Why Sceptical Theism isn't Sceptical Enough
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(Invited contribution for *Skeptical Theism: New Essays* (OUP), edited
by Trent Dougherty and Justin McBrayer)

The most common charge against sceptical theism is that it is too sceptical, i.e.
it committed to some undesirable form of scepticism or another. I contend that
Michael Bergmann's sceptical theism (2001, 2009, forthcoming) isn't sceptical
enough. I argue that, if true, the sceptical theses secure a genuine victory: they
prevent, for some people, a prominent argument from evil from providing any
justification whatsoever to doubt the existence of God. On the other hand, even if
true, the sceptical theses fail to prevent even the atheist from justifiably accepting
it.

In section 1, I introduce the problem of evil and Bergmann's sceptical theses.
It's popular to defend the most controversial premise of the argument from evil
with a special kind of argument we can call a 'negative generalization'. In section
2, I clarify one important feature of negative generalizations. In section 3, I argue
that, if the sceptical theses are true, then the atheist's negative generalization fails
and the sceptical theist scores a genuine victory. In section 4, I argue that
Bergmann's sceptical theses do not tell us anything about whether we have some
rational, non-inferential means of believing the controversial premise and,
consequently, that the argument from evil may justify some in rejecting the
existence of God.

1. Skeptical Theism and the Problem of Evil
1.1. *The Argument from Evil*
I restrict my attention in this paper to what Tooley (2009) calls *direct*
arguments from evil. This kind of argument attempts to show that God doesn't
exist directly, without comparing theism to any alternative hypothesis other than
the mere denial of theism. The indirect approach, championed by Hume and
Draper (1989), compares theism with some alternative other than its denial. It
then claims that, given the sort of evil in the world, the alternative (often
naturalism) is more probable than theism.[1] For the purposes of this paper, we can
focus on this simple version of the direct argument:
> **E1:** If God exists, God wouldn't permit the holocaust (or insert your
> preferred evil) unless He had a good reason for doing so.
> **E2:** There are no good reasons for doing so.
> **E3:** Therefore, God does not exist.

E1 is fairly uncontroversial, at least if we can agree on an account of good
reasons. Following Rowe (1979), something like the following account is usually
granted at least for the sake of argument:
> R is a *good reason* for God to allow some evil E only if (i) R is a possible
> good G which entails E and R is at least as good as E is bad; or (ii) R is a

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[1] I discuss Draper's argument very briefly in section 5.

possible evil, E entails ~R, and R is at least as bad as E. (cf., e.g., Alston 1991: 29-30; Bergmann 2009: 376; Hasker 2010: 16-7)

Given this account of good reasons, possible goods and evils can be good reasons to allow some evil E *provided* that they bear relevant entailment relations to E. Although I have a number of concerns about this account of good reasons,[2] I will assume it for the sake of argument.

The most contentious premise is E2. How are we supposed to have justification for this premise? Following Rowe (1979, 1988, 1991), it is sometimes assumed that the argument for E2 should be a special kind of inductive generalization, namely a:

Negative (Universal) Generalization
NG1: In the sample, no Fs are Gs.
NG2: Therefore, no Fs are Gs.

Let us say that:

R is a *potential reason* to allow some evil E just in case (i) R is a possible good G or (ii) R a possible evil.

Every good reason is a potential reason, but not every potential reason is a good reason. The atheist's negative generalization begins with this notion of potential reasons. We survey all the possible goods and evils—i.e. the potential reasons for allowing the holocaust—that we know of. When we do this, we inevitably find one of two things. We find either that the relevant good (evil) isn't good (bad) enough to outweigh the holocaust or that the good (evil) doesn't bear the requisite entailment relation to the holocaust. More formally, we get the following negative generalization:

NG-Reasons
E2a: In our sample (i.e. the potential reasons we can think of), no potential reasons are good reasons for allowing the holocaust.
E2: Therefore, no potential reasons are good reasons for allowing the holocaust.

Michael Tooley (2008,[3] 2009) provides an argument for E2 that he takes to be a fundamentally different kind of argument for E2. I focus on NG-Reasons because Bergmann's sceptical theses were designed with NG-Reasons in mind, and I don't think that Tooley's argument enjoys any special advantages that NG-Reasons can't enjoy with some minor modifications.[4]

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[2] One concern is that it's incompatible with the dialectic of the problem of evil (see Tucker and Murphy ms).

[3] All references to Tooley 2008 are to Tooley's part of Plantinga and Tooley 2008.

[4] There are two key differences between Tooley's argument and NG-Reasons. First, Tooley's argument concerns right- and wrong-making properties rather than goods and evils. Even Tooley (2008: 132) seems to think that NG-Reasons can be recast in his preferred terminology. The other key difference is that NG-Reasons, and Rowe's argument more generally, focuses on whether there is a (defeasible) good reason for some evil, whether or not that good reason is defeated by further considerations. In contrast, Tooley focuses on whether there is an all-things-considered good reason to allow the relevant evil (e.g., see 2008: 124-6). Rowe's argument and NG-Reasons could be recast with this slightly different focus in mind. Hence, I think what Tooley says in defence of his argument can be applied to a suitably modified version of NG-Reasons.

1.2. Bergmann's Sceptical Theses

Bergmann claims that NG-Reasons fails. To explain why, he directs us to the following sceptical 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.
>
> (ST3) We have no good reason for thinking that the entailment relations we know of between the 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.[5]

A key ingredient in each of these theses is the phrase 'we have no good reason for thinking'. This phrase is, I think, to be interpreted rather loosely. A strict reading would allow the following response: "Fine, we have no reason for thinking that the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods there are. But, given your proper functionalist account of justification, justification doesn't require reasons (Bergman 2006: 63-4). Hence, for all ST1-3 says, we might have lots of justification that the goods we know of are representative of the goods there are." I don't think Bergmann intended to leave this possibility open.

Taken at face value, the primary intention of the sceptical theses is to *deny* that we have a certain sort of reason, namely a good reason for believing that, e.g., the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods there are. I think, however, the intended import of the sceptical theses is to *affirm* that we have a certain sort of reason, namely an undefeated reason to *withhold judgment* about, e.g., whether the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods that there are. The connection between the denial and affirmation is not hard to see: our recognition that we don't have a good reason (or anything else that might make it rational) to believe that our sample is representative is itself a reason to withhold judgment about whether our sample is representative. To make this explicit, I suggest that we replace 'We have no good reason for thinking that' with 'We have undefeated reason to withhold judgment about whether'.

Recall that NG-Reasons is essentially this argument: none of the potential reasons in our sample are good reasons, so no potential reason is a good reason for allowing the holocaust. If we combine Bergmann's sceptical theses, modified in the way explained above, we get:

> ST1-3: We have undefeated reason to withhold judgment about whether our sample of potential reasons for allowing the holocaust is representative of the potential reasons there are.

Recall that a good reason is a sufficiently strong possible good or evil that bears a relevant entailment relation to the holocaust. A potential reason is simply some possible good or evil. Each sceptical thesis essentially cites a different reason for what I am calling 'ST1-3'. We should withhold judgment about whether potential

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[5] Bergmann sometimes considers a fourth sceptical thesis (see 2009: 379-80; 2012: 12). I ignore this additional thesis because I'm not sure I understand it and Bergmann holds that "it's not needed to make the skeptical theist's point" (2009: 379).

reasons are representative, because we should withhold judgment about whether our sample of goods, evils, and entailment relations is representative of the goods, evils, and entailment relations there are. I will focus on ST1-3 because it will make the sequel smoother. Recall that NG-Reasons secures its conclusion by generalizing from a sample. Ideally, any time we generalize from a sample, we know that our sample is representative. But if ST1-3 is true, we not only fail to know that our sample is representative, but we have justification for *withholding judgment* about it. How serious is this predicament? In the next two sections, I argue it is very serious indeed.

2. Inductive Generalizations and Representativeness
2.1 Two Types of Representativeness

In this section, I identify the notion of representativeness that gives ST1-3 the best chance of posing a problem for NG-Reasons, whether or not it is the account of representativeness that is useful to, say, statisticians. In the next section, I argue that, given this account, ST1-3's truth would prevent NG-Reasons from justifying the claim that there are no good reasons to allow the holocaust.

There are at least two different senses in which a sample can be representative. A sample might be:

> **A-Representative:** Some sample of Fs is *A-representative* with respect to G just in case, probably, if n/m Fs in the sample have G, then *approximately* n/m Fs have G.

Something like this sense of 'representative' is useful to pollsters. Suppose we are trying to determine whether Obama will be re-elected. We might poll 1,000 voters and 700 of them might say they plan to vote for Obama. We might conclude that *approximately* 70% of voters plan to vote for Obama or, we might make 'approximately' more precise by saying something like "70% of the voters plan to vote for Obama *with a 3% margin of error*."

Contrast A-representativeness with:

> **E-Representative:** Some sample of Fs is *E-representative* with respect to G just in case, probably, if n/m Fs in the sample have G, then *exactly* n/m Fs have G.

E-representativeness is the more demanding sort of representativeness. E-representativeness clearly entails A-representativeness: if it is likely that exactly n/m Fs have G, then it is likely that approximately n/m Fs have G. Yet A-representativeness doesn't entail E-representativeness. Suppose that the total population is 1,001. It would be impossible for *exactly* 70% of the population to plan to vote for Obama. Our poll might nonetheless provide excellent reason for thinking that 70% *plus or minus 3%* plan to vote for Obama.

Depending on the type of inductive generalization at issue, both types of representativeness have their place. Consider:

> **Unqualified Inductive Generalization**
> (UG1) n% Fs in the sample are Gs.
> (UG2) Therefore, n% Fs are Gs.
> **Qualified Inductive Generalization**
> (QG1) n% Fs in the sample are Gs.

(QG2) Therefore, *approximately* n% Fs are Gs.

With respect to qualified inductive generalizations, what matters, if anything, is that the premise <n/m Fs in the sample are G's> makes it likely that the conclusion <approximately n/m Fs are Gs> is true. A-representativeness seems sufficient for that purpose. But an unqualified generalization may need to be such that its premise makes it likely that *exactly* n/m Fs have G, which would require such arguments to be E-representative.

Qualified inductive generalizations are often sufficient for our purposes, because we only need a rough estimate of how many Fs are Gs. Yet suppose I'm considering whether to believe that there are (exactly) no red ravens. If only 1 red raven exists, it would be true that *approximately* no red ravens exist; however, it still would be false that *exactly* no red ravens exist. If I am to rationally believe that there are no red ravens on the basis of an inductive argument, I presumably need an *un*qualified inductive generalization that relies on an E-representative sample.

When it comes to the problem of evil, it is crucial that there be no good reasons to allow the holocaust. If there is even 1 good reason to allow the holocaust, then God, if He exists, was justified in allowing it. To pose a problem for theism, NG-Reasons presumably needs to make it likely that *exactly* 0 potential reasons are good reasons. Hence, when we consider NG-Reasons, the sort of representativeness at issue is E-representativeness.[6] Henceforth, whenever I use 'representative' and its cognates, I will be referring to E-representativeness.

2.3 Representativeness and Reliability

Recall that a sample of Fs is (E-)representative with respect to G just in case, *probably*, if n/m Fs in the sample have G, then exactly n/m Fs have G. Consider again our generic negative generalization:

NG1: In the sample, no Fs are Gs.
NG2: Therefore, no Fs are Gs.

To say that the sample of this argument is representative is to say that, probably, if the premise is true, then the conclusion is true. But what does this probability operator amount to? I am using the term 'probability' very loosely, such that *probably, if NG1, then NG2* is synonymous with each of the following:

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[6] In claiming that E-representativeness is the relevant notion, I am intentionally deviating from what Bergmann says about representativeness. Says Bergmann, "To say a sample of Xs is representative of all Xs relative to a property F is just to say that if n/m of the Xs in the sample have property F, then approximately n/m of all Xs have F" (2009: 376). The main differences between E-Representativeness and Bergmann's notion is that the former has a 'probably' qualifier but no 'approximately' qualifier. Above I explain why the 'approximately' qualifier is inappropriate in this context. The 'probably' qualifier is needed for two reasons. First, it is needed to leave open the possibility that representativeness is required for an unqualified generalization to justify its conclusion. It might be required that the samples in our negative generalizations make it *likely* that no Fs are Gs, but it doesn't require that, in fact, no Fs are Gs. The second reason is that the 'probably' qualifier makes what I call 'RepReq3' less controversial. See note 10 on this point.

(a) The (conditional[7]) probability of NG2/NG1 is > .5.
(b) NG1 (conditionally) reliably indicates NG2.
(c) It is likely that, if NG1 is true, then NG2 is true too.

In other words, I am making no sharp distinctions between probability, reliability, and likelihood. When the concept is used as an operator I tend to use 'probably' or 'it is likely that'. In what follows I tend to use the term 'reliably indicates', because it will be convenient to talk about the concept as a relation between the premise and conclusion.

We can say, then, that if a negative generalization's sample is representative, its premise reliably indicates its conclusion. But what type of reliability is at issue? Is it supposed to be bare statistical reliability, some modal reliability, logical probability, or is it just an oblique way of talking about evidential support? For every different conception of reliability, we will get a different notion of representativeness. And it might be that more than one sort of reliability and, consequently, more than one sort of representativeness is relevant to whether an unqualified inductive generalization justifies its conclusion. In what follows, I'm going to leave talk of reliability at an informal and intuitive level. This approach will leave a lot of questions unanswered, but it is the approach that is generally taken in the literature on the problem of evil, and trying to settle the issue would take us too far afield.

3. Representativeness and Justification

Recall that, if ST1-3 is true, we should withhold judgment about whether one's sample is reliable. The purpose of this section is to explain why, if ST1-3 is true, it follows that the atheist's negative generalization, NG-Reasons, fails. The short answer is that, if ST1-3 is true, then the atheist's negative generalization fails to satisfy a necessary condition on inferential justification. In 3.1, I'll identify the necessary condition that I think Bergmann has in mind, and in 3.2, I'll defend this necessary condition. The upshot will be that the atheist's negative generalization fails and the atheist doesn't get what she really wants.

3.1 Representativeness Requirements

Although it may not be obvious which requirement Bergmann has in mind, it is clear that it has something to do with representativeness. Consider:

RepReq1: S's negative generalization NG can make its conclusion justified only if NG's sample is representative of G.

NG, recall, is the argument that *in the sample no Fs are Gs therefore no Fs are Gs*. RepReq1 holds that my belief in the conclusion is justified only if NG's sample is in fact representative. As previously mentioned, a negative generalization's sample is representative with respect to G only if its premise reliably indicates its conclusion. Hence, RepReq1 says, in other words, that S's negative generalization justifies its conclusion only if the premise reliably indicates the conclusion. With this gloss, RepReq1 may sound like the sort of requirement that

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[7]The 'conditional' qualifier indicates that we are talking about the probability of NG2 *on the condition that* NG1 is true. A similar point holds for the qualifier in (b). I suppress the qualifier in all subsequent discussion.

only reliabilists, such as John Greco (1999, 2000), would accept. Keep in mind, though, that we are working with a very generic understanding of reliability, and even internalists will say that one's premise needs to reliably indicate its conclusion in some sense; they will simply say that the relevant sort of reliability is necessary, knowable a priori, and that it doesn't entail statistical reliability in the actual world.

Regardless of whether RepReq1 is true, it's not the requirement that Bergmann thinks will be violated if ST1-3 is true. Bergmann doesn't say that it is *false* that our sample of potential reasons is representative.[8] What he says is that we have *no good reason* to think that our sample is representative, and that "we are seriously in the dark about whether the possible goods, evils, and entailments between them are likely to contain the makings of a potentially God-justifying reason to permit [the holocaust]" (2009: 379). Apparently, then, the problem of evil is supposed to fail because it violates some other requirement related to the representativeness of samples.

Consider:

> **RepReq2:** S's negative generalization NG can make its conclusion justified only if S has a justified belief that NG's sample is representative.

RepReq2 is closer to the relevant sort of requirement, as it concerns, not whether NG is in fact representative, but our epistemic access to whether this fact obtains. In fact, this requirement could certainly motivate sceptical theism in the following way: "Given ST1-3, we do not have a justified belief that our sample is representative. But such a belief is required for a negative generalization to make its conclusion justified."

Although RepReq2 can underwrite Bergmann's sceptical theism, it is advisable that he choose a different route. Given the above account of representativeness, RepReq2 is tantamount to the claim that NG provides justification for its conclusion only if one has a justified belief that NG1 reliably indicates NG2. Philosophers will have two sorts of worries about claim. First, they will worry that it is psychologically implausible: "Since we do not ordinarily have beliefs of the relevant sort, given RepReq2, we would not justifiably believe the conclusions of our negative generalizations. Yet are justified in believing at least some of these conclusions." Second, some philosophers will object that RepReq2 leads to Humean scepticism about induction. This worry will be especially pressing if Bergmann were to demand that one not only have a justified belief that NG's sample is representative, but also that the justified belief be *antecedent* to the conclusion's being justified. If Bergmann wants sceptical theism to be rather uncontroversial, he needs to look elsewhere.

A more uncontroversial requirement that can be used to underwrite Bergmann's sceptical theism is:

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[8] Bergmann explicitly denies that this is what he is saying. See, e.g., his 2001: 284.

RepReq3: S's negative generalization NG can make its conclusion justified only if S doesn't have undefeated reason to withhold judgment or disbelieve that NG's sample is representative.[9]

If we recognize that we have no good reason to believe that our sample of potential reasons is representative, then we have reason to withhold judgment about whether our sample is representative. If RepReq3 is true and the reason isn't defeated, it follows that NG-Reasons cannot provide justification for believing its conclusion. Hence, RepReq3 seems strong enough to do the work Bergmann needs done. But is RepReq3 true?

3.2 Defending RepReq3

RepReq3 certainly seems very plausible. Consider an illustration. Suppose you are trying to determine whether there are any atheists at some particular school. The most pertinent information you know is that (i) in the sample of students polled, no student was an atheist, (ii) the students were polled as they were leaving church on Sunday morning, and (iii) you justifiably withhold judgment as to whether this particular school requires students to sign a statement of faith. In such a case, a negative generalization from (i) would be irrational because (ii) and (iii) together provide you with a reason to withhold judgment about whether the sample is representative. Their conjunction doesn't provide a reason to *disbelieve* that the sample is representative, because given (iii), for all you know, the religious views of a sample of students leaving a church is representative of the students in the school.

RepReq3 also seems grounded in a more fundamental epistemic principle. Recall that, given the account of representativeness at issue, when you have reason to doubt that the sample of your negative generalization is representative, you doubt that your premise reliably indicates your conclusion. Now suppose that you provide what is in fact a sound proof of some mathematical theorem. This proof will not justify its conclusion if you also have undefeated reason to withhold judgment about whether the premises reliably indicate their conclusion. If you are really tired or you just discovered that you were drugged with something known to cause mistakes in reasoning, then you might have undefeated reason to withhold judgment about whether the premise reliably indicates its conclusion. In such circumstances, you would not be rational in accepting the proof, even though the proof is perfectly legitimate.

RepReq3 is, in other words, just a specific application of this more general principle: an argument *P therefore Q* can make its conclusion rational only if S doesn't have undefeated reason to withhold judgment or disbelieve that P reliably indicates Q. But there seems to be an even deeper principle at play. If I have

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[9] One may argue: "If S doesn't have undefeated good reason to withhold judgment or disbelieve that NG's sample is representative, then S has good reason to hold that NG's sample is representative (cf. Fumerton 2006: 186); therefore, RepReq3 entails that one must have justification for representativeness." I tentatively reject the premise of this argument, but it doesn't matter for the purposes of this paper. Requiring no reason to withhold is weaker and less controversial than requiring positive reason to believe that the sample is representative. If Bergmann wants his sceptical theism to be as uncontroversial as possible, he should go with RepReq3.

reason to believe that certain experiences are not reliable indicators of their contents (e.g. I seem to see red, but someone tells me the wall is illuminated by red lights, so would look red even if it is not in fact red), then I am not rational in believing the contents of my experience, at least not in virtue of having the experience. Perhaps the deeper principle is something like this: a mental state M can provide justification for holding belief B only if the subject doesn't have undefeated good reason to disbelieve or withhold judgment about whether M reliably indicates B. In any event, the intuitions in favour of RepReq3 are strong, and it seems to be grounded in a more general principle that covers believing something on the basis of any experience or on (believing the premises of) any argument.[10]

3.3 Why the Sceptical Theist Would Earn a Genuine Victory

Bergmann is correct when he holds that, if ST1-3 is true, then the atheist's NG-Reasons fails. NG-Reasons, recall, is the argument *no potential reasons in the sample are good reasons therefore no potential reasons are good reasons*. Given ST1-3, NG-Reasons violates RepReq3. ST1-3 holds that we have undefeated reason to withhold judgment about whether NG-Reasons' sample is representative, which is equivalent to the claim that we have undefeated reason to withhold judgment about whether NG-Reasons' premise reliably indicates its conclusion. Yet this is precisely the sort of situation that RepReq3 says is incompatible with NG-Reasons' providing justification for its conclusion. Since ReqReq3 seems very plausible, if ST1-3 is true, NG-Reasons fails to provide justification to believe E2.[11]

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[10] In nt 6, I claimed that a notion of representativeness which included a probability operator would make RepReq3 less controversial. This sub-section explained why RepReq3 is very plausible when 'representativeness' is defined so that it has a probability operator. The basic, widely-acknowledged point was that withholding judgment about whether your premise reliably indicates your conclusion is a defeater. Without the probability operator, E-representativeness would be defined in terms of a mere material conditional that has no tight connection with reliability. On such a notion, if we withhold judgment about whether the sample in our argument is representative, we are in effect withholding judgment about this material conditional: if my premise is true, then my conclusion is true too. It's more obvious to me that I have a defeater for an inductive generalization if I withhold judgment about *my premise reliably indicates its conclusion* than if I withhold judgment about the conditional *if my premise is true, my conclusion is too*. And while other epistemologists agree that I have a defeater if I withhold about the reliability proposition, they don't really discuss cases where I withhold solely about the mere material conditional. If I always get a defeater in the latter sort of case, then we could jettison the probability operator in E-representativeness and modify my arguments accordingly.

[11] Hasker complains that ST1-3 have a "strongly *anti-inductive* character" (2010: 20, emphasis original). If I understand Hasker—and I'm not sure I do—his argument is this:

> If ST1-3 is true, then S's negative generalization justifies its conclusion only if S has a "fairly complete survey of the reference class in question". But this "fairly complete survey" requirement would lead to a fairly widespread inductive scepticism. So ST1-3 is false.

Hasker never explains why he thinks ST1-3 is committed to such a requirement, and I certainly don't see the connection. In any event, the universal generalizations that Hasker (2010: 21) wants to save plausibly concern regularities that hold in virtue of the laws of nature; the universal generalizations attacked by the sceptical theist don't seem to concern regularities that hold in virtue of the laws of nature. As Tooley (2009, sec. 3.2.3) suggests, it is plausible that our samples

Recall that, in this paper, we are focused on this version of the argument from evil:

> **E1:** If God exists, God wouldn't permit the holocaust unless He had a good reason for doing so.
> **E2:** There are no good reasons for doing so.
> **E3:** Therefore, God does not exist.

This argument will provide defeasible justification for the theist to believe that God doesn't exist only if *either* the theist has non-inferential justification for the premises *or* the atheist provides a good argument for any premise for which the theist doesn't have non-inferential justification. Let us suppose that at least some theists lack non-inferential justification for E2, which seems plausible. The atheist, then, needs to provide a good argument that E2 is true or likely true. The atheist puts forward NG-Reasons to secure E2; however, given ST1-3, NG-Reasons fails. It doesn't follow that this argument from evil fails to justify its conclusion for anyone, for perhaps atheists have non-inferential justification for E2 that some theists don't have. It does follow, however, that the sceptical theist achieves a genuine victory, if ST1-3 is true.

4. The Sceptical Theses and Non-Inferential Justification

In the previous section, I explained why the sceptical theses, if true, prevent NG-Reasons from justifying its conclusion. In this section, I explain why these theses do not cast doubt on any non-inferential way of justifiably believing E2, the claim that there are no good reasons to allow the holocaust. In 4.1, I give a positive argument for this conclusion. In each of 4.2 and 4.3, I consider and reject a Bergmannian objection.

4.1. Non-Inferential Justification for E2 is Untouched

Suppose Mommy is looking for Baby. She quickly scans each room from its respective doorway and doesn't see Baby. Of course, she knows that she didn't look behind any big objects, check in any closets, or look under any beds. She then considers the following argument:

> P1: Baby wasn't in any of the places I looked.
> C1: Therefore, Baby isn't in the house.

She quickly realizes, though, that she has good reason to withhold judgment about whether the places she looked are representative of the places there are to hide (this time of day it's quite likely that Baby is hiding from Mommy), so she appropriately withholds judgment about the representativeness of her sample. Nonetheless, Mommy can be well-justified in believing C1 if she sees Baby chasing the cute Westie down the street. Hence, withholding judgment about the representativeness of her sample doesn't prevent her from acquiring justification for C1.

One may object that this case doesn't get to the point: "What we want to know is whether Mommy can have some *non*-inferential way of acquiring justification for C1, even though she withholds judgment about whether the sample in P1 is

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need to meet much higher standards in the latter sort of case. Hence, Hasker has failed to show that ST1-3 have some objectionably strong anti-inductive character.

representative. In the case at hand, one doesn't have non-inferential justification that Baby isn't in the house; rather, she infers it from her knowledge that he is running down the street." I'm inclined to think that Mommy might really see (non-inferentially) that Baby isn't in the house when she sees Baby running down the street, but assume the objection is correct.

Recall that representativeness of samples really boils down to reliability. To say of a negative generalization that its sample isn't representative is to say that its premise does not indicate its conclusion. But, generally speaking, when we hold that a premise does not indicate its conclusion, it doesn't follow that we can't know that the conclusion is true in some other way. Suppose Mommy sees a blue chair and then considers the following argument:

P2: There is a blue chair here.

C2: Therefore, Baby is chasing a cute Westie down the street.

She recognizes that P2 doesn't indicate C2 in the least, but she might have non-inferential justification for C2 because she sees Baby chasing the cute Westie. Generally speaking, then, withholding judgment about whether a premise reliably indicates a conclusion does not prevent one from having some non-inferential way of acquiring justification for the conclusion. So why should it do so in the special case of negative generalizations? I don't see any good answer to this question.

We can, moreover, construct a possible case in which one has a negative generalization, the subject reasonably withholds judgment about the representativeness of the sample, and the subject nonetheless has a non-inferential justification for her conclusion. To see this, we need only modify the original Mommy/Baby case. Once again, Mommy considers:

P1: Baby wasn't in any of the places I looked.

C1: Therefore, Baby isn't in the house.

Can Mommy have non-inferential justification that Baby isn't in the house, when she withholds judgment about whether the sample in P2 is representative? Yes. To help see this, suppose that Mommy is in an Alpha Centaurian. Evolution (or God) has given these creatures a remarkable survival-enhancing power. Every member of this species gives off a unique pheromone (or radiation or whatever). Before a child is born, the unique pheromone is encoded in the Mother's brain. Although the process is draining and requires great focus, this encoding allows the mother to tell, within a few feet, where her child is, at least provided that the child is within range. We might even suppose that this way of locating Baby— call it 'BabyTracker'—is well-understood by the science of the day. Mommy thinks very carefully about the question 'Is baby in the house?' BabyTracker then makes it overwhelmingly and non-inferentially obvious that the answer is no.

Surely, it is possible for BabyTracker to provide non-inferential justification for C1, even though Mommy reasonably withholds judgment about whether the sample in P1 is representative. More to the point: justifiably withholding judgment about her sample's representativeness provides no reason at all for her to doubt her non-inferential way of knowing where Baby is. Likewise, suppose an atheist has a non-inferential way of knowing that there are no good reasons for allowing the holocaust. She can justifiably believe that there are no good reasons

for allowing the holocaust, and this is so, even if she knows that her sample of potential reasons is unrepresentative of the potential reasons there are.

The analogy with Mommy and Baby suggests that ST1-3 doesn't prevent one from having non-inferential justification for E2, the claim that there are no good reasons for allowing the holocaust. We get further support for this conclusion when we consider that negative generalizations don't seem to be an exception to this general rule: a good reason to withhold judgment about whether one's premise reliably indicates the conclusion does not prevent the subject from having some non-inferential way of rationally believing the conclusion. However powerful these considerations may seem, Bergmann contends precisely the opposite, namely that the truth of ST1-3 would prevent one from having non-inferential justification for E2. He has two argumentative strategies, and we will consider one in each of the next sub-sections.

4.2. Bergmann's First Strategy: The Requisite Psychological States Don't Obtain
Multiple accounts of non-inferential justification can be used to defend the idea that one might have non-inferential justification for E2. Consider:

> **Phenomenal Conservatism (PC):** if it seems to S that P, then, in the absence of defeaters, S thereby has non-inferential justification that P.[12]

A seeming that P is an experience with the propositional content P and a special phenomenal character, called 'assertiveness'. Seemings, which are also referred to as "appearances", are assertive in that they "have the feel of truth, the feel of state which reveals how things really are" (Tolhurst 1998: 300). A priori intuitions and perceptual experiences are plausible candidates for seemings.[13]

PC holds that (in the absence of defeaters) if we have a certain kind of psychological state, a seeming that E2, we have non-inferential justification for E2, the claim that there are no good reasons for allowing the holocaust. I'm guessing most atheists have very strong and stable seemings to that effect, and even some theists report having such seemings (e.g., Dougherty 2008; Swinburne 1998: 20-8). Assuming that these reports are accurate, PC entails that at least some of us have prima facie justification for E2.

I focus on PC because it makes the problem for Bergmann especially clear and decisive, and there is an existing debate about whether a view like PC poses trouble for sceptical theism.[14] Yet reliabilists and proper functionalists also can rely on seemings to defend the idea that one might have non-inferential justification for E2.

Regarding reliabilism, since seemings can figure into reliable processes and can constitute reliable grounds, they can justify beliefs—or at least be integral parts of the processes that justify beliefs. Presumably, most reliabilists think that perceptual seemings play integral roles in justifying perceptual beliefs. In

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[12] Defenses of PC include Huemer 2001 and my 2010 and 2011.

[13] Others, such as Swinburne 2001: 141, use the term 'seemings' to pick out inclinations to believe rather than a special kind of experience or propositional attitude.

[14] See Swinburne (1998: 20-8) vs Bergmann (2009: 386-9); and Dougherty (2008) vs Matheson (2011) and Bergmann (2011).

principle, there is nothing preventing the reliabilist from saying that a seeming that E2 plays a similar role in justifying a belief in E2.

Regarding proper functionalism, we know what we are designed to do, in large part, by knowing what we actually do. We all base beliefs on the way things seem, so it is plausible that we are designed to believe things on the basis of the way things seem. For example, most proper functionalists presumably think that perceptual seemings play integral roles in justifying perceptual beliefs. In principle, there is nothing preventing the proper functionalist from saying that a seeming that E2 plays a similar role in justifying a belief in E2. Hence, there are multiple accounts which can be used to defend the idea that a seeming that E2 justifies E2 (or is part of the reliable or properly functioning process that justifies E2).

Bergmann's response to such manoeuvres is to deny, not the relevant accounts of non-inferential justification, but that we are ever in the relevant psychological state. He says, "According to [ST1-3], it *doesn't* appear that there is no God-justifying reason for permitting [the holocaust]" (2009: 386). Unless Bergmann means something unusual by 'appear', he is simply mistaken. ST1-3 doesn't say anything directly about what experiences or seemings we have. At best, it implies that our seemings concerning potential reasons are not sufficiently plentiful or variegated to ensure that our sample of potential reasons is representative of the potential reasons there are. Yet E2 can seem true, even if our sample of potential reasons is unrepresentative or even if we have reason to withhold judgment about its representativeness.

4.3. Bergmann's Second Strategy: Deny that E2 is Commonsense

In a recent paper, Bergmann argues that sceptical theism can be reconciled with:

> *Commonsensism:* the view that (a) it is clear that we know many of the most obvious things we take ourselves to know (this includes the truth of simple perceptual, memory, introspective, mathematical, logical, and moral beliefs) and that (b) we also know (if we consider the question) that we are not in some sceptical scenario in which we are radically deceived in these beliefs. (forthcoming, sec. I.A.)

At one point in the argument, Bergmann considers a possible objection, according to which the atheist "can just see directly that a perfectly loving God is *unlikely* to permit the suffering in question and so she knows that God is *unlikely* to have [a good reason] to permit it" (emphasis original; forthcoming, II.A). Bergmann responds that this claim isn't a matter of commonsense. I agree. This claim is hardly one of the most obvious things we take ourselves to know. Indeed, some of us, e.g., Bergmann, think it is false. Yet Bergmann then concludes that "A thoughtful person…will, therefore, refrain from concluding, of any particular instance of horrific suffering we know of, that a perfectly loving God wouldn't permit *that*" (II.B).

The assumption that Bergmann seems to be relying on here is that, if a claim isn't commonsense, then one doesn't or can't have a non-inferentially justified belief that it is true. Yet this assumption is mistaken. An expert mathematician

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might have a non-inferentially justified belief that some argument is valid, even though the argument is too complicated for most of us to understand. Many people find it intuitive that there could be swamppeople or zombies, or that the correct answer in the trolley problem is to pull the switch, or that my nose and keyboard do not jointly compose some third material object. Presumably, their intuitions provide them with some degree of prima facie justification (at least given PC) even if that prima facie justification is ultimately defeated. Perhaps this prima facie justification is defeated by an awareness that many of one's peers disagree with one, but these claims would not be commonsense even setting aside such a defeater. Hence, we often have non-inferential justification for a claim without its being commonsense.

Although Bergmann is correct that E2 isn't commonsense, he is wrong to infer that no one has non-inferential justification for it. It is not unusual for a claim to be non-inferentially justified for someone even though it fails to count as commonsense. And, as we saw in the previous sub-section, given some accounts of non-inferential justification, it follows that at least some of us have non-inferential justification for E2. I conclude that ST1-3 tells us nothing about whether we have non-inferential justification for E2. If we take people's reports of their seemings seriously and assume that PC is true, then we also can conclude that some, perhaps many people have non-inferential justification for E2.

4.4. Why the Sceptical Theist's Victory Wouldn't be Complete

Sceptical theism is a complete response to an argument from evil only if it prevents anyone, including the atheist, from justifiably believing that God exists on the basis of that argument. We saw, in section 3, that if ST1-3 is true, Bergmann scores a genuine victory, namely that a prominent argument for E2 fails. We see, in this section, that the victory isn't complete. The argument from evil may not even defeasibly justify disbelief in God for those who, like Bergmann, have no seeming that E2 is true. Others, however, have strong and stable seemings that E2. Given some respectable accounts of non-inferential justification, these seemings would yield non-inferential justification for E2. Hence, Bergmann's sceptical theses cannot prevent the argument from evil from justifying its conclusion for those people.

Perhaps, though, there is some indirect way that Bergmann's sceptical theses can prevent non-inferential justification. I can report that, after considering Bergmann's sceptical theses and sceptical theism more generally, my seemings in favour of E2 are much weaker and less stable than they used to be. A lot of the time, it seems to me that I can't tell whether E2 is true. In my case, reflection on the sceptical theses has prevented me from having the sort of seemings that would provide strong and stable non-inferential justification for E2. But it doesn't have this effect on everyone—indeed, it may have the opposite effect on some, whereby one gets even stronger seemings that E2 is true.[15] ST1-3 can prevent non-inferential justification for those who lose the relevant seemings upon considering them; however, given respectable accounts of non-inferential

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[15] cf. what Plantinga says about the effects of moral disagreement at the end of his 1995.

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justification and that one continues to have the relevant seemings, ST1-3 is powerless to prevent one from having non-inferential justification for E2.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has been an attempt to determine what follows from Bergmann's sceptical theses. I have argued that the sceptical theses, if true, proffer a scepticism strong enough to gain a partial victory, namely crippling an important argument for a key premise in a popular argument from evil. On the other hand, the scepticism proffered by those sceptical theses doesn't pose a problem for non-inferential ways of acquiring justification for that key premise. Hence, Bergmann's sceptical theism isn't sceptical enough to prevent everyone from justifiably accepting the relevant argument from evil.

Yet even the partial victory is in doubt. It is conditional on the *truth* of the sceptical theses, and Bergmann has not yet adequately defended his sceptical theses. My concern is that he doesn't rule out a salient way of defending the representativeness of our sample of potential reasons. Bergmann (2009: 385-6) seems to admit that his sceptical theses don't address Draper's indirect argument from evil if Draper relies on the principle of indifference in a certain sort of way. Yet Tooley (2008: 126-131; 2009, sec 3.5) defends the representativeness of our sample of potential reasons using a very similar strategy. So Bergmann's defence of the sceptical theses needs to be supplemented by an attack on certain uses of the principle of indifference and other resources that are available to inductive logicians and Bayesians. Hence, more work needs to be done before Bergmann's sceptical theses secure even a partial victory.[16]

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