

## Wykstra on Evil

PHIL 320  
Philosophy of Religion  
Spring 2008

## Problem of Evil

- Logic
- Epistemology
- Metaphysics
- Gears of the formal machinery

## “Does not appear”

- Evidential
- Non-technical
- Epistemic sense
- Principle of credulity

## Rowe's Argument

1. There exist instances of suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
3. Therefore, there does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.

## Rowe's Evidence

- **Concede Premise 2**
- **Defend Premise 1 with conceptual arguments**
- **Aquinas to Plantinga**
- **Defend evidentially**
- **Rowe's fawn**
- **Apparently pointless**
- **Many such cases**

## Rational Support

- **Weak support**
- **Strong support**
- **No attention to counter-evidence**
- **Super strong support**
- **Not even weak support**

## "Appears"

- **Ken and Nick**
- **Appeal to mystery?**
- **Principle of credulity**
- **Swinburne's slip**
  - **Positive versus negative claims**
  - **Artifact of formulation**
  - **Appears to be no table in the room**
  - **Room appears to be empty**
- **Still, Swinburne is on to something**

## Three Killer Examples

- **No table in the hanger**
- **Sour milk**
- **Ceramics dean**
- **Are we entitled to use the expression "It does not appear that ..."?**

## CORNEA

- Swinburne – From “it does not appear” to “it is not the case.”
- Wykstra – Legitimacy of “it does not appear”
- Principle 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 in some way that is discernable by her.

## Plagiarism

- Suspicious essay
- Google search
- “It appears we have a case of cheating”
  - E<sub>1</sub>. Suspicious essay
  - E<sub>2</sub>. Google search
  - =====
  - T<sub>0</sub>. Case of cheating
- Rival explanations:
  - T<sub>1</sub>. Coincidence
  - T<sub>2</sub>. Student blog

## CORNEA & Cheating

- Does it pass the CORNEA test?
- Rivals must always explain the data
- Question is what best explains it
- “likely be different”
- Rank ordering
  - Table inference
  - Cheating inference
  - Dean inference

## Evil as Evidence

- E<sub>1</sub>. Moral evil
- E<sub>2</sub>. Natural evil
- E<sub>3</sub>. Animal pain
- =====
- T<sub>0</sub>. God does not exist
- Rival explanations:
  - T<sub>1</sub>. God has a morally sufficient reason, but it is beyond our ken (mystery theodicy)
- Rank order?
- Tie?

## Adult/Infant Analogy

- Quote on p. 155
- One month old infant
- Adjust the ages
- Six year old
- Our condescending adult perspective
- The reasonableness of her inference
  - We know a better rival explanation
  - Is the rival from her perspective better?
  - What is the best explanation for her?

## Ideal Jury

- Atheist makes her case
- Evidence, not a sound deductive argument
- Theist responds
  - Challenging the “admissibility” of the evidence – CORNEA
  - Present mystery as a rival
- Atheist responds
  - Evidence does not violate CORNEA
  - Atheist’s hypothesis is superior to mystery account

## CORNEA & Evil

- Rowe’s deductive argument
- Rowe’s inductive defense of premise 1
- Burden of proof for premise 1?
- The CORNEA challenge
  - Not simply the best explanation
  - Purposed evidence is not even relevant
- Which is more likely?
  - There is no God, so there’s no morally sufficient reason
  - There is a God, and a morally sufficient reason, but that reason is intrinsically unknowable

## Wykstra v. Rowe

- Hume and the title
- Rowe’s distinction
  - Restricted theism
  - Expanded theism
- Evil might count as evidence against restricted theism
- Expanded theism defines itself as immune to the challenge of evil
- Does the fact that evil does not count as evidence against expanded theism mean it does not count against restricted theism?

## Wykstra's Expanded Theism

- **God's attributes are within our ken**
  - Omnipotence
  - Omniscience
  - Moral perfection
- **God's morally sufficient reasons are not**
- **Is every bit of evidence, positive or negative, blocked by CORNEA?**
- **Impossibility of natural theology**
- **Will this be persuasive to the ideal jury?**

## Rowe's Audience

- **Fellow atheists**
- **Committed theists**
  - G.E. Moore shift
  - Friendly atheism
- **Ideal agnostics**

## Wystra's Audience

- **Atheists**
- **Fellow theists**
  - Defend theism by attacking argument for atheism
  - Defend the rationality of hold on to theism even in the face of evil
- **Ideal agnostics**

## Johnson's Audience

- **Ideal agnostics**
  - No reader is an ideal agnostic
  - Advantages of the idealization nonetheless
  - Make my case
  - Who am I really talking to?
- **Atheists**
- **Theists**
- **The profession**