (2014b) is correct<sup>46</sup>—will ultimately end up like Kyla’s mother. My sense is, if she can imagine the suffering of Kyla’s mother from the perspective of Kyla’s mother in the afterlife, she might begin to see that *that* world is quite compatible with theism. It is hard to imagine her seeing God as a wrongdoer or as blameworthy in that world. And most importantly, in this project, I have argued that that *is* the kind of world we live in.

#### 8.5d Objections

A scathing criticism meets us here, however: The relevant kind of change in construal is simply *immoral*! To “see” the evils of the Holocaust (as one example) as anything other than *unjustifiable* in every way is to see them wrongly. To see such events as defeasible and as an integral part of the beginning of a story is insulting to the victims of these evils. These events should never be allowed to be a part of *any* story. And even if this reconstrual is not entirely immoral, it is, at least, an egregious error. The theist either underappreciates the badness of the events that she is reconstruing or is encouraging others to buy into a delusion. It is the same level of error, perhaps, as that made by the astronomer Percival Lowell, who claimed that there were a series of canals on the surface

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<sup>46</sup> See Dougherty (2014b: chapters eight and nine).

of Mars built by an ancient civilization.<sup>47</sup> As an especially graphic example, to reconstrue evil in the way being suggested is like telling a woman that is being raped (or has recently been raped): “Just look at the event from a future perspective, where you will embrace what is happening to you as an important part of who you are. And thus, you should give up your resistance!” And that is *completely* reprehensible.

These objections (and I do think there is more than one in the above paragraph) need to be considered carefully. The charges are serious, and so we need to be serious in making sure we are not guilty of them. Let us begin by carefully unpacking the objections:

Objection 1: To reconstrue horrific evils as *anything* but unacceptable is to do something morally wrong.

Objection 2: To reconstrue horrific evils in the way I have suggested is to grossly distort one’s perception of reality.

Objection 3: To reconstrue horrific evils (especially ones that are occurring presently) in the way I have suggested undermines our motivation for combating, preventing, or stopping evil from occurring.

To start, Objection 1 is essentially Roth’s (2001) view.<sup>48</sup> As I noted in Chapter Five, Roth defends a kind of “antitheodicy” which, for him, means “refusing to justify, explain, or accept...the relationship that subsists between God...evil, and suffering’ (4). This is because he thinks that attempts to justify the evils of the world are doomed to fail since there is literally nothing God can do to redeem the immense suffering and evils (what Roth calls “waste”) that have occurred throughout history (10–12). And, in Chapter Five,

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<sup>47</sup> This suggestion comes from van Inwagen (2006: 59-60), who argues that any response to the problem of evil that implies evil is not *actually* bad makes an epistemic error of tremendous magnitude (akin to Lowell’s).

<sup>48</sup> Lest the reader think that I am shadowboxing at this stage of the discussion.

I tried to be especially clear that Roth claims that “no matter what happens” in the eschaton, “God is going to be much less than perfectly justified” in His allowance of the evils that have occurred on earth (like the events of the Holocaust) (12). Additionally, in Chapter Five, I argued that Roth’s claims are based on his *construal* of the relevant evils (i.e. his *non-doxastic* resistance).

Now, there are two reasons (that I can see) for thinking that the relevant evils cannot be redeemed. One is based on a deontological argument, the other is based on the assumption that there actually are (or have been) evils that no creature can overcome (or defeat). First, the deontological argument goes like this: There are some evils that can never justifiably be allowed (by any being, for any reason). And at least some of the evils that occurred during the Holocaust fall into that category. Hence, God is unjustified in His allowance of those evils.

In response, we might argue that if an evil is defeasible and God gives all creatures affected by it sufficient opportunity to defeat that evil, then it is justifiable that he allow it to occur. Suppose that, or something like it, is right. Then the burden is on Roth to show that the evils that occurred during the Holocaust are either indefeasible or that those affected will not be given adequate opportunity to defeat them. Dougherty (2014b) has already pointed out that we have little to no evidence that there are any indefeasible evils (that have occurred in the actual world). And the literature on posttraumatic growth supports Dougherty’s claim. So it does not seem promising for Roth to argue that the relevant evils are indefeasible. But if he were to argue that God has not given those affected adequate time to defeat the relevant evils, he must also show that God *will not* give the victims that opportunity. And we already have an argument against

*that* response: God's goodness entails that such an opportunity will be given. So Roth appears to be out of options, when it comes to the "deontological" argument.

This leaves Roth with option 2: Argue that there are some evils that are so great that no creature could overcome them. And then, he would have to show that some of those evils actually occurred in our history. But again, Dougherty and the literature on posttraumatic growth suggest that no such evils have occurred. Human beings are apparently resilient enough to overcome whatever evils they have experienced. The key factor is *time*. So it is unclear to me that Roth (or those pressing the same objection) have any plausible reason to support their objection. Thus, it is not apparent that reconstruing the relevant evils in the way I have described is *immoral*. It could be done in an immoral way (that is, if one insists upon that construal in the face of ongoing suffering and chastises those who do not share the view). But, contra Roth, there is nothing *intrinsically* immoral about the reconstrual itself.

Now consider Objection 2: To reconstrue horrific evils in the way I have suggested is to grossly distort one's perception of reality. We might ask, which part of the reconstrual distorts reality? The key concepts are *defeasibility*, *integrity*, and *beginning*. If any of these concepts is misapplied, then that means that the construal fails to reflect reality. In this case, a failure to reflect reality would mean at least one of three things: the evils are not defeasible, not essential (integral) for one's personal story (or the personal stories of relevant others), or these evils are not part of the beginning of one's life. This means that the objector must reject my argument that the evils are defeasible, my general account of personal stories, or the view that there will be an afterlife. But as I have

defended each (and will not recount those defenses here), the burden is on the objector to choose which to attack.

Finally, I will consider Objection 3, which I take to be the most serious objection of the three. The objection states that to reconstrue horrific evils (especially ones that are ongoing) in the way I have suggested undermines our motivation for combating, preventing, or stopping evil. We might add that the reconstrual could be seen as an offense against those who are presently suffering (though this may collapse back into Objection 1). In response, it bears repeating that the reconstrual I am describing does not imply that she should give up her resistance towards evil in any real capacity. The agent who reconstrues evil as I suggest *must* continue to fight it. She must continue to perceive it rightly: As horrific, wrong, and worthy of opposition. Morally praiseworthy agents work to prevent evil *even if they hope (or believe) it will be defeated should they fail*. Similarly, agents can (and should) work to combat evil even if they are capable of seeing it as defeasible in the long run. Defeasibility, integration into personal stories, and being part of the beginning of victims' lives do not imply that the evils they suffer are less bad in any way (than perceptions that do not apply those same three concepts).

The thing is, when dwelling on the evils of the past as they relate to God (and the claims of theism), I think the theist can attempt to get others to “see” the world from a perspective like Kyla and her mother in *The Lost Child (Afterlife)* case. But the reverse is true too: The theist who can see evil in this way *can also* work to see it from the perspective of a victim who may *not* see it as defeasible. This seems especially befitting

of the theist, particularly the Christian theist, who puts great emphasis on compassion and on things like “mourning with those who mourn.”<sup>49</sup>

In other words, even if one becomes able to reconstrue evil as I have suggested, that does not mean they must give up looking at the world from victims’ perspectives altogether! People can shift between competing construals of the same data, sometimes at will. This is obvious when considering that most people can shift between construing the duck-rabbit as a duck or as a rabbit.<sup>50</sup> And, importantly, feelings of empathy *require* being able to construe the world in the way others do, at least assuming that Roberts (2003 and 2013) is right in identifying emotions as *concern-based construals*. If two agents lack the same construal of a situation (and have the same concerns) then they will often experience a difference in emotion. And if empathy requires emoting with others, then sharing a construal with another is part of what it means to empathize with them. So *learning to construe things differently* seems well-connected with virtue. It fosters one’s ability to better understand perspectives, experiences, emotions, and reactions of others.

But from the theist’s perspective, what matters is getting resisters of God or theism to entertain the possibility of construing evil as defeasible, integral to one’s personal story, and as part of the beginning of one’s life. This can, no doubt, be done in an insensitive manner (as in the case where the woman being assaulted is told to change her construal of what is happening to her). But it does not have to be done in that way. As

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<sup>49</sup> From Romans 12:15.

<sup>50</sup> As Roberts (2003) points out (concerning images like the duck-rabbit): “When you have sufficient skill at seeing the figure in both ways, the two construals are within the purview of the will. One can respond to the command: See it this way, see it that way” (71). And he adds that when this kind of switch occurs, “the one view tends to exclude the other” (that is, you usually cannot see the image both ways *at the same time*) (72).

an agent is experiencing suffering, the most appropriate thing that the Christian theist may do is work to construe the evil as the sufferer does. In doing so, she works towards empathizing with the victim. But empathy (in this way) does not imply that one gives up one's construal of evil in the way I have described. Analogously, construing the duck-rabbit as a duck does not require that one become *incapable* of construing the image as a rabbit. And whatever the case, there does not seem to be anything objectionable about *hoping* that recent victims of evil—indeed, *any* victim of evil—will one day defeat it, rise above it, be restored and made even better than before, and become icons of triumph. But there is a time for discussions of such hope. And sharing the possibility of this kind of hope with those in the midst of suffering will not always be appropriate (though if the sufferer does hope for this kind of result, even in the midst of suffering, that does not seem objectionable either).

On a related note, what is happening (presently) and what will happen have not been woven into anyone's story yet (from our perspective). So there is no relevant personal story that is threatened by our resisting evil in the present or working to prevent it in the future. In fact, by doing so, by working to defeat, undo, and prevent evil *now*, we work towards (and anticipate) the eventual defeat of all evil (or, at least, the possibility of it). So again, reconstruing evil in the relevant way does not require that one fail to resist the evils of the present (or the future). People undergoing assault, people who observe morally bad states of affairs occurring (or soon to occur) are free to resist them, fight against them, and prevent them (and *should* do so). Thus, contrary to Objection 3, I do not see any reason to think that the relevant reconstrual will undermine our motivation to oppose evil.

One final objection must be considered before moving on: Even if it is plausible that it is not *wrong* (morally or epistemically) to reconstrue the data of good and evil in the ways I have suggested, people cannot simply *change* their construal of things (like the data of good and evil) on command. Construals will often be very difficult to change, particularly when it comes to experiencing trauma (or learning of the trauma that others have suffered). Those construals tend to *stick*.

In response, I agree that the relevant sort of construal will often be extremely difficult to change, especially in cases that involve suffering and trauma. But people can indeed *work* to change their construal of things. Take the duck-rabbit illustration in Chapter Two, for example. Some people who are unable to see a duck in the picture may work hard to *try to see* it. They do not need to alter their sense data in doing so either. That is, they do not need to adjust the picture, its coloration or anything of that sort (though doing so may help). And others may help them in the task of seeing it differently, by tracing various parts of the picture, labeling different parts of the duck in the image, and so forth.

One major motivation for willing that one's construal of a thing is different (and working to change it) is when one becomes convinced that the construal is not accurately representative of reality. In the False Allegations case from Chapter Two, for example, community members gained conclusive evidence that a man who had been accused of child molestation had not committed any such crime. Yet they continued to *see* him guilty and a threat to their safety. That is, their construal of him as a threat "stuck with them" even despite a change in their beliefs. In that kind of case, responsible members of the community would (and *should*) work to change their construal of the man because

they have learned that their construal of the man is inaccurate; it is a significant misrepresentation of reality. And, as I have argued above, if the theist is right, then seeing evils as indefeasible, or as “having the final say” in a creature’s life will be to misconstrue that evil. So not only *can* people change their construals (generally), there are many cases in which they *should* (even if doing so is difficult).

### 8.5e *The Role of Faith-Generated Resistance*

Lastly, how does faith (and the resistance it generates) connect with the suggested way of reconstructing the data of good and evil? To see the connection, it will be worth looking at an example given by C.S. Lewis’ (1952) in his discussion of faith:

..., my reason is perfectly convinced by good evidence that anesthetics do not smother me and that properly trained surgeons do not start operating until I am unconscious. But that does not alter the fact that when they have me down on the table and clap their horrible mask over my face, a mere childish panic begins inside me. I start thinking I am going to choke, and I am afraid they will start cutting me up before I am properly under. In other words, I lose my faith in anesthetics. It is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other. (138-9)<sup>51</sup>

To use our terms to describe what is happening in Lewis’s example: Lewis has no doxastic resistance towards the doctors’ use of anesthetics on him. He is perfectly convinced that they are safe. He even has *faith in* anesthetics. But he *does* experience non-doxastic resistance towards the use of anesthetics when a mask is placed on his face. He cannot help but *see* the doctors’ actions as a threat (and one he is concerned to

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<sup>51</sup> As quoted in Kvanvig (2018: 9-10).

neutralized at that, hence his experience of *fear*).<sup>52</sup> So there is a clash within him between his faith in anesthetics and his non-doxastic resistance towards them.

That he has faith in anesthetics—if we take Kvanvig’s account of faith (or something like it)—means that he is committed to letting doctors use anesthetics in the course of the surgery. But when the doctors begin, Lewis is overwhelmed with non-doxastic resistance towards their actions. He *sees* their actions as threatening (and, therefore, unacceptable). And this leads him to *oppose* the doctors’ actions in some way. But this, in turn, could threaten his commitment to letting them do their work. And so, his non-doxastic resistance constitutes a threat to his faith.

Thus, faith-generated resistance has (at least) two tasks: To block *doxastic* resistance that threatens one’s commitment and to block *non-doxastic* resistance that threatens one’s commitment. Lewis’s faith-generated resistance either accomplishes the first task (or does not have to, given that he does not experience any doxastic resistance against his commitment). But it fails to accomplish (or struggles to accomplish) the second task. His faith-generated resistance begins losing ground on the non-doxastic level (given his construal of the situation), and this threatens his commitment (i.e. his faith).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Once more, this falls in line very nicely with Roberts’ (2013) account of fear (46-7).

<sup>53</sup> Incidentally, this provides a response to Kvanvig (2018) who writes (concerning this same quote by Lewis) that it “seems to angle toward rescuing the doxastic account of faith by pitting it against the emotions. [Lewis] doesn’t say so directly, but instead talks of the possibility of reason conflicting with emotion. Once this possibility is noted, however, he says, ‘In other words, I lose my faith . . . ,’ a remark that requires the identification of faith with belief” (10). But I think Kvanvig is mistaken here. On the story I have just told, we do *not* have to identify faith with belief. One’s non-doxastic resistance can threaten one’s commitment (even without threatening one’s beliefs). So Kvanvig’s claim that Lewis’s example “requires the identification of faith with belief” is unwarranted.

Now, consider the construal advocated in 7.5c, where one works to reconstrue creaturely suffering (and evil) as *defeasible, integral* to valuable personal stories, and as part of the *beginning* of those stories. Faith in theism—a commitment to living one’s life as though the universe is governed by an all-powerful, perfectly good God—might generate resistance in two ways. In terms of doxastic resistance, one might be less prone to giving up theistic belief when faced with evidence against it. This is the type of resistance that is often the subject of criticism, particularly when the critic takes the evidence against theism to be overwhelming. But faith-generated resistance will also insulate the theist from a change in *construal* of suffering. If she construes it in the relevant way (described in 7.5c), her faith-generated resistance will—or should—work towards the *development* and *retention* of that construal. And, as argued in Section Four of Chapter Eight, this can be perfectly rational.<sup>54</sup>

### 8.6 Conclusion

To sum up the lessons of this chapter, faith generates a kind of resistance in faithful agents. This applies to faith of any kind, religious or otherwise. The resistance that faith generates can insulate the agent in ways that allow their faith to be preserved when faced with certain obstacles (epistemic or otherwise). And this resistance can be perfectly rational. It can also come out as reasonable, when tested by the virtues and logic of resistance. So, for example, the Christian may work to construe the evils of the world

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<sup>54</sup> This process also seems to be a kind of “faith seeking understanding,” to borrow a phrase from St. Anselm (see Anselm 2001). After all, one’s faith—a commitment to the Christian path—may come prior to one’s ability to construe the evils of this world in the relevant ways. But (if the theist is right) it is in reconstruing those evils that one comes to better understand some important truths about reality. So faith precedes understanding.

as defeasible, integral to important personal stories, and as part of the beginning of those stories. She may also (rationally and reasonably) retain this construal in the face of serious evidence against it. And she may (reasonably and ethically) work with unreasonable resisters of God (or theism) to help *them* to construe the evils of the world in that way. In doing so, her attempts at reconstructing the evils of the world—and inviting others along for the ride—constitutes a kind of “faith seeking understanding.”

In this project, I have attempted to provide an account of *resistance*, as well as a series of ways to distinguish between *reasonable* and *unreasonable* resistance. When studying logic, we learn how to identify arguments and evaluate them. My account provides an analogous way of identifying and evaluating instances of resistance. Next, I applied these lessons to discussion of God, theism, and evil. I argued that the problem of evil—really, the *problems* of evil—can often be understood in terms of resistance. As such, these problems are subject to the evaluative standards I developed for resistance generally. We saw this at work in particular cases (e.g. Job, Ivan Karamazov, etc.). And I drew from those particular cases a number of general points about the reasonableness of the problem of evil. Lastly, I ended with a discussion of the connection between faith and resistance, emphasizing how faith might lead agents to a deeper understanding of the world (e.g. by transforming their construal of the data of good and evil).

This does not form a complete response to the problem of evil. That is, it may turn out that some formulations of the problem (by some agents) are perfectly reasonable. Some agents may indeed have “a case” against God or theism. But if the findings here are correct, many do not. And this is important because the task of theodicy—an attempt to justify the ways of God to human beings—is often taken to need no justification. This

project denies that assumption. In other words, I have shown (implicitly at least) that human beings may not be in a position to “bring God to trial” in the first place. The focus of this project has been on the *resister*: The *individual* who resists God or theism. And it is only after clearing the hurdles set forth by the virtues and logic of resistance that the resister can reasonably *hope* to bring God to trial. But even should the resister clear those obstacles, the theist—serving as God’s defense attorney—may bring to the trial a wealth of defenses and theodicies on behalf of the divine.

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