# Skeptical Theism

Timothy Perrine and Stephen J. Wykstra

In *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil*, eds. Chad Meister and Paul K. Moser.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Abstract: Skeptical theism is a family of responses to the evidential problem of evil. What unifies this family is two general claims. First, that even if God were to exist, we shouldn't expect to see God's reasons for permitting the suffering we observe. Second, the previous claim entails the failure of a variety of arguments from evil against the existence of God. In this essay, we identify three particular articulations of skeptical theism—three different ways of "filling in" those two claims—and describes their role in responding to evidential arguments of evil due to William Rowe and Paul Draper. But skeptical theism has been subject to a variety of criticisms, several of which raise interesting issues and puzzles not just in philosophy of religion but other areas of philosophy as well. Consequently, we discuss some of these criticisms, partly with an eye to bringing out the connections between skeptical theism and current topics in mainstream philosophy. Finally, we conclude by situating skeptical theism within our own distinctive methodology for evaluating world views, what we call "worldview theory versioning."

Skeptical theism emerged in the 1980s in response to the *evidential* problem of evil, itself emerging out of the apparent collapse of the *logical* problem of evil.[1] [2] While the seeds of evidential arguments can be found in Hume's *Dialogues*, they were brought into the limelight by the pioneering work of the late William Rowe and Paul Draper. But these sophisticated formulations of evidential atheological arguments gave rise—and continue to give rise—to "skeptical theistic responses" by William Alston, Michael Bergmann, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Alvin Plantinga, Peter van Inwagen, Stephen Wykstra, and others.

The dialectic between evidential atheology and skeptical theism, because of its ever-increasing connections to other perplexing issues in mainstream philosophy, has become a rich and lively one. With limited space, our aim is to pinpoint the key ways in which skeptical theists have sought to defuse the evidential arguments from evil, to spotlight problems central to current debates among philosophers of religion, bringing out how these intertwine with issues within mainstream philosophy, and to offer some new ideas, including a proposal for taking skeptical theism into new waters of "constructive worldview theorizing."[3]

---

[1] This paper is fully co-authored, with last names listed alphabetically.

[2] The logical version claimed, roughly, that the existence of any evil whatsoever was (logically) inconsistent with theism. That argument is widely seen to fail due to the work of Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense, though concerns over technical elements of that defense have arisen. (Cf. Howard-Snyder (2013).) We won't treat that argument from evil as the more pressing arguments are evidential ones that skeptical theists try to undermine.

[3] Existential, Biblical, and theological roots of skeptical theism are explored in Wykstra (2017a). Noteworthy here are writings of Nicholas Wolterstorff following the death of his son Eric in a climbing accident. He writes (1978): "Job's friends tried out on him their explanations… I have read the theodicies to justify the ways of God to man. I find them unconvincing. To the most agonized question I have ever asked, I do not know the answer. I do not know why God watched him fall. I do not know why God would watch me wounded. I cannot even guess.…" For his further reflections, see Wolterstorff (2010).

# 1.  THE CORE-CLAIMS OF SKEPTICAL THEISM

Skeptical theism—like the evidential problem of evil to which it responds—comes in many versions, with many roots. We propose that two core claims form the root of all lines of the family tree:

>    *(I) The Core Conditional:* If the theistic God does exist, then very likely there is a divine-human gap such that we humans should, for many evils in our world, not expect to grasp the divine purposes and reckonings behind God's allowing these evils.

And:

>    *(II) The Core Implication:* The *Core Conditional* entails the failure of a variety of important anti-theistic evidential arguments from evil.

Various skeptical-theists take these core claims in different directions, reflecting both their varying philosophical orientations, and the variety of atheological arguments being targeted. Before looking at the differences, however, we underscore three points.

First, the *Core Conditional* is *not* seen by skeptical theists as precluding knowledge (or reasonable belief) of God's existence, attributes, or capacity for self-revelation to humans in a way suited to their capacities. It is seen as expressing a *conditional epistemic humility* about the scope of our grasp of God's cosmic purposes and plans. For if God exists, we should not expect to grasp more than a small *fraction* of either the goods which lead God to act as God acts (including divine acts of allowing evil) or the constraints that make such divine allowings needful. A corollary of this conditional epistemic humility is that even if God were to exist, we nevertheless should not expect to be able to fully explain or predict anywhere near all the features of good and evil in the world around us.

Regarding the second core claim—*Core Implication*—we stress that skeptical theism is fully compatible with affirming that *some* features of evil in our world decrease to *some* extent the probability or reasonableness of theism.[4] What is essential to contemporary skeptical theism is the claim that "conditional epistemic humility" takes the steam out of many evidential arguments from evil against theism on offer.

Taken together, we note, the two core claims suggest that the label "skeptical theism" is a misnomer.[5] As conditionals, both claims can be fully embraced not only by theists, but by atheists, agnostics, pantheists, panentheists, and all manner of non-theists.  Moreover, there's nothing especially "skeptical" about epistemic humility. As even Dirty Harry Callahan had to regularly if unsuccessfully remind himself, "a man's got to know his limits."

# 2.  THE VARIETIES OF SKEPTICAL THEISM

## 2.1.  CORNEA-based Skeptical Theism

In the contemporary literature, an early version of skeptical theism was Wykstra's "CORNEA" response to William Rowe's 1979 paper that opened the floodgates of evidential arguments from evil. Rowe's case culminates in a two-premise argument that, slightly simplified, goes like this:

---

[4] Construing skeptical theism as this stronger claim is not baseless, as it can be found in skeptical-theist writings (cf. Wykstra (1984) Howard-Snyder and Bergmann (2004)). But we see it as limit-theses not universally accepted, cf. Wykstra (1996: 137).

[5] Cf. Howard-Snyder (2009: 20).

*Rowe-1:* If God exists, then God will prevent any instance of intense suffering unless doing so would lose some greater good (or permit some evil equally bad or worse).[6]

*Rowe-2*: There exist instances of intense suffering the divine allowing of which do not serve any God-justifying good.

*Rowe*-3: Therefore, God does not exist.[7]

This argument is deductively valid. What makes the case "evidential" is Rowe's way of supporting the second premise. (Rowe sees Rowe-1 as a conceptual truth on which theists and non-theists should agree.[8]) Rowe here relies on the story—one he takes to have prolific instantiations—of a fawn who, burned in a forest fire, perishes after days of agonizing pain. Rowe's argument—FAWN, we'll call it—goes like this:

Fawn-1: No matter how hard we look, we *see no* God-justifying purpose served by this suffering;

Fawn-2: Hence, it appears that there is *no* good that would justify God in allowing this evil

Fawn-3: Hence, probably there *is no* good that would so justify God.

Rowe urged that FAWN, coupled with its multiple realizations in our world, gives us good inductive reason for accepting his crucial second premise, and thus Rowe-3 as well.

Fawn-2, Wykstra argued, uses 'appear' in an epistemic sense, meaning (roughly) that barring defeaters, it is reasonable to believe the clause following 'appears.' Wykstra thus analyzed the logic of epistemic "appears" claims and proposed an evidential norm for evaluating such claims—dubbing that norm by the unprincipled acronym CORNEA, the *"Condition Of ReasoNable Epistemic Access"*:

On the basis of cognized situation s, human H is entitled to claim "it appears that p" only if it is reasonable for H to believe that given her cognitive faculties and the use she has made of them, if p were not the case, s would likely be different than it is in some way discernible by her.[9]

CORNEA, Wykstra argued, helps diagnose fallacies in inferences involving appears-claims. Imagine a doctor who, after close visual inspection of a hypodermic needle picked up off the floor, reports

Germ-1: I see no viruses or germs on the needle.

On this basis, the doctor then asserts

Germ-2: It appears that there are no germs on this needle.

And from this concludes that

Germ-3: Probably, there are no germs on the needle.

Wykstra sees Germ-2 as overstepping, and uses CORNEA to challenge the move from Germ-1 to Germ-2. By CORNEA, Germ-1 entitles the doctor to assert Germ-2 only if it is reasonable for her to believe:

If there were germs on the needle, the doctor's perceptual experience (or "cognized situation") would likely be different than it is.

---

[6] For simplicity's sake, we omit this last disjunct in what follows.

[7] (1979 [1996]: 2).

[8] Though many theists accept Rowe's claim, there's a lively dispute over what could be a God-justifying good, specifically, the relationship between a God-justifying good and the person who suffers for it. See Adams (1999) and the resulting literature for discussion.

[9] (1984: 85).

But this is clearly not reasonable for her to believe, given the limits of unaided human visual perception. While entitled to say that she *sees no* germs, she is not—by CORNEA—entitled to infer the appears claim. Her visual evidence is, after all, just what she should expect if there *were* germs on it.

CORNEA gives exactly the right verdict in this and many other cases; Rowe thus wholeheartedly endorsed it. The issue is then what verdict it yields when applied to FAWN-2. In his application, Wykstra's distinctive moves are prototypical of skeptical theism. Is it at all reasonable to think that if there were a justifying good for a particular evil, then we would likely discern it? In answering this question, Wykstra claims that the outweighing good at issue here is

> …of a special sort: one purposed by the Creator of all that is, whose vision and wisdom are therefore somewhat greater than ours. How much greater? A modest proposal might be that his wisdom is to ours, roughly as an adult human's is to a one month old infant's…

Wykstra then joins this with CORNEA, using a parent/child analogy:

> But if outweighing goods of the sort at issue exist in connection with instances of suffering, that we should discern most of them seems about as likely as that a one-month old should discern most of his parents' purposes for those pains they allow him to suffer—which is to say, it is not likely at all.[10]

But this means that Rowe's FAWN argument (and with it his main argument) fails, for we are—by CORNEA—not entitled to Fawn-2: "it *appears* that there is no good that would justify God in allowing this evil" and thus not entitled to Rowe-2. If we shouldn't expect to see the justifying good even if it is there—if our failure to see it is pretty much what we'd expect if it were there—then not seeing such goods doesn't warrant us in claiming that the goods do not appear to be present.[11]

## 2.2. *Representativeness-based Skeptical Theism*

While not conceding that theism itself implies so unfavorable an estimate of our ability to discern outweighing divine goods, Rowe bypassed the subtleties of the "appears" idiom by shifting to a more plainly inductive formulation.[12] Just as it is reasonable to inductively infer from "all iron we've observed does not float in water" to "all iron does not float in water," so also, Rowe claimed, we can reasonably make the following inference:

> *Inductive-1:* No good we know of justifies God in permitting E1 and E2
> *Inductive-2:* Therefore, it is probable that no good at all justified God in permitting E1 and E2

(where 'E1' and 'E2' designate two horrific evils). Combing these claims with his earlier conceptual principle that God will prevent any instance of intense suffering unless doing so would lose some greater good, we again get the conclusion that it is probable that God does not exist.[13]

Focusing on the inference from Inductive-1 to Inductive-2, William Alston and Michael Bergmann urged that the inductive strength of that inference depends heavily upon whether we can be reasonably confident that our premise reflects testing of a "representative sample" of X's

---

[10] (1984: 88).
[11] (1984: 89).
[12] (1996: 267).
[13] This is a slightly revised version of the argument on (1996: 263).

of the entire population of X's.[14] Whether our confidence is well-placed or ill-placed will often depend upon what *sort* of thing X's are, and how much we know about them. For example, if we do not know whether some chemical element (say, carbon) has allotropes, then we may not be well-placed even to judge whether our sample from the carbon population contains a sufficient variety of cases to be deemed representative of *all* carbon—and so to infer a conclusion like "Probably, all carbon is soft."

With this point in hand, Alston and Bergmann argue that Rowe's inference from Inductive-1 to Inductive-2 is defective. Bergmann,[15] specifically, advocates for these two theses:

    (ST1) We have no good reason for thinking that the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods there are.

    (ST2) We have no good reason for thinking that the possible evils we know of are representative of the possible evils there are.[16]

Bergmann argues that, given (ST1) and (ST2), Rowe's new inference is defective. But this is not the only problem with the argument. Bergmann also submits two additional claims:

    (ST3) We have no good reason for thinking that the entailment relations we know of between possible goods and the permission of possible evils are representative of the entailment relations there are between possible goods and the permission of possible evils.[17]

    (ST4) We have no good reason for thinking that the total moral value or disvalue we perceive in certain complex states of affairs accurately reflects the total moral value or disvalue they really have.[18]

Bergmann argues that given these additional claims, we have no good reason to think Inductive-1 is true.[19] Rowe's revised argument thus continues to be undercut by skeptical-theist considerations.

*2.3 Modal-based Skeptical Theism*

A third important representative of skeptical theism is the "modal skepticism" by which Peter van Inwagen argues that important atheistic arguments—specifically, arguments like Paul Draper's—depend on dubious assumptions about the epistemic status of crucial modal propositions. While granting we can be pretty confident about some ordinary modal claims—that, e.g., there might have been more dogs in Paris in 1933 than there actually were—van Inwagen has long advocated a general "modal skepticism" coming, he says, to this:

    If the subject matter of p is remote from the concerns of everyday life, then our ordinary human powers of modalizations are not reliable guides to the modal status of p.

For instance, as van Inwagen sees it, while I may be in a position to assert "I could've been a janitor," I'm in no position to assert "I could've existed while nothing material exists."[20]

Failure to admit limitations of our "powers of modalization" is endemic to contemporary professional philosophers. We are, says van Inwagen, like

---

[14] See Alston (1991 [1996]; 1996), Bergmann (2001, 2009).
[15] We focus on his (2009) reconstruction.
[16] (2009: 376).
[17] (2009: 376).
[18] (2009: 379).
[19] Cf. Alston (1991 [1996]: 102-8).
[20] Cf. (1998 [2001]: 244).

> …a Greek mariner in Homeric times who thinks that his [well-grounded] belief
> that the mountain that has just appeared on the horizon is about thirty miles away
> and his belief that the sun is about thirty miles away stem from the same source,
> to wit, his ability to judge distances by eye.

Of particular importance is van Inwagen's application of modal skepticism to Paul Draper's evidential argument. Draper concedes that the skeptical theists' critique has effectively undermined Rowe-style inductive arguments, but he does not think they thereby undermine *all* evidential arguments from evil, specifically *abductive* arguments from evil.[21] Using Bayes' theorem and simplicity considerations as tools of choice, Draper pioneered abductive approaches for comparing theism and naturalism against a broad range of "Humean data" about both good and evil. To illustrate the dialectic between them, we begin with a minimalist sketch of Draper's approach.[22]

Draper compares theism with the "Hypothesis of Indifference":

> (HI): "Neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of
> benevolent or malevolent actions performed by nonhuman persons."[23]

Draper compares HI to theism *vis-à-vis* their ability to explain a full range of empirical data that he calls "O", formulated as

> O: "A statement reporting both the observations one has made of humans and animals
> experiencing pain or pleasure and the testimony one has encountered concerning
> the observations others have made of sentient beings experiencing pain or
> pleasure."[24]

Draper's overall strategy is then to argue *abductively* that HI is much more probable than theism on O. We can formulate his argument as:

> Draper-1: HI explains the facts O reports much better than theism does.
> Draper 2: So, there is *prima facie* good reason for thinking theism is less probable than
> HI.[25]

To contest the argument's sole premise, van Inwagen deploys his modal skepticism against a parallel premise of a parallel argument that is simpler but of the same sort—what we may call a Draper-*Style* argument. The thought here—accepted by Draper[26]—is that the modal issues brought to light will apply *mutatis mutandi* to Draper-1. In the place of Draper's data O (covering both good and bad), van Inwagen substitutes:

> S: A proposition that describes "in some detail the amount, kinds, and distribution of
> suffering."[27]

The parallel argument is then

> (Draper-Style-1): HI explains S much better than theism does.
> (Draper-Style-2): So, there is *prima facie* good reason for thinking theism is less
> probable than HI.[28]

---

[21] (1996: 176).

[22] Draper's argument has changed in the last 25 years; we focus only on the earliest presentation. We discuss a more recent presentation in our (2014).

[23] (1989 [1996]: 13).

[24] (1989 [1996]: 13).

[25] (1989 [1996]: 14).

[26] (1996: 179).

[27] (1991 [1996]: 153).

[28] (1991 [1996]: 153).

Here van Inwagen claims that a sufficient condition for showing *Draper-Style-1* false is to find a *version* of theism—that is, theism conjoined with further claims, H—that that meets the following two conditions:

(Cond-1) the probability of H given theism is high, and

(Cond-2) the conditional probability of S, given theism and H is high (or at least not too low).[29]

Taking an indirect route, van Inwagen does not provide a version of theism that, he thinks, meets these conditions. Instead, he proposes the following principle, which we'll call *PvI's Condition:*

We are in no position to evaluate whether the HI explains the data of (good and) evil, if there is a version of theism such that (i) the probability of the data, given that version, is high and (ii) we are in no position to determine how likely that version is, given theism.

Otherwise put, *PvI's Condition* states that if there is a version of theism that meets Cond-1, but we are in no position to say it meets Cond-2, then we are in no position to say Drapter-Style-1 is true.[30] Using his modal skepticism, van Inwagen constructs a "defense" of theism—a version of theism that meets Cond-1 *and* is such that, *for all we know*, also meets Cond-2.[31]

For his Defense, van Inwagen offers the following three-fold proposition:

Defense-1: Every possible world that contains higher-level sentient creatures either contains patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those recorded by S, or else is massively irregular

Defense-2: Some important intrinsic or extrinsic good depends on the existence of higher-level sentient creatures; this good is of sufficient magnitude that it outweighs the patterns of suffering recorded by S

Defense-3: Being massively irregular is a defect in a world, a defect as least as great as the defect of containing patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those recorded by S[32]

Now van Inwagen's key claim here is that we are simply in no position to evaluate whether, on the Defense, (Cond-2) is satisfied, that is, whether the conditional probability of S is high, low, or middling. We're in no such position, van Inwagen argues, in multiple ways: to think Defense-1 is false or unlikely we'd need to be (but are not) in a position to construct an extremely detailed story of how a world could go;[33] to think Defense-3 false we'd need to be (but are not) in a position to have reliable moral intuitions regarding the comparison of extremely complex cosmic states of affairs; and so on.[34] But if we are in no position to judge S is improbable on The Defense, and the Defense is itself not very improbable on theism, we have every reason to admit we are not in a position to assert Draper-Style 1, and so *mutatis mutandi* Draper-1.

## 3. ISSUES AND BRIDGES

---

[29] Strictly speaking, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for showing *Draper-Style-1* false that a version of theism meets these conditions (cf. our (2014: 148-50)). Nevertheless, van Inwagen and Draper appear to agree that, as a matter of fact, if some version met these conditions, Draper-1 would be false, perhaps because neither think that HI explains the relevant data very well.

[30] Cf. (1996: 228).

[31] (1991 [1996]: 156).

[32] (1991 [1996]: 157).

[33] (1991 [1996]: 159).

[34] (1991 [1996]: 161-2).

A second aim of our essay is review the rich issues provoked by skeptical theism among philosophers of religion, and to describe these issues so as to bring out their connection to current topics in mainstream philosophy.

### 3.1. The Analogical-Inference Puzzles

Wykstra argues for *Core Conditional* by appeal to a parent/child analogy, and for *Core Implication* by appeal to CORNEA. Here we present two lines of response to the first argument pressed by Rowe and Russell.[35]

Rowe objects that Wykstra's parent/child analogy does not support *Core Conditional*.[36] The parent/child analogy, Rowe concedes, does show that if God exists, then God likely grasps many goods (and bads) beyond our ken—goods in the distant future, for example. But what it needs (but fails) to show is that if God exists, God allows those evils we are aware of for the sake of this class of inscrutable goods.

Wykstra, in response, refined the parent-child analogy and supplemented it with a new line of reasoning. The refinement compared parents on a continuum of intelligence and goodness, arguing that as we get parents with more intelligence and goodness, we also get increased likelihood that that they will allow things (savings accounts for college, say) for the sake of future goods that are beyond the child's ken.[37] By extension, God would also allow many things in the present for the sake of our distant future. Supplementing this, Wykstra also argued that if God exists, we have considerable reason to think that our universe will have a depth reflecting God's own depth. And this moral depth, Wykstra argued, finds some independent confirmation in the way in which scientific revolutions disclose new physical depths of the universe.

These further considerations are, however, opposed by counter-considerations. Perhaps, given theism, it is probable that *either* the universe has great moral depth *or* that we human beings have cognitive limitations limiting how deeply we can see into the actual depth. But it does not follow from that, given theism, we should expect *both* an axiological depth where the "deep goods" play an essential role in God's permission of evil *and* an inscrutability of those deep goods for those who are suffering for the sake of them. In support of this point, Rowe argues that Wykstra's parent-child analogy backfires: for when a loving parent allows a dearly-beloved child to suffer (in, say, a medical procedure), the parent will do her best to mitigate the suffering by being personally present to the child as much as possible, rather than, in the midst of such human suffering, remaining hidden, distant, and unavailable.[38]

In evaluating these analogies, it is important to keep in mind that good analogical reasoning demands finely-tuned holistic judgment that weights dis-analogies and counter-considerations. One puzzling consideration is Rowe's usage of (as it has come to be called) "divine hiddenness" in his appeal to the parent analogy. Rowe clearly deployed it to show that Wykstra's parent-child analogy fails to undercut his original argument. But whether it can be deployed to do more than

---

[35] Some have criticized the second argument by claiming that CORNEA is false, either because it violates closure principles (Graham and Maitzen (2007)) or is incompatible with inductive evidence (McBrayer (2009)). As these issues have been treated elsewhere—Wykstra (2007) and Wykstra and Perrine (2012) respectively—we won't repeat discussion.

[36] (1984: 97-8).

[37] Wykstra (1996: 142-6).

[38] See Rowe (1996: 275-6; 2006).  For an analysis and response, see Wykstra (2008: 184-5).

this—in particular, to fortify Rowe's original evidence with further atheological evidence—is a topic of ongoing investigation.[39]

### *3.2.  The Modal Skepticism Puzzles*

Peter van Inwagen, responding to Draper-style arguments, appeals both to his more general "modal skepticism" position and to a plausible principle regarding epistemic probabilities:

> *PvI's Condition*: We are in no position to evaluate whether the HI explains the data of (good and) evil, if there is a version of theism such that (i) the probability of the data, given that version, is high and (ii) we are in no position to determine how likely that version is, given theism.

But Bruce Russell argues that, even given his modal skepticism and PvI's Condition, the critique fails: van Inwagen's Defense, Russell thinks, fails to meet PvI's Condition because, even given theism, we do have reason to think the Defense *unlikely* (or even *false*). This is because the first claim in the Defense is unlikely:

> Defense-1: Every possible world that contains higher-level sentient creatures either contains patterns of suffering morally equivalent to those recorded by S, or else is massively irregular

This is highly unlikely because given the vast amount of suffering in our world, we can easily imagine—in some detail—a world that contains higher-level beings with *less* suffering, where (for some particular evil) God miraculously intervenes to prevent *that* evil. And such a world, Russell argues, is not "morally equivalent" to our world: God thus has "decisive reason" for preferring that imagined world to our own[40]—and this, for (roughly) the reason that was specified in *Rowe-1*: a person is obligated to (and a perfectly good being would) prevent any evil it can if this does not sacrifice some greater good (such as the regularities of a world). Since Defense cannot be more probable that any claim it contains, and Defense-1 is unlikely given theism, Defense fails to meet *PvI's Condition.*

Van Inwagen is not without reply: Rowe-1, he thinks, is a weak reason for thinking Russell's world is morally equivalent to our world. Even if God could prevent some suffering without loss of a greater good, sorites considerations should keep us from thinking this gives God decisive reason for doing so.  Here van Inwagen offers analogies: a 10-year prison sentence for a criminal might be no less effective if it was one day shorter, but we quickly end in absurdities if we think a just judge is therefore required to shorten the sentence by a day, rather than choose an arbitrary cut-off point. Similarly, a just God may choose an arbitrary cut-off for the amount of suffering allowed to achieve a set of cosmic goods. The mere fact that we can conceive of a world that, without loss of goods, has one less bit of suffering does not suffice to show that world fails to be morally equivalent to the actual world. Russell's argument does not show Defense-1 unlikely given theism.

Draper resists van Inwagen's critique by arguing that even conceding modal skepticism, van Inwagen's Defense does not undermine *Draper-1*. As Draper reads him, van Inwagen is granting that we have some initial reason for thinking that the pleasure and pain we observe is more likely given the hypothesis of indifference than theism; van Inwagen is merely trying to tip the scales back in favor of theism by using his Defense. Draper urges this "tipping" fails because we can construct counter-defenses which neutralize van Inwagen's defense where a 'counter defense' is,

---

[39] Here the problem of divine hiddenness impinges on evidential arguments from evil. On this see Schellenberg's contribution to this volume, Bergmann (2009: 382-3), and van Inwagen (2002).

[40] Russell here uses van Inwagen's definition of "morally equivalent" (1991 [1996]: 158).

roughly, a version of theism such that the version makes the relevant data really *improbable* and are such that we are in no position to judge how likely it is given theism.

Draper's discussion of counterexamples is probabilistically quite complex and we lack space to fully articulate it. But insofar as his discussion of counter defenses incorporates this reading of van Inwagen, detailed discussion is not needed. For van Inwagen is not urging that defenses give us reason to shift the initial value that Draper gives. He is arguing that defenses give us a sufficient reason to *not assign even an initial value* to Draper's comparative claim.[41]

The key issue in this exchange, as we see it is, is whether *PvI's condition* is true. Even if Draper's initial criticism misses its mark, it might be that some revised criticism does show that principle false. A full discussion of the principle would take us deep into complex issues about defeaters for comparative epistemic probabilities—something we lack the space to discuss.

A different response than either Russell or Draper is to criticize van Inwagen's argument at the first stage.[42] For example, one might argue that van Inwagen's modal skepticism compromises *ordinary* modal knowledge. For instance, van Inwagen claims that his Defense would fail if we could, with good reason, say that there are possible worlds with nomological regularity comparable to ours, in which high-level organisms live in utopia.[43] But to say such worlds are even possible, we'd need detailed insight into the laws of nature that would hold in them, and how the evolutionary story would then go, and so on. Filling in such cosmic details is not remotely within our cognitive capacities.

It might be objected that the same inability holds for claims that van Inwagen thinks do fall within our modal knowledge—e.g., that JFK could have died of natural causes instead of being assassinated in 1963.[44] None of us can imagine in any great detail a possible world in which JFK is merely wounded and lives to a ripe old age. So, it may seem, van Inwagen's requirements for modal knowledge undercut much ordinary modal knowledge. Consequently, there might be reasons (independent of arguments from evil) for thinking that van Inwagen's modal skepticism is suspect, and thus that his criticism of Draper's argument fails.[45]

### 3.3. The Hellish-World-Immunity Problem

Some have claimed that Core Implication has an absurd consequence: if the expectable hiddenness of God's cosmic purposes means the evil in our world does not seriously disconfirm theism, then virtually *no* amount of evil—not even the universe being utterly hellish, with all creatures in intense suffering during their entire endless existence—can do so either.[46]

Whether this is a consequence, however, turns on the particulars of *why*, according to some version of skeptical-theism, a particular atheological argument fails to provide the intended support for atheism. After all, the claim that some particular argument (e.g. Rowe's) fails to show an evil to be gratuitous does not entail that *any* argument for that conclusion likewise fails. An analogy may help here. Balancing the budget of some large state university with over a hundred thousand employees and multiple satellite campuses is a complex matter for which most of us are ill-equipped. It requires knowing the particularities of the different campuses, the university tax codes, the details of large-scale loans for construction of new buildings and

---

[41] (1996: 226-7; 230).
[42] Here we rely on the work of Geirsson (2005).
[43] (1991 [1996]: 159).
[44] (1998 [2001]: 246)
[45] For further discussion, see Geirsson (2005) and Hawke (2011).
[46] Cf. Wilks (2009: 68-9), Almeida and Oppy (2003: 501-2), Rowe (2001: 298).

maintenance of old ones, the expected demographics over the coming decade…and a slew of other things that don't even occur to most of us. Given such ignorance, we ordinary folks might often—even usually—be in no position to second-guess most financial decision by a college president or Board of Trustees as cases of irresponsible management. But it doesn't follow from this that we'd be unable to deem as irresponsible *any* possible managerial decision—say, a decision to eliminate the entire chemistry department and use the laboratory spaces for arcades of video games.

Moreover, Michael Bergmann has argued that skeptical theism is consistent with other principles which, if conjoined to theism, would make the hellish world precluded by theism. One such principle is that a good God would not create a world such that each of its sentient creatures had, on balance, a bad life. Since nothing in skeptical theism rules out conjoining theism with such a principle, it is false that skeptical theism entails that theism could not be seriously disconfirmed—even decisively falsified—were our evidence to be that our world is a hellish world.[47]

### 3.4. *The Entails-Moral-Skepticism Problem*

Critics of skeptical theism sometimes object that the position entails some odious kind of *moral skepticism*. Now not all kinds of skepticism are odious: some moral truths, like some mathematical truths, might be beyond the limits of human understanding. But many theists suppose that humans have a God-given "common-sense faculty" for grasping some important moral truths; if skeptical theism threatens important regions of such "moral common-sense," we have a source of serious worry.

The objection here, as usual, can assume many forms, depending on what region of common-sense moral knowing is seen as under threat. Perhaps the most plausible threat is that skeptical theism undercuts—in a way that would lead to objectionable paralysis—judgments resting on practical moral reasoning where consequential considerations play a decisive role (which even deontologists recognize can occur). Suppose, for example, that I face a situation where I alone (among human beings) can prevent some instance of suffering (a child drowning, say) about to occur and can do so, without—so far as I can tell—any adverse consequences. Moral common sense dictates that I ought to act so as to prevent that suffering. But suppose I, as a theist, believe both that God regularly fails to intervene for similar instances of evil and this is because God sees that such non-intervention is essential to promoting to some inscrutable greater good. If I hold this, must I not worry about whether I know, or can even reasonably judge, whether the good that leads God to fail to intervene will be compromised by *my* intervening?[48]

Note that this problem does not just arise given the strong assumption (accepted by Rowe and Wykstra, but contested by van Inwagen) that God's allowing of each and every evil is due to God's seeing (as we cannot) that doing so is essential for promoting certain God-intended outweighing goods. It also arises on the more modest assumption that God permits *some* evils because doing so is in this way essential—and that these include evils that, by "moral common sense," we judge that it would be *morally wrong* for *us* not to prevent. So even van Inwagen's weaker view will not escape the problem.

---

[47] Bergmann (2009: 390). Bergmann's point is correct: skeptical theism does not entail P if it is consistent with some other principle Q, and together they do not entail P. Nevertheless, he does not point out, as perhaps he should, that to provide a convincing response, it must also be the case that the skeptical theist's reason for holding Q is not undercut by that skeptical theism.

[48] Cf. Piper (2007), Jordan (2006), Almedia and Oppy (2003), Russell (1996).

A proper solution to this problem will require attention to relevant work in contemporary moral theory.[49] To illustrate that relevance, consider Derek Parfit's distinctions between three senses in which an action may be said to be "morally wrong."[50] One is the "objective" sense: an action is morally wrong for an agent in this objective sense if (roughly put) the agent would correctly judge it morally wrong in the ordinary sense, were the agent aware of all of the morally relevant consequences of the action (and of its live alternatives). Now, on some consequentialist theories, the morally relevant consequences include any outcome of an agent's acting—no matter how inscrutable that outcome might be to the agent.[51] But in Parfit we find the suggestion that the morally relevant consequences are a function of—as one of us has put it elsewhere—the "optimal axiological horizon" of that agent (or that sort of agent).[52] This offers a cue to how skeptical theists might address this problem. That God the divine agent sees vastly many good and bad consequences that we human agents can't see does not entail that we are in no position to know, in situations where consequential reasoning plays a deciding role, what the objectively right thing for us to do is. For that knowledge will require us to weigh the good and bad consequences falling within *our* own optimal axiological horizon as human moral cognizers. The skeptical theistic proposal that God's horizon is infinitely greater need not, given the cue we find in Parfit, imperil our common sense practical reasoning about what the morally right and morally wrong thing—in Parfit's objective sense—is for us to do.

### 3.5. *The Entails-Other-Skepticisms Problem*

Beyond moral beliefs, skeptical theism can also seem to threaten the epistemic status often accorded to other sorts of beliefs as well,[53] ranging from external-world claims like

     A. I am sitting on a chair,

through well-established scientific claims like

     B. The earth is very old,

to claims central to major religious traditions like

     C. God chose Israel to bless all nations.

One source of threat here is that the skeptical-theistic strategy seems to open serious possibilities of divine lies and deception. Does not the strategy ask us to hold that horrific suffering in our world may—contrary to how things seem—serve God-justifying goods that are beyond our ken? If we hold that, won't we need to say that for all we know, God may well equally be deceiving us on matters like (A)-(C) for God justifying purposes which are inscrutable to us for similar reasons?

For these to be more than mere pesky questions, they must be morphed into disciplined arguments. Thus, we will here explore how a critic might craft a challenging argument that skeptical theism of the CORNEA-type threatens an untoward skepticism about the scientific claim that the earth is old.[54] Does the CORNEA strategy indeed create a threat for this claim?

Let 'E' be the pool of accumulated scientific data favoring the Old-Earth theory—data including such things as carbon-14 testing, ordered geological strata, tectonic plate rates of

---

[49] For one approach see Bergmann (2012). For worries about Bergmann and a Parfitean approach to resolving them see Wykstra (2012) and Wykstra (2017b).

[50] Parfit (2011).

[51] Cf. Sosa (1993: 101-2).

[52] See Wykstra (2017b).

[53] Cf. Hudson (2014), Weilenberg (2010), Wilks (2009), Maitzen (2007), Russell (1996).

[54] Russell (1996) has been an important stimulus to the argument we develop. For a discussion of the CORNEA strategy applied to beliefs like (A), see Boyce (2014).

motion, and so on.  Let 'Y' be the hypothesis that the earth is very young. Now according to CORNEA, E entitles us to claim that it appears that

   (~Y)  The earth is not young

only if it is reasonable for us to believe what we'll call:

   *Y-Crux:* If Y were true (i.e. the earth was a young earth), then E—the scientific data—
        would likely be different in a way we can discern.

   So far, CORNEA seems to pose no problem: the scientific community, after all, would endorse Y-Crux, noting that a young-earth hypothesis makes (e.g.) the results of Carbon-14 tests far less expectable than does the Old Earth theory. The Critic's intuition, however, is that if we accept CORNEA-style skeptical-theism, this endorsement is somehow no longer open to us. What lies behind this intuition is by no means obvious—skeptical theism does not, after all, have much to say about what to expect from a Young Earth hypothesis. The Critic's underlying idea becomes clearer, however, if we use the weighted average principle. For the Critic can note that we can flesh out two different versions of theism relative to the presumptions of scientific testing:

   T1: If God exists, he would make a veridical universe in which scientific inquiry gets at
        the truth, or
   T2: If God exists, God would create a universe in which the evidence systematically
        points to hypotheses that are in fact false for reasons beyond our ken.

If we combine Y with T1, we remain in accord with the commonsense presumptions of normal scientific reasoning, making it reasonable to accept Y-Crux. After all, given Y&T1 there is still a high conditional probability that the evidence would be different from what it is so that the probability of ~E, given Y&T1 is high (or in probabilistic notation: $\Pr(\sim E \mid Y \ \& \ T1 \ \& \ k) > .5$).[55]

   However, if we accept T2 things are different. For on Y&T2, it does *not* seem so likely that the evidence will differ from E (if only because we now have a hard time knowing what to expect from *any* hypothesis).

   Here the weighted average importantly enters.[56] It tells us that what *Y itself* "probabilistically predicts" regarding E will be the weighted average of how likely E is on each of these two conflicting conjunctive hypotheses, each one weighted by, respectively, the antecedent probability of T1 and of T2. And a lot will turn on these antecedent probabilities. In particular, if T2 is very probable, then the low probability of E on Y&T2 will swamp the weighted average, so $\Pr(\sim E \mid Y \ \& \ k)$ will turn out to be low, making Y-Crux unreasonable to accept. So for the CORNEA-style theistic skeptical theist to be reasonable in believing Y-Crux—and by it, reasonably in believing, based on E, that the earth is not very young—it must be reasonable for her to believe that T2 is not very probable at all. But—and here is the linchpin of the Critic's argument—skeptical theism makes this problematic: by espousing diffidence about what to expect from God, it blocks us from assigning to T2 a low probability, and so undermines our standard way of confirming scientific hypotheses.

   The argument we've developed has no obvious satisfactory response, and we offer none here. However, an important question here is whether entails-skepticism objections like this one dependent at all on its being *God*—rather than an evil demon or envatting alien of epistemological lore—doing the deceiving. If not, wielders of the objection (insofar as they are themselves not radical skeptics) are making an assumption: that of the many current respectable

---

[55] We here assume what we've discussed elsewhere (Wykstra and Perrine (2012)), namely that conditionals that are grammatical subjunctives—like Y-Crux—can be understood as expressing conditional probabilities.

[56] For more on this principle, see Wykstra and Perrine (2012).

responses to standard evil-demon arguments for skepticism, none—when transposed into the context here—will be equally availing to the skeptical theist. It is not clear to us that this assumption will survive serious scrutiny. In any case, the issue here once again intertwines with mainstream issues at the cutting edge of current epistemology.

## 4. SKEPTICAL THEISM AND WORLDVIEW EXPANSION

What unifies skeptical theists are two things. The first—*Core Conditional*—is an insistence that for finite human knowers, conditional epistemic humility is the appropriate stance for a reasonable person to take toward the full range of goods and constraints that would inform divine decision-making. The second—*Core Implication*—is that such conditional epistemic humility brings to light serious defects in at least some important versions of the evidential argument from evil. While the "at least some" may seem a retreat from the bolder claims of early skeptical theism,[57] evidential arguments have evolved beyond Rowe-style arguments of the 1980's, and no "one-size-fits-all" response handles all of them.

Indeed, quite varied strategies now seem in order. Against Rowe-style *inductive* arguments, it was useful to use a "minimalist" strategy urging that if God exists, then it is—considering just the core claim of theism—relatively unsurprising that finite human cognizers should often fail to see the goods or constraints comprising God's rationale for allowing suffering. But against Draper-style *abductive* arguments, a more "expansive" strategy seems needed, by which we explore the various "best extensions" of core theism that may best outfit it for an explanatory rough-and-tumble with naturalism on its own best extensions.

We see this expansive strategy as avoiding two temptations.[58] The first—call it Indulgent Adhocery—is to suppose that when certain data E has a problematic fit with mere theism (relative to some rival like "mere naturalism"), we can immediately solve the problem by plumping for *any* expanded version of theism, T*—no matter how *ad hoc*—that fits this data well. Such success is illusory: the expanded hypothesis T* may not, by E, be *made* more improbable that it was prior to E. Nevertheless, while T* is not made improbably by E, it still becomes improbable by its increased content and complexity.[59]

The second temptation—call it Compulsive Timidity—is to overcorrect, by supposing that if we are to avoid *ad hoc* expansion, we must never look at how some plausibly expanded version of theism might fit and illuminate the data. We find this temptation belied by the history of scientific theorizing, which shows us that it is only by a disciplined expansion of core claims that we gain deeper insight into reality. The search for insight proceeds precisely by taking a vague or unadorned core hypothesis—Darwin's vague conception of pangenesis, say, or an unadorned wave conception of light—and, by sustained trial and error, using new incoming data to expand that core conception into its best versions, comparing these with the best versions of rival core claims. Such after-the-fact expansions, by increasing the complexity and content of the theory, do indeed represent an initial price. But if the new supplement has new theoretical content, the price may be right—an investment in extra content may quickly pay for itself and more, by re-shaping our expectations in ways that yield high explanatory or predictive dividends. In worldview theorizing as well, we think, theory-expansion is central to the only process by which

---

[57] E.g. Wykstra (1984).

[58] Cf. Wykstra (1984: 91), Russell and Wykstra (1988: 155-60) and Rowe (1991: 79).

[59] Cf. Perrine and Wykstra (2014: 148-50).

the core claims of any worldview can, through the rough and tumble of worldview competition, eventually prove its mettle in the long run.[60]

As we see it, the past several decades of analytic philosophy can naturally be seen as attempts to work out coherent and systematic worldviews. In areas as diverse as philosophy of mind, epistemology, and ethics, philosophers have sought to let the detailed results of scientific research guide their effort to produce so-far-best version of an overarching worldview, and to let such a so-far-best-versioned worldview heuristically shape and illuminate further inquiry. In its newer approaches to the problem of evil, contemporary evidential atheology is squarely within this trend, and theistic responses will need to complement their earlier minimalist "undercutting" projects with that disciplined expansion of a theistic core worldview, by which it can best be "versioned" so as to harmonize with, and heuristically guide, our empirical inquiry into this world.

## 5. THE COHERENCE QUESTION

Our proposal that skeptical-theistic responses of the old-fashioned "minimalist" sort be supplemented with a more positive "worldview research program" may raise some skeptical eyebrows. To some the proposal may seem in tension with skeptical theism; to others it may seem incoherent, contradicting its very essence. We see neither tension nor incoherence. The skeptical theists' substantive claim is that if God exists, it is not likely that we should grasp the full range of God's purposes for current divine actions. This claim is entirely compatible with affirming that we are nevertheless capable of seeing and grasping a good many truths about God and God's purposes.

Many analogies model this compatibility. One earlier analogy was a university budget: It is perfectly consistent to expect to understand some but not all of the reasoning behind a university budget. The consistency remains even when there are more fundamental sources for our lack of full epistemic access. For example, while gazing at the heavens on a clear night, one could fully grant that innumerable celestial objects may lie beyond our vision and that many celestial mechanisms are beyond our current comprehension or imagination. But such humility about the limits of our perception, comprehension, and imagination is consistent with full confidence that an amazing number of celestial objects are in plain sight, and that we have a good grasp of many of mechanisms behind them (e.g. those behind the super-eclipse in September 2015). Moreover, epistemic humility about celestial objects and mechanisms is fully compatible with a passionate quest, in matters astronomical, to push beyond the current limits of what we can observe, comprehend, and imagine. In the same way, there is neither contradiction nor tension, in matters theological, between affirming that a divine axiology will have fathomless depth, while also affirming that many things lie within our current grasp, and many more may, on passionate investigation, come into cognitive focus.

The dialectical challenges we have here surveyed are, to be sure, both intricate and formidable. They are, however, intertwined with—and a backdoor entrance into—issues within

---

[60] A useful model for this is a broadly Lakatosian approach, on which mere theism functions as the "hard core" of a research program, just as mere naturalism is the "hard core" of a rival research program. There will be differences between worldview theorizing understood this way and scientific theorizing, as worldview inquiry would not dismiss modes of access other than the scientific (including, perhaps divine revelation and divine illumination within theistic traditions). But while we lack the same to do so here, we think an adequate model could be developed. We've tried our hand at this, albeit somewhat indirectly, in our (2014).

mainstream philosophy that are equally thorny. While granting that skeptical theism gives no one-size-fits-all answer to evidential atheology, and needs to be incorporated within a broader "worldview research program," we judge that it will remain a keen resource in that worldview competition that must ineluctably engage all reflective human beings, from world-class philosophers and Nobel-laureate physicists, to the janitors who sweep their floors and empty their waste-baskets.

**For Further Reading**
The literature on skeptical theism is large—spanning several decades—and still growing. An important collection containing essays defending and criticizing skeptical theism is Howard-Snyder, Daniel (ed.). (1996). *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. For van Inwagen's more recent reflections on skeptical theism and the problem of evil, see his (2006) *The Problem of Evil*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. For Rowe's later reflections on skeptical theism, see his (2006) "Friendly atheism, skeptical theism, and the problem of evil." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 59.2: 79-92. For a clear and careful presentation of the moral skepticism objection to skeptical theism, see Jeff Jordan's (2006) "Does Skeptical Theism Lead to Moral Skepticism?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 72.2: 403-417. For a clear and careful discussion of the objection, see Daniel Howard-Snyder's (2009). "Epistemic humility, Arguments from evil, and Moral Skepticism." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. Jonathan Kvanvig. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Finally, a third of essays in the recent volume *The Blackwell Companion the Problem of Evil*, (2013), eds., Justin McBrayer and Daniel Howard-Snyder, are dedicated to skeptical theism responses to the problem of evil.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Adams, Marilyn McCord. (1999). *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

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

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

Bergmann, Michael. (2001). "Skeptical Theism and Rowe's New Evidential Argument from Evil." *Nous*. 35.2: 278-296.

Bergmann, Michael (2009). "Skeptical Theism and the Problem of Evil." In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*. Ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bergmann, Michael (2012). "Commonsense Skeptical Theism." In Michel Rae and Kelly James Clark (eds.) *Reason, Metaphysics, and Mind: New Essays on the Philosophy of Alvin Plantinga.* Oxford University Press.

Boyce, Kenneth. (2014). "Some Considerations Concerning CORNEA, Global Skepticism, and Trust." In *Skeptical Theism*, ed. Trent Dougherty and Justin McBrayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Howard-Snyder, Daniel. (1996b). "The Argument from Inscrutable Evil." In Howard-Snyder (1996).

Howard-Snyder, Daniel. (2009). "Epistemic humility, Arguments from evil, and Moral Skepticism." *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. Jonathan Kvanvig. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel. (2013). "The Logical Problem of Evil: Mackie and Plantinga." In *The Blackwell Companion to the Problem of Evil*, eds. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Justin McBrayer. Blackwell.

Howard-Snyder, Daniel and Michael Bergmann. (2004). Evil does not make atheism more reasonable than theism." In *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. Michael L. Peterson and Raymond J. VanArragon. Blackwell Publishing.

Hudson, Hud. (2014). "The Father of Lies?" In *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, volume 5 Ed. Jonathan Kvanvig.

Jordan, Jeff. (2006). "Does Skeptical Theism Lead to Moral Skepticism?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 72.2: 403-417

Maitzen, Stephen. (2007) "Skeptical Theism and God's Commands" *Sophia*, 46: 237-43.

McBrayer, Justin. (2009). "CORNEA and Inductive Evidence." *Faith and Philosophy*. 26.1: 77-86.

Parfit, Derek. (2011). *On What Matters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Perrine, Timothy and Stephen J. Wykstra. (2014). "Skeptical Theism, Abductive Atheology, and Theory Versioning." In *Skeptical Theism: New Essays*, ed. Trent Dougherty and Justin McBrayer.

Piper, Mark. (2007). "Skeptical Theism and the Problem of Moral Aporia." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. 62.2: 65-79.

Rowe, William. (1979). "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism." *American Philosophical Quarterly*. 16.4: 335-341.

Rowe, William. (1984). "Evil and the Theistic Hypothesis: A Response to Wykstra." *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion.* 16.2: 95-100.

Rowe, William. (1991). "Ruminations about Evil." *Philosophical Perspectives*.

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

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

Rowe, William. (2006). "Friendly atheism, skeptical theism, and the problem of evil." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 59.2: 79-92.

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

Sosa, David. (1993). "Consequences of Consequentialism." *Mind*. 102.405: 101-22.

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

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

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

Van Inwagen, Peter. (2002). "What is the Problem of the Hiddenness of God?" In *Divine Hiddenness*, ed. Dan Howard-Snyder and Paul Moser. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wielenberg, Erik. (2010) "Skeptical Theism and Divine Lies" *Religious Studies* 46.4: 509-523.

Wilks, Ian. (2009). "Skeptical Theism and Empirical Unfalsifiability." *Faith and Philosophy*. 26.1: 64-76.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. (1987). *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ. Co.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. (2010). *Inquiring About God*. Ed. Terence Cuneo. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wykstra, Stephen J. (1984). "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of "Appearance"." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16.2: 73-93.

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

Wykstra, Stephen J. (2007). "CORNEA, Carnap, and Current Closure Befuddlement." *Faith and Philosophy*. 24.1: 87-98.

Wykstra, Stephen J (2008). "Suffering, Evidence, and Analogy: Noseeum Arguments Versus Skeptical Gambits," in *Philosophy Through Science Fiction*, ed. Ryan Nichols, Fred Miller and Nicholas Smith (New York and London: Routledge. 174-187.

Wykstra, Stephen J. (2012) "The End of Skeptical Theism: Reply to Michael Bergman" in Michel Rae and Kelly James Clark (eds.) *Reason, Metaphysics, and Mind: New Essays on the Philosophy of Alvin Plantinga.* Oxford University Press.

Wykstra, Stephen. (2017a). "A Skeptical Theist View" and "The Skeptical Theist Response," in Chad Meister and James K. Dew, Jr., eds., *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 99-127, 173-184.

Wykstra, Stephen. (2017b). "Beyond the Impasse: Contemporary Moral Theory and the Crisis of Skeptical Theism." In *Ethics and the Problem of Evil*, ed. James Sterba. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Wykstra, Stephen J. and Timothy Perrine. (2012). "The Foundations of Skeptical Theism: CORNEA, CORE, and Conditional Probabilities." *Faith and Philosophy*. 29.4: 375-399.