Some Things Are Worth Dying For[1]

Brad J. Kallenberg

In April of 1992, Kristen French, a 15 year-old girl was kidnapped and held as a sex slave in suburban Ontario. For two days she was raped and threatened with death. Surprisingly, on the third day she grew defiant, refusing to perform a particular sexual act even after she was shown pre-recorded videotape of her predecessor, Leslie, being strangled by her captors with an electrical cord. (Leslie's corpse was sawn into 10 pieces before disposal.) A record of Kristen's suffering was preserved on videotape too. Of interest is Kristen's dying claim: "Some things are worth dying for."[2]

Kristen's story strikes me as a pointed example of the sort of suffering Some have offered as the basis for an evidential argument from evil. For example, William Rowe captures the heart of the argument in proposition P: "No good we know of justifies an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being in permitting E1 and E2." Yet I think Kristen's tragedy is more troubling than that of E1, the case of the fawn languishing for days horribly and alone in the forest before succumbing to third degree forest fire burns, because I do not know what it means to say that animals are conscious of their pain. Kristen's case seems also more pointed than E2, the case of the rape, beating and death of a five year-old, since 5 year-olds lack conceptual skills to fully cognize the evils of rape much less the sense that death is impending.

Given that her story epitomizes gratuitous evil, there is something unnerving about Kristen's assertion that some things are worth dying for. Taken at face value, Kristen claims to know of a good causally connected to some evil, namely, death-by-rapist, that makes the evil of some value, "worth it" in her words. Granted, she may have had a privative rather than a substantive good in mind (viz., the cessation of rape). Still, her story is reminiscent of others who insisted that some things are worth dying for. For example, at the turn of the 20th century, a 12 year-old peasant girl named Maria Goretti was killed for refusing sex with the son of a tenant farmer with whom Maria's

[1] Thanks to William Rowe and William Hasker for timely access to their fine papers. Thanks to Maureen Tilley for help in tracking down information about Christian martyrs. Thanks to Matt Minix for his research help and to my friends and colleagues, Terry Tilley and Bill Portier, for their close and insightful reading of earlier drafts of this essay.

[2] Russell Watson, *Sex, Death, and Videotape* Newsweek. (29 May 1995 [accessed 8 Oct 2004]); available from LexisNexis Universe.

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family shared cramped living quarters.[3] By all accounts Maria wasn't very bright, but she had been catechized and faced her assailant with resolution: "No, it's a sin! God does not want it." (Incidentally, her words are known to us today because the 18 year-old would-be rapist, Alessandro Serenelli, recorded them. Serenelli was haunted by the image of Maria who, as she lay dying, spoke words of forgiveness to him. Serenelli not only confessed, while in prison he repented, and much later lived out his days working in a monastery garden.) Or consider, an early Christian martyr, Felicitas, who refused to pay homage to the genius of Caesar and was imprisoned, tortured and killed for her lack of patriotism. In Maria's case, the good that outweighed her death was the preservation of her virginity. In Felicitas' case, the good that was worth dying for was her allegiance to an unseen deity. Both Goretti and Felicitas were canonized as saints by the Catholic Church.

It will certainly be objected that at least some of the details of martyr stories are apocryphal. That charge doesn't damage the point that I wish to make. For, whether it was spoken by the victims themselves or their redactors, a truth claim is still on the table: "Some things are worth dying for."

Now this claim—that some things outweigh horrible suffering—may be true or it may be false or it may be confused. But I am hesitant to discount it out of hand on the basis of proposition P, namely, that we do not know of any such God-justifying goods, because what gnaws at the back of my mind is this: "What if these women know (or have rational belief concerning) something I don't?" And, "Why might I not know it?"

In light of these stories, consider a sentence in Rowe's 1996 article, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look." In section VII Rowe writes,

> At long last we come to the question of P itself. What reason do we have to believe [P:] that *no good we know of justifies God in permitting E1 and E2*? The main reason to believe P is this: When we reflect on some good we know of we can see that it is very likely, if not certain, that the good in question *either* is not good enough to justify God in permitting E1 or E2 *or* is such that an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being could realize it (or some greater good) without having to permit E1 or E2.[4]

Rowe states "when *we* reflect on some good *we* know of *we* can see . . ." Who is the "we"? And, what might be involved in this seeing of theirs?

[3] Kathleen Norris, "Maria Goretti—Cipher or Saint?," in *Martyrs*, ed. Susan Bergman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

[4] William L. Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 276–77.

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In his classic 1984 essay, Stephen Wykstra framed the Condition of Reasonable Epistemic Access (CORNEA) as a challenge to the induction from P to Q, from "no good we know of" to the claim "no good at all," on the grounds that God-justifying goods are beyond human ken just as parent-justifying goods are beyond the ken of the month-old infant. Wykstra writes

> The linchpin of my critique has been that if theism is true, this is just what one would expect; for if we think carefully about the sort of being theism proposes for our belief, it is entirely expectable—given what we know of our cognitive limits—that the goods by virtue of which this Being allows known suffering should often be beyond our ken.[5]

A number of papers have since been written by Wykstra and Rowe (not all of them published), the upshot of their rivalry resulting in Wykstra moving from the assertion "God-justifying goods are likely beyond human ken," to a more "modest" position, which is to say, "God-justifying goods are *just as likely as not* to lie beyond human ken." Rowe pounces on this concession, thinking that it gives him the leverage needed to assign the probability that God exists, given background information k, an even 0.5 and then move swiftly to show that when P is conceded, $Pr(G/k\&P) << 0.5$, which is to say, the probability that God exists given P and in light of k is much less than 50/50.

My complaint is that this line of reasoning seems to falsify the nature of religious knowledge. I can't help but recall Wittgenstein's remark to Drury: "Can you imagine St. Augustine saying that the existence of God was 'highly probable'!"[6] However, I think that the mismove is Wykstra's (rather than Rowe's). His CORNEA principle sets up a comparison between what God must know—given the sort of being theists say God is—and inherent limits to what humans know. This invites a stinging challenge from Rowe:

> Is our intellectual grasp of goods for the sake of which God (if he exists) permits horrendous human and animal suffering *analogous* to a one-month-old infant's intellectual grasp of his parents' purposes for those pains they allow him to suffer? It hardly seems so. For a one-month-old infant hasn't developed the *concepts* necessary for even contemplating the proposition that good purposes may justify parents in permitting pains. Adult human beings, on the other hand, have the intellectual equipment to distinguish intrinsic goods from extrinsic goods, to distinguish different kinds of intrinsic goods, to recognize certain intrinsic goods as superior to

[5] Stephen J. Wykstra, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of 'Appearance'," in *The Problem of Evil*, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams and Robert Merrihew Adams (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), 159.

[6] M. O'C. Drury, "Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein," in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1984), 105.

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> others, to form an idea of goods that have never been experienced by living human beings on earth (e.g., total felicity in the eternal presence of God), and to make some reasonable judgments about what goods an omnipotent being would (or would not) be able to bring about without permitting various instances of horrendous suffering. Of course, we have to allow that there may be kinds of intrinsic goods we have not thought of. But we do have reason to believe both that every intrinsic good necessarily involves conscious experience and that the highest intrinsic good human beings are capable of involves conscious experience of God. So, we know of many goods and we know of some of the very highest goods that human beings can experience. Why then does Wykstra believe that the parental analogy provides a strong argument for the view that the goods that justify God in permitting much horrendous suffering will be goods of which we have no knowledge?[7]

Apparently Rowe thinks that adult humans *do* have requisite concepts for understanding God-justifying goods should they exist. While he concedes "we" may have not thought of these intrinsic goods *yet*, "we" nevertheless are capable of thinking them.

I simply want to ask who is the "we" who share these concepts? Do *all* adults have the requisite conceptual fluency simply by virtual of being adults? I think not. My first suggestion is that Wykstra, rather than framing CORNEA as a comparison between generic human beings and God, might have better framed it as a comparison between those who have undergone the sort of training requisite for coming to know God-justifying goods (let's call them "saints") and those untrained souls, who like the rest of us, have trouble specifying God-justifying goods (let's call them "spectators").

Second, I contend that an important difference between these two is masked by Rowe's working assumption (one that Wykstra gives every indication of sharing) that background information, k, is restricted to that which is *shared* between theists and non-theists. I find this restriction very puzzling. To set the probability of God's existence on shared background information k (for which the greatest common denominator is bound to be quite low) to 0.5 seems more than a little arbitrary. Imagine approaching a bridge we'd never seen before, and asserting that its safety is a 50–50 proposition *prior* to calling in an engineer! (If someone ordinarily approached bridges this way, it would say much more about the outlook of the person than about the trustworthiness of the local bridges.) *After* consultation with the structural engineer then, do we then raise or lower the *probabilities* accordingly? Well, I suppose we might if the call is ours to make, for example, if we had the authority to permit or deny pedestrian travel. The trouble is, what we would be doing isn't

[7] Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look," 275. Emphasis added.

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judging at all. Judgment belongs to the engineer. The engineer's opinion *trumps* our probability calculus because laypersons are not privy to the knowledge the engineer possesses—how could we be, given our lack of training? In other words, laypersons have little direct knowledge about the safety of this or that bridge. Does that mean we are left simply to take a stranger's word for it? No. Because while nonengineers may have virtually no relevant knowledge regarding the qualifications of *this* engineer who is unknown to us, we do have relevant knowledge regarding engineers in general, namely this: Anyone who undergoes an engineer's *training* is far and away more likely to accurately judge structural integrity than the rest of the population. If there is a probability to be calculated, it concerns not the safety of this bridge but the trustworthiness of this engineer, given his or her training. One assigns this likelihood not in light of information that the general public shares concerning *bridges* but in light of what the wisdom of the ages has established as the *connection* between an engineer's training and the trustworthiness of their judgment.

What remains then is whether there is such a thing as an "experienced" judge in matters of God's reality. Of course, such expertise might be hard to spot just as you or I may have trouble estimating whether this particular engineer standing before us is a reliable one. All we have to go on is general knowledge of the sort of training that he or she has undergone and the standard view that such training normally produces expertise. Allow me to use the term "saint" in this second-hand sense: by the term saint I am conceding epistemological privilege but *not* on the basis of my prior knowledge of that which saints know. Rather, the term "saint" is assigned in light of the *training* someone has undergone, training that constitutes appropriate preparation for thinking, judging and speaking on these matters.

On the basis of his working assumption, that only such information as is uncontested by either theist or nontheist comprise acceptable background information (k), Rowe asks:

> Will k include the information that ordinary religious experiences and mystical religious experiences occur? Insofar as the inclusion of such information raises the probability of G on k above 0.5 we will have to exclude it.[8]

As a matter of fact, Rowe not only excludes any putative knowledge which might be incurred by such experience he also excludes claims to knowledge *that* religious experience occurs.

Rowe's willingness to give God a 50–50 chance strikes me as very generous on his part. I suspect that Rowe's skepticism concerning the probability God's existence off the record may be even lower than the 0.33 he is willing to claim at the essay's conclusion. But what are we

[8] Ibid., 266.

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to do with Rowe's demand that we ban the saint from consideration? Ought we not ban the skeptic as well? On the one hand, there are writers like Augustine, who claimed that God was more real to him than he was to himself. On the other hand, we have David Hume. How do we split the difference between these extremes? Doesn't Rowe's initial probability value of 0.5 indicate an average calculated to appease the knowledge claims championed by both extremes? (And these *are* knowledge claims; both sides asserting that the other side is *ignorant*.) But without the Augustines of the world, how did Pr (G/k) get to be as *high* as 0.5? In other words, if saints are excluded, or even if skeptics outnumber them (as is commonly supposed), shouldn't the initial probability begin much lower than 0.5? Of course, then what numerical value might be assigned instead? It would be nearly impossible to quantify what the initial probability might be. Any number nominated would be easily contestable as purely arbitrary. But then, what makes 0.5 seem any less arbitrary? Perhaps 0.5 only *masquerades* as a nonarbitrary value.

However, the arbitrariness of this restriction and its accompanying initial value is really not what concerns me. What gives me real concern is that Rowe conceives the difference between theists and nontheists as one of *information*. I propose that the pertinent difference is between saints and spectators, and it is *not* one of information, but one of fluency. On my view, a lack of fluency may afflict believers as well as nonbelievers. For, the important point is not so much the broad chasm between faith and doubt, but that there is a *continuum of conceptual fluency* such that novices and non-players ought to operate with a principle of charity: spectators ought to take seriously the claims to knowledge of God-justifying goods made by saints precisely *because of P*, which is to say, precisely because we spectators *don't* know.[9] I for one certainly have trouble wrapping my mind around Justin Martyr's words to those who were about to behead him, "You can kill us, but you cannot hurt us."[10]

So I think that there are problems with Wykstra's principle of CORNEA because like Rowe, he fails to pick up the differences between spectators and saints. In his view,

> 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 that it is in some way discernible by her.[11]

[9] I number myself among the spectators, though I hope one day to be numbered among the saints in the sense I am using the term.

[10] Cited in L. Russ Bush, ed., *Classical Readings in Christian Apologetics A.D. 100–1800* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervans, 1983), 6.

[11] Wykstra, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of 'Appearance'," 152.

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But why should we assume that generic human H is likely to discern these differences? The trouble I see is with the optimistic assessment that Wykstra gives to H's cognitive faculties. Some have argued that there is an ordinary, normal baseline to human cognition.[12] It is *this* assessment that I want to challenge.

For example, imagine H is a tourist in France. For several minutes she has been conversing with a polite and good-humored native. All of a sudden, she finds herself flabbergasted because she cannot make heads or tails out of what the native is saying. When she asks clarifying questions, the native smiles and nods his head knowingly but then goes on to say something else equally unintelligible. What ought the tourist conclude? That the native is speaking gibberish (whether from meanness or stupidity)? Should not H's first conclusion be that perhaps she wasn't as proficient in French as she thought?

For the remainder of the paper, let me sketch some of the conceptual distance that seems to separate spectators (like us) from the saints. As a spectator I cannot fully cognize what these differences might be without first becoming a saint. Nevertheless, I think it is reasonable to get something of a handle on the fact *that* there are some differences. The strategy for spotting the differences is the same as might be employed by the tourist: retrace the conversation and begin looking for confusion at the last place conversants seemed to understand each other.

I want to be clear that the categories "spectators" and "saints" divide up the field quite differently than do the terms "theists" and "nontheists." Not all theists are saints in the sense I am using the term. Rush Rhees, himself a nontheist, was able to detect the difference between saints and mere theists by listening to their respective ways of speaking. Rhees recalls students he'd met from a local Bible college in Swansea. He marveled that

> they used to talk of "meeting" Jesus in a way that sounded no different from meeting, say, the Principal of the College. I never could understand any of this, but it never sounded like what I should call religion. Jesus is here as one of us, although he is someone who can advise us and tell us what to do. I could not find anything in what they said that would suggest or lead on to: "sanctus, sanctus, sanctus. Domine Deus . . ."[13]

Rhees is rightly objecting to the fact that the mode of speech these students employed indicated that they spoke of an ordinary object.

[12] For example, Alvin Plantinga thinks that true belief hinges in part on "proper function" of one's faculties. Alvin Plantinga, "Justification and Theism," in *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader*, ed. James F. Sennett (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

[13] Rush Rhees, "Mescaline, Mysticism, and Religious Experience," in *Rush Rhees on Philosophy and Religion*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 340.

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They imagined they were talking about a deity, but their speech gave them away. "Saving the irreverence," Rhees notes, "'consulting Jesus' seemed no different than from consulting another human being."[14]

In sharp contrast, saints speak quite differently of God. They speak not of God's existence, take it or leave it, but of God's *presence*. Many—though not all—saints report that God's reality fills them with a certain fascinating terror.[15] God is always watching, God's presence can never be evaded, there is no secret hiding place, not even in one's thoughts is one alone. God may be good, but he is not safe. God may be patient, but not interminably so. There will be an end, and we shall be judged according to criteria such that if we were left to our own devices, none of us would clear the bar. Completely naked shall we stand there . . . at least so say the saints. "It is a terrifying thing," writes the biblical author, "to fall into the hands of the living God."[16]

The communication breakdown between saints and spectators might be more easily overcome if the language of "God" was universal. However, this seems not to be the case. Language of God emerged in the community of those who care most deeply about God. Consequently, the language spectators employ originated with the saints. The saints' concept of God, in turn, is bound up with their odd practices.[17] Saints set their slaves free and welcomed them as brothers and sisters; saints rejoiced at their own mistreatment; saints robbed the "exposure sites" taking the unwanted infants home to raise as their own; saints welcomed death as a friend. Their oddness unnerved their tormentors; it must be noted that by the time of Felicitas's death, the head jailor had converted to Christianity.[18]

Kierkegaard was once asked whether the queer outlook of the saints could be attributed to their expectation of future reward, as if saints played the same game of acquisition and competition as everyone else and thought that heaven would show that they win Pascal's wager after all.[19] But Kierkegaard observed that it is the

[14] Ibid.

[15] Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy; an Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

[16] Hebrews 10:31.

[17] Unfortunately, my knowledge of saints is limited to those recognized by the Christian tradition. Early in Christian history, the Buddha was momentarily nominated for *Christian* sainthood. But since those earlier times, dialogue between supposedly rival traditions of saintliness has only recently begun. Philip Almond, "The Buddha of Christendom: A Review of the Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat," *Religious Studies* 23 (1987).

[18] . . . *iam et ipso optione carceris credente*. "The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. Herbert Musurillo, *Introduction, Texts and Translation* by Herbert Musurrilo, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 124.

[19] The familiar game of competition and acquisition is implied by James' phrase, "bitter jealousy and selfish ambition"; James 3:14.

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spectator not the saint who is "swift to listen and see if there might be an explanatory word."[20] In other words, the conversation called theodicy originated between spectators. Saints play an entirely different game.

It seems to me that theodicists disregard the distinctiveness of saintly speech. But this disregard hazards their own confusion. For example, theodicies take for granted that the term "exists" applies to God in some sense equivalent to: "This lump of coal exists." If *that* is what is meant by 'exists', then the saints cheerfully concede: God doesn't exist in *that* sense. (Thus Kierkegaard: "God does not exist, he is eternal."[21])

Attention to these differences may illuminate the current impasse in theodicy. I therefore offer some observations on the saints' grammar of "good" and of "God."

I. Grammar and the Limits of Explanation

As we shall see, overcoming the misunderstanding that rival grammars breeds is daunting. But the problem is complexified by the fact that human reliance upon language prevents explanation from ever being conclusive. That being so, stalemate between theodicists, who are attempting to certify God's existence, and their detractors seems unavoidable.

Even as early as the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein observed that the modern *Weltanschaung* is afflicted with the illusion that its explanations of natural phenomena reach deeper, all the way down to "so-called laws of nature," than the pseudo- or pre-scientific explanations (at least that's what we've been taught to call them) maintained by the ancients. But both so-called explanations grind to a halt somewhere.

> 6.372 So people stop short at natural laws as something unassailable, as did the ancients at God and Fate.
> And they both are right and wrong. But the ancients were clearer, in so far as they recognized one clear terminus, whereas the modern system makes it appear as though everything were explained.

In Wittgenstein's mind, at least the ancients had sense enough to know the limits of their "explanations." (And in an important sense, "God" names this limit.) Does this mean that all explanation is illusory? Not at all. But Wittgenstein worries that something about the modern outlook may trick us in to forgetting that explanations

[20] Søren Kierkegaard, "Every Good and Perfect Gift Is from Above," in *Edifying Discourses; Vol. 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1943), 38.
[21] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 296.

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are things that *humans* construct and *humans* labor to apprehend; *humans*, not theories, do the explaining. Thus Wittgenstein (in *Zettel*), "Any explanation has its foundation in *training*."[22] Consider,

> One man is a convinced realist, another a convinced idealist and teaches his children accordingly. In such an important matter as the existence or non-existence of the external world they don't want to teach their children anything wrong.
> What will the children be taught? To include in what they say: "There are physical objects" or the opposite?[23]

This of course is a bogus question. Children don't learn to use the phrase "there are/are not physical objects." Rather, they learn words such as 'red' and 'chair' by learning to count chairs, for example, all the red ones. And of course the idealist doesn't object to the "reality" of chairs in the same way realists refuse to believe in fairies! If idealists believed *that*, then the surest way to protect children against heresy is simply not to teach them the vocabulary (and, additionally, keep them away from people who do talk about fairies!).[24] But what might work for 'fairies' will not work for 'chairs', because "the idealist *will* teach his children the word 'chair' after all, for of course he wants to teach them to do this and that, e.g., to fetch a chair." At which point Wittgenstein's interlocutor complains, "Then where will be the difference between what the idealist-educated children say and the realist ones? Won't the difference only be one of battle cry?"[25] At stake is this: given the fact that both children speak of chairs, are not the putatively rival concepts of "chair" necessarily identical? Not exactly. The important difference lies in the sort of language-games can be executed with the words. "The language-game 'What is that?'—'A chair.'—is not the same as : 'What do you take that for?'—'It might be a chair.'"[26] To the untrained ear, this sound a bit disingenuous. It sounds as though idealists (so too, anti-realists) must teach their children this way: "Here's a chair—but there really aren't any."[27] The objection seems to be that the idealist's child must "begin by being taught a false certainty" about chairs. Wittgenstein's

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), §419. Emphasis mine.

[23] Ibid., §413.

[24] "If someone does not believe in fairies, he does not need to teach his children 'There are no fairies': he can omit to teach them the word 'fairy'. On what occasion are they to say: 'There are . . .' or 'There are no . . .'? Only when they meet people of the contrary belief." Ibid.

[25] Ibid., §414. Emphasis mine.

[26] Ibid., §417.

[27] I was sent a recent e-mail by a fundamentalist Christian grad student who, thinking me to be an anti-realist and therefore a relativist—a sin of the highest degree—asked me whether when I stumbled while hiking in the woods, did I trip over the log or over the word 'log'?

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rejoinder: "There isn't any question of certainty or uncertainty yet in their [the children's] language-game. Remember: they are learning to *do* something."[28]

With this last remark, Wittgenstein is, once again, shifting his readers' attention from problems that are apparent to ones that are real. The central question concerns not the reality of chairs but how skillfully the child is becoming at playing a growing variety of language-games that employ the word 'chair'. But one cannot run until one has learned to walk. "To begin by teaching someone 'That looks red' makes no sense. For he must say that spontaneously once he has learnt what 'red' means, i.e., has leant the technique of using the word."[29] And language use is all about a developing tacit technique.

I turn now to the tacit techniques surrounding the uses of "good" and "God."

II. The Grammar of "Good"

A central claim in the debate over the evidential argument from evil involves the notion of weighing: there does not appear to be any good effected by the fawn's suffering that outweighs its suffering. Ultimately, we are asked to assess whether the known goods of the world (including those future goods that we justifiably expect to come to know) outweigh the evils that were necessary to bring these goods about. However, it seems to me that there is something dishonest about concluding, "all goods of the world are insufficient to justify the weight of known evils" when the goods in question, "all the goods of the world," does not include God.[30] It will certainly be replied that my suggestion of putting God on the balance is tantamount to question-begging, since in the argument we are considering, we are looking for those goods that are precipitated by evils, and surely God is not a good caused by some prior evil—at least let's hope not!

Yet there is a class of goods that while not causally related to any given evil, still has bearing on the suffering engendered by those evils. I'm speaking of a class of goods that *overwhelm* human experience of gratuitous suffering just as winning the lottery may overwhelm one's awareness of a painful hangnail. Significant goods that can reasonably thought to belong to this set include: finding one's lost child, a surprising remission of cancer, marriage, surviving a near-death accident, the birth of one's child. In their scheme of things the saints rush to include God (or one's relation to God) as one of these goods. The Apostle Paul wrote:

[28] Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §416.
[29] Ibid., §418.
[30] I owe this point to Terry Tilley.

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> But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.[31]

Reconsider Felicitas's story. Her suffering was immense. Eight months pregnant, she was understandably distraught over the fate of her unborn child, not to mention that of the nursing infant whom she was made to surrender. Initially, she was imprisoned alone in a dark hole and divested of her nursing infant. From time to time they would drag her out of the dungeon and attempt to coerce from her a change of mind. Resisting her father's scorn ("Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us!. . . . Perform the sacrifice—have pity on your baby!" [113]) she was made to witness her father be "thrown to the ground and beaten with a rod." (115). Yet she would not budge; for she reasoned that just as a waterpot cannot be rightly called by another name, neither can she; for she is a "Christian."[32]

When the sentence was passed, so that the prisoners knew they were to be thrown to "the beasts" Felicitas reports returning to her cell "in high spirits" (115) and dreamed of a fellow martyr giving thanks to God because "I am happier now than I was in the flesh" (121). Stripped nearly naked, Felicitas and the others were scourged before a line of gladiators and then placed in nets and dragged into the arena to battle to the death a mad heifer for the enjoyment of the spectators.

Two days before her execution, Felicitas gave premature birth to a baby girl. Because her labor was difficult and painful, one of the prison guards taunted her, pointing out that if having a baby was so painful, how did she expect to face the greater pain awaiting her in the arena? She replied, "What I am suffering now [in childbirth] . . . I suffer by myself. But then *Another* will be inside me who will suffer for me, just as I shall be suffering for him."[33]

At this point in the text, Felicitas's account is truncated and an eye-witness steps in to finish the story. The narrator describes Felicitas and the others as marching to the amphitheater "joyfully as though they were going to heaven, with calm faces, trembling, if at all, with joy rather than fear."[34] Wishful thinking? Perhaps. But if we read the text charitably for a moment, we come face to face with our own perplexity.

[31] Phil 3:7–11.

[32] The term "Christian" was a term of scorn assigned to those whose hero was a loser, for crucified criminals were at the bottom of the Ancient Near East social ladder. See Michael J. Wilkins, "Christian," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

[33] "The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," 124–25.

[34] Ibid., 126–27.

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What sort of joy is this? Conversely, on what grounds dare we assume that both the martyr and her narrator were deluded, psychotic even? On the grounds that we can't follow their conversations? On the grounds that *we don't know* what they are talking about?[35] I propose that as modern spectators, we don't know what the martyrs are talking about. We *thought* we knew because we imagined that their concepts, particularly of "happiness" and of "sin," were analogous to our notions of "pleasure" and "imperfection."[36] But their entirely odd and unpredictable conduct—especially their joy—is a clue that we are no longer in the same conversation. And because we overlook the differences, we are tempted to turn their speech into something with which we are familiar: analytic philosophy.

For three centuries, Christian ascetics underwent self-imposed and rigorous training so that they might honorably endure martyrdom.[37] Observe, then, the agony in Augustine's memory, recalling how as a young man, on the verge of conversion, he heard a report of two Christians who pledged themselves to a life of asceticism after simply reading about a hermit named Anthony of Egypt. Augustine reports that their story undressed his own hubris:

> Ponticianus told us this story, and as he spoke, you, O Lord, turned me back upon myself. You took me from behind my back, where I had placed myself because I did not wish to look upon myself. You stood me face to face with myself, so that I might see how foul I was, how deformed and defiled, how covered with stains and sores. I looked, and I was filled with horror, but there was no place for me to turn my gaze from myself. . . . Thus was I gnawed within myself, and was overwhelmed with shame and horror . . ..[38]

These two draw what they take to be the eminently reasonable conclusion that they must imitate Anthony's life in order to know

[35] I can't help but be reminded that Wittgenstein thought this sort of logic typified our contemporary scientific outlook: "What a curious attitude scientists have—: "We still don't know that; but it is knowable and its only a matter of time before we get to know it!" as if that went without saying."Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch, English translation with the amended 2nd. ed. (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 40e.

[36] Again Wittgenstein, "People are religious to the extent that they believe themselves to be not so much imperfect, as ill. Any man who is half-way decent will think himself extremely imperfect, but a religious man will think himself wretched." Ibid., 45e. Likewise Kierkegaard claimed that remorse is not only a wonderful friend, it is a measure of one's spiritual health. Furthermore, an admission of reticence to pray may be nothing other than a confession that one is not wise, for wisdom comes through prayer. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is To Will One Thing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1956 [1846]), 39, 46, 55.

[37] Maureen A. Tilley, "The Ascetic Body and the (Un)Making of the World of the Martyr," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LIX, no. 3 (1991).

[38] St. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), viii.7.

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Anthony's God. Augustine, trained in law, rhetoric and philosophy, does not challenge the logic of their conclusion. Rather, he concurs that knowing God is the pearl of great price for which he must impoverish himself in order to obtain.[39] In this moment Augustine is terrified by the prospect that he has nothing in himself with which to barter. Ironically, this self-discovery of his poverty and unworthiness is internally related to the action of grace he hopes to know,

Once Augustine discovers his own poverty, grace had begun its transformative work. The connection between transformation and religious knowledge leads Wittgenstein, (who knew the *Confessions* very well) to pleadingly remind his readers:

> Christianity is not a doctrine, not, I mean, a theory about what has happened and will happen to the human soul, but a description of something that actually takes place in human life. For "consciousness of sin" is a real event and so are despair and salvation through faith. Those who speak of such things . . . are simply describing what has happened to them, whatever gloss anyone may want to put on it.[40]

Not only must we consider what these saints report. We must attend to the very manner in which they report—to attending circumstances and behaviors—if we wish to see what sort of good is God and how the possibilities of this goodness messes up the calculus of theodicy.

III. The Grammar of "God"

Thus far I've tried to suggest that the parent-child analogy upon which CORNEA depends ought to be construed not as the relation between God and human beings but between saints and spectators. The fact that saints speak a different language than spectators (or at least speak a language to which spectators are only poorly adequated) can be deduced from breakdowns in conversations between them, breakdowns that stem from neglect of the saints' distinctive grammar of "exists" and "good." A second point in their conversations where spectators mistakenly think they understand surfaces when we consider the distance between the respective notions of God.

I suspect that the differences between the uses of "God" by saints and by contemporary theodicists show up as a matter of historical record. (That task is left to the readers' judgment, as much more work needs to be done in recounting the past 400-year history of theodicies than space allows here.) I also suspect that the only way to bridge the distance is by learning the saint's language on its own terms. I suggest that if theodicists began employing the saints'

[39] Matthew 13:46
[40] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 28e.

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vocabulary (here, "God") in the same *manner* as the saints, theodicy as a speech-act may become obsolete.

The term "theodicy" first enters western vocabulary through Leibniz in 1702. It names a genera of literature in which not only is God's agency defended, God's "existence" is purportedly as well. By the 18th Century the claim "God exists" seemed intelligible enough because the language game of theodicy had succeeded in objectifying God. Or to put it more precisely, the word 'God' becomes commonly used in the language games of *objects*. *This* is the point of departure that spectators take from an earlier manner of speaking.

As late as the 16th Century a *dynamic*, rather than an objectified (i.e., static), trinitarianism could be found in vast portions of Christendom. Even the tiny and mostly under-educated radical reformation movement (the Anabaptists) commonly conceived of the world as permeated by God: "The material and human," writes historian John Rempel, "are united with the spiritual and divine. This happens where Spirit and faith come together. The prototype for this movement is the Lord's Supper."[41] In other words, practices of the believing community such as the Eucharist, presuppose a *dynamic* relation between God and the world; when the Eucharist is celebrated, the underlying fact of God's actual presence simply becomes manifest. Even more strongly, Anabaptists thought these practices were "also a part of the dynamic in which external works *become one reality* with the God revealed in them."[42]

Nor were Anabaptists unique in holding this doctrine; its is standard fare in the Eastern church; it is orthodox among Roman Catholic theologians; it has notable presence in Luther and some of his recent followers; it can even be found among a few evangelicals.[43] (I suspect that our ignorance of these historical resources is what makes Process Thought seem like such a breath of fresh air.[44]) Only

[41] John D. Rempel, *The Lord's Supper in Anabaptism; a Study in the Christology of Balthasar Hubmaier, Pilgrim Marpek, and Dirk Philips*, *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, No. 33* (Waterloo, ONT and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 161.

[42] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[43] For example, Reinhard Hütter, "The Church," in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, ed. James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago (Grand Rapids, MI & Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2001), Reinhard Hütter, "The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice and the Holy Spirit," *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 3 (1994), Brad J. Kallenberg, "All Suffer the Affliction of the One: Metaphysical Holism and the Presence of the Spirit," *Christian Scholar's Review* 31, no. 2 (2002), Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, ed. Alan G. Padgett, *Sacra Doctrina* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

[44] A compromise position between process thought and static trinitarianism has been attempted by the openness of God thinkers. See William Hasker, "The Openness of God," *Christian Scholars Review* 28, no. 1 (1998).

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after various realisms (e.g., Scottish common sense realism, critical realism, etc.) become common coinage sometime in the 17th or 18th Century does one notice an increasing tendency among theologians to speak of God as one thing and the world as another. Ever since, western systematic theologies start with the unity and "being" of God before proceeding to a discussion of God's attributes and Persons.

A second historical example illustrates how naturally premodern saints conceived nature as bound up in the divine presence. Until late in the 17th Century, "Christian theology" and "natural philosophy" covered virtually the same domain. Both disciplines were *overlapping* responses to the created world (and it *was* seen as creation, rather than something else).[45] Historian of science Margaret Osler writes,

> Medieval natural philosophy was conditioned by theological presuppositions, and its conclusions pertained to important theological issues. Discussions of the causes of things, for example, included questions about the cause of the world and revolved around the issues of the divine creation of the world. Discussions of matter and change had implications for the interpretation of the Eucharist. Discussions of the nature of animals and how they differ from humans had direct bearing on questions about the immortality of the human soul.[46]

The historical identity of natural philosophy with theology was not a function of the Church flexing its institutional muscles. It was an indication that all thinkers intuitively thought of creation as inextricably bound up with the Creator. To say the same thing differently, a rival view understands God not in *objective* terms but in terms of *relationality*. God's identity, at least as far as humans are able to talk about it, cannot be extracted from relations both *ad intra* and *ad extra trinitatis*. Until the 17th Century then, such a dynamic conception of God in effect prevented both theodicies and anti-theodicies from getting off the ground. Why? Because theodicy *requires* a language that treats God as an object, as a piece of furniture whose existence can be brought into question.

Not surprisingly, the in grammar that objectified God and enabled theodicy was accompanied by the invention of "pure nature" (which is to say, nature conceived in terms ontologically prior to and abstracted from all things divine) and its logical counterpart "supernature."

In 1949 Henri De Lubac observed that the theory of "pure nature" doesn't appear in Latin theology until very late. However, once taken root, the notion was mistakenly read backwards into all the previous texts. In other words, the vision of contemporary historiographers

[45] Margaret J. Osler, "Mixing Metaphors: Science and Religion or Natural Philosophy and Theology in Early Modern Europe," *History of Science* 35 (1997).
[46] Ibid.: 92.

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has been blurred by 300 years of wrong-headedly presupposing that it has always made sense to speak of "pure nature." In this modern vision, notions of grace, spirit, calling, and the supernatural—if they have substantive content at all—must be treated as add-ons to the presumably more basic concept of "pure nature." But clearly this was not the Christian outlook in its previous fifteen centuries. For the church fathers, the creation of human beings in God's image meant that human beings were "destined to live eternally in God, to enter into the inner movement of the Trinitarian life *and to bring all creation with [them]*."[47] Following the Patristics, medieval Christians extended the patristic understanding that, "nature was made for [what we now call] the supernatural" and cannot even be conceived, much less explained, without it.[48] The inseparability of natural and supernatural typified the monastic view and is given its most eloquent expression by Augustine who included all creation in the "us" of the famous opening to the *Confessions*, "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Rather than ask with de Lubac whether we moderns were wrong to embrace the concept of pure nature (i.e., nature seen without any reference to the transcendent), I want simply to ask whether having embraced it in fact robs us of the ability to join with any fluency conversations with the saints about their God. In other words, Once the initial moment of invention of "pure nature" recedes into the background, it becomes increasingly plausible for theodicists to focus attention upon induction as the means for stretching from nature to super-nature. Results of inductive arguments, of course, can necessarily never achieve certainty, but only some degree of probability above or below 0.5. However, my point is this: the disputes between theodicists and their detractors necessarily excludes from the conversation those who speak as if there were *no bifurcation* of supernatural and natural.[49] The conceptual bifurcation of God and cosmos—were it possible—would imply the possibility for spectators to conceive the

[47] Henri De Lubac, "Internal Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred," in *Theology in History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 230. For a fuller account see Henri De Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. with an introduction by David L. Schindler Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 1998 (1967)). Emphasis added.

[48] De Lubac, "Internal Causes of the Weakening and Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred," 231.

[49] The speakers I have in mind date back at least to New Testament times. Granted, there is a semantic division of "spirit" and "nature" in Christian Scripture, but not the division we moderns are familiar with. Rather, the division spoken of is a division that runs straight through the human heart. As Jude reports, it is *people* who are "merely natural, devoid of the Spirit" (Jude 19.). See also Jas 3:5). The NT gives little evidence of a bifurcation between nature and supernature that pits the created order against its maker while human beings stand neutrally on the sideline and daring to enter the fray only at great peril to their souls. *That* sort of scenario was a Gnostic invention that is never widespread in the West . . . until the 18th Century.

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nonexistence of God-as-object without denying the existence of the cosmos. (And no one can deny the existence of the cosmos without sounding looney.) But if the grammar of "God" is learned from those who treated God as inseparably bound up with the cosmos, then to assert the reality of the cosmos is to assert the reality of God—at least in the sense that they used the term. Attention to their rival grammars shows that misunderstanding could hardly be avoided.

Although we may quibble over whether to number Kierkegaard among the saints, he nevertheless is one of the finest exegetes of saintly speech. More than any other 19th-century thinker, Kierkegaard reveals saintly speech to be the grammatical inverse of theodicy. He observed that the bifurcation that "absolutized the distance between heaven and earth" constitutes a form of "doubt" that seeks comfort in a *self*-satisfying manner.[50] When the sorrowful doubter pleads "Why?" the object of a doubter's quest *must*, or so the seeker thinks, suit the seeker's criteria—namely, objectively certain explanation. But this mode of seeking will not yield worthwhile faith but rather "the fearful comfort of bad faith and false confidence and [more] doubt."[51] In other words, when one seeks *that* sort of comfort, the comfort of explanation, the manner of the search may result in *an inability to receive* the "good and perfect gift."[52] For that which comes from God is beyond human explanation.

Kierkegaard's doubting friend complains:

> But how is this possible . . . either to determine what it is which comes from God, or what may rightly and in truth be called a good and perfect gift? Is then every human life a continuous chain of [inexplicable] miracles? Or is it possible for a man's understanding to make its way through the interminable ranks of derived causes and effects, to penetrate all the intervening events, and thus find God?"[53]

That which fuels the quest for theodicy is doubt itself. But for Kierkegaard, the grammar of 'God' is not bound up with inductive leaps from effects to causes. Rather, the apprehension of God comes by means of a fragile regress of disclosures. For Kierkegaard, when the author of *James* wrote "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights . . ." he is not using this claim in a restrictive sense, as if to assert "If something is good, it comes from God." Instead, the biblical author is running the logic the other way around:

[50] Timothy Polk, "'Heart Enough to Be Confident': Kierkegaard on Reading *James*," in *Grammar of the Heart*, ed. Richard H. Bell (San Francisco: Harper, 1988), 221.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Jas 1.17
[53] Kierkegaard cited in Polk, "'Heart Enough to Be Confident': Kierkegaard on Reading *James*," 211.

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> That which he [the apostolic writer] emphasizes is that as God's all-powerful hand made everything good, so He, the Father of lights, still constant, makes everything good in every moment, everything into a good and perfect gift for everyone *who has the heart* to humble himself, *heart enough* to be confident.[54]

As we can see, in Kierkegaard's mind the ability to see the good, the bad, the ugly all under the aspect of gift is a matter of the "heart." In Kierkegaard's understanding, heart condition does not refer to a stable faculty but something that can develop (or atrophy). Consequently, the quality of one's conversation with apostolic writers is a function of one's heart condition:

> You interpreted the apostolic word; *as your heart developed*, you did not ask to learn much from life; you wished only to *learn* one thing: always to thank God, and thereby learn to understand one thing: that all things serve for good to those that love God.[55]

Kierkegaard reminds his readers that the properly developed heart is the heart that has in particular been made capable of recognizing "gift." But it sounds to me that Kierkegaard thinks that one needs a properly developed heart to read scripture rightly and that the reading of scripture rightly is itself the means for developing the gratitude that constitutes the properly developed heart. How does one break into this circle? Kierkegaard's answer is simply: "courage."[56] Yet whatever courage the sufferer has must come as gift. The regress of disclosures begins: the faith to receive this courage and ct upon it is also a gift . . . as is one's recognition of the imperfection of one's faith. In fact, in Kierkegaard's mind, *imperfection itself is a gift*, precisely because recognition of one's imperfection (as we saw with Augustine) is a crucial part of a long regress that discloses the point at which the spade is turned: God-the-giver. God is not the First Mover who can be reasoned toward by means of induction. God is the First Giver, the perception of whom indicates a transformed heart.

In her essay, "The Love of God and Affliction," Simone Weil exemplifies Kierkegaard's analysis. She writes from the perspective of the saint who herself suffers.

> As one has to learn to read or to practice a trade, so one must learn to feel in all things, first and almost solely, the obedience of the universe to God. It is really an apprenticeship. Like every apprenticeship, it requires time and effort. He who has reached the end of his training realizes that the differences between things or events [noticed by the untrained] are no more important than those recognized by someone who knows how to read, when he has before him the same sentence reproduced several times, written in red ink and blue, and printed in this, that, or the other kind of lettering. He who

[54] Cited in Ibid., 206. Emphasis added.
[55] Cited in Ibid., 225.
[56] Of course Aristotle's answer was "Mom."

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> does not know how to read sees only the differences. For him who knows how to read, it all comes to the same thing, since the sentence is identical. Whoever has finished his apprenticeship recognizes things and events, everywhere and always, as vibrations of the same divine and infinitely sweet word. This does not mean that he will not suffer. Pain is the color of certain events. When a man who can and a man who cannot read look at a sentence written in red ink, they both see the same red color, but this color is not so important for the one as for the other.
>
> When an apprentice gets hurt, or complains of being tired, the workmen and peasants have this fine expression: "It is the trade entering his body." Each time that we have some pain to go through, we can say to ourselves quite truly that it is the universe, the order, and beauty of the world and the obedience of creation to God that are entering our body. After that how can we fail to bless with tenderest gratitude the Love that sends us this gift?[57]

When Weil writes "pain is the color of certain events" and "it is the trade entering his body" is she offering a thinly veiled soul-making theodicy? Not at all. Weil is not offering a general explanation that can readily be understood by spectators. We know this because much of what she writes befuddles us. Was she saintly? Well, she certainly was odd. From age five, she bound herself in solidarity with all who afflicted: she refused to eat sugar because French soldiers at the front (WWI) had none; she refused to wear socks because her schoolmates, children of common laborers, were too poor to afford socks. Brilliant (she completed her *agregée de philosophie* at age 22), she suffered recurring illness and crippling migraines that finally cost her life at age 32.

But was she saintly? I have argued that saints hold conversations that spectators imagine they are following only to realize a few phrases later that they have become completely lost. Weil seems to fit this category. For example, Weil writes: "We know then that joy is the sweetness of contact with the love of God, that affliction is the wound of this same contact when it is painful, and that *only the contact matters*, not the manner of it."[58] Thus far everything seems in order. Contact with the divine is surely of great comfort and significance. Clearly Rowe is not the only one to point out that it is the God-forsakenness of suffering that makes evil so very pointless, and if contact with God were obvious, the notion of God's parenting toward us would be that much more plausible.[59]

[57] Simone Weil, "The Love of God and Affliction," in *Waiting for God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 131–32.

[58] Simone Weil, "Letter VI; 26 May 1942," in *Waiting for God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 89. Emphasis added.

[59] Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look," 276. In addition to conscious awareness of the parent's presence, Rowe thinks the child also needs special assurances and age-appropriate explanation.

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But then Weil takes a surprising turn. She continues,

> The knowledge of this presence of God *does not afford consolation*; it takes nothing from the fearful bitterness of affliction; nor does it heal the mutilation of the soul. But we know quite certainly that God's love for us is the very substance of this bitterness and this mutilation.[60]

The presence of God takes nothing away from the bitterness of affliction? Then what good is it? Affliction mutilates the soul? What then of her soul-making theodicy? God's love is the substance of this bitterness? It begins to dawn on us that perhaps we have no clue what she is talking about. Rather than dismiss her as confused or irrational or neurotic, I am suggesting that a more appropriate question may be to ask where *we* went wrong.

Conclusion

In this essay I've argued that Wykstra's CORNEA *is* flawed in the way Rowe thinks. There is a grave problem with assuming that the gap between human beings and God with respect to cognition is analogous to that of the gap existing between an infant and its parents. Yet CORNEA is fundamentally on the right track: before we can rule on the question of God, we must be made adequate to the language right for the task. I've argued that the fact that we are not automatically up to the task is revealed by the conceptual distance between those I've called "saints" and "spectators," a distance that is evidenced by misunderstandings between them. In this essay, I've hinted at two places where the confusion may be on the side of the spectators rather than the saints. Contemporary theodicies employ notions of "good" and "God" that are far removed from their origins in saintly practice. Should spectators be content to play new language games with these terms, all is well . . . so long as they also content themselves with the fact that they have neither proven nor disproved anything concerning the God of whom the saints speak. The misunderstanding between spectators and saints must be written off as a confusion of homonyms. But should, spectators desire to make claims about the God of the saints, the way is obvious, but costly. In the words of St. Athanasius (d. 373 AD):

> For without a pure mind and a modeling of the life after the saints, a man could not possibly comprehend the words of the saints. For . . . he that would comprehend the mind of those who speak of God must needs begin by washing and cleansing his soul, by his manner of living, and approach the saints themselves by imitating their works; so that, associated with them in the conduct of a common life, he may understand also what has been revealed to them by God. . . .[61]

[60] Weil, "Letter VI; 26 May 1942," 89. Emphasis added.

[61] St. Athanasius the Great, *On the Incarnation* (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Books, nd), LVII.2–3.

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