The Problem of Goodness for the Problem of Evil: The Intractability and Inscrutability of the Probabilistic Argument

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I contend that the probabilistic argument from evil (PAE) is unsuccessful with respect to its axiology. First, I introduce my argument and outline several aspects of the problem of evil (PoE). Next, I address various critical terms for the dissertation. In particular, I examine the nature of probability by distinguishing between three kinds, and I identify the relevant kind of probability for the PAE. Then, I proceed to discuss the topics of good and evil, covering sundry examples of each. After discussing these preliminary topics, I claim that the existence of objective goodness presents a difficulty for the PAE. I support this claim by providing the following reasons: (a) some goods are best explained by theism, thereby presenting an abductive challenge to the PAE; (b) the PAE overlooks significant and contentious issues in axiology and moral philosophy, and this factor weakens the argument; and (c) the difficulty of understanding the nexus of goods and evils in the world undercuts the PAE. With regard to (c), the axiological configuration of the world presents a problem of combinatorial optimisation. The complexity of this problem is intractable for human beings. This point diminishes the plausibility of the conclusion of the PAE. I close by articulating several axiological questions that might be of interest for philosophers to pursue further. Given that the PoE is usually analysed with respect to its metaphysics and its modal logic, my emphasis on axiology raises new and interesting questions for scholars who desire to investigate the PoE afresh.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Preface

This chapter contains an introduction for my thesis. The introduction presents the specific problem and hypothesis, demarcates the thesis, highlights important sub-questions and abbreviations, and summarises the content covered in the remaining chapters.

1.2 Statement of the problem and hypothesis/central theoretical statement

The primary problem addressed in this dissertation can be articulated in the following question: Is the existence of objective goodness a problem for the probabilistic argument from evil (PAE)? My central theoretical statement is that the existence of objective goodness presents a problem for the PAE, for the following reasons: (a) some objective goods are best explained by theism; (b) there are significant axiological and moral disagreements about the number of objective values, about the correct theory of normative ethics, and assuming value pluralism (VP), about whether values are comparable; these disagreements pose an axiological problem for the PAE, which is typically constructed based on unexamined and thus unwarranted presuppositions concerning these contended issues; and (c) the difficulty of understanding the nexus of goods and evils in the world undercuts the PAE.

1.3 Demarcation of the thesis

This dissertation is a philosophical examination concerning the problem of how goodness bears upon the probabilistic version of the problem of evil (PoE). This is a question in analytic philosophy of religion which may have repercussions for both theology and philosophy of religion in general. The dissertation is not an exercise in theistic apologetics, nor is it an attempt at theodicy (i.e., an effort to articulate God's *actual* reasons for permitting evil). Rather, it is an evaluation of a specific argument (the PAE) which is prominent in the philosophy of religion.

To elaborate, the purpose of this study is to explore an important element of the PAE which has not received sufficient attention in the philosophical literature. I will explore the axiological aspects of the PAE by investigating the nature and extent of objective goodness, cataloguing important instances of objective goodness, and examining whether objective goodness in general and the existence of specific objective goods pose a problem to the PAE.

These tasks address a significant gap in the literature. As James Sterba (2017:1) indicates, philosophers currently working on the PoE have not applied to the problem the resources of moral philosophy; such resources could advance the PoE as metaphysics, modal logic, and probabilistic reasoning have done. Similarly, I claim, the resources of axiology may prove useful. There is hence a gap in the literature regarding how moral theory and axiology bear on the PoE.

It should be emphasised, once again, that this dissertation is not an exercise in theistic apologetics, nor is it an attempt to prove the existence of God. If the result of this dissertation provides support to theism or anything else of apologetic interest, that would be incidental. Moreover, the position I defend (i.e., that goodness poses a problem to the PAE) is compatible with theism, agnosticism, and atheism. For instance, an atheist could agree that goodness poses a problem to the PAE, yet consistently remain an atheist by citing another argument for atheism. An agnostic could agree that goodness is a problem for the PAE, leading him or her to be sceptical of the argument in a way that fits agnosticism. In any case, rather than pursue apologetics, I will engage in philosophical analysis by exploring the question of how goodness bears on the PAE. Accordingly, my goal is to analyse and evaluate the problem by investigating objective goods and evils to determine how they bear on the probabilistic argument.

It is important to note, furthermore, that this thesis will not attempt to provide a theodicy, nor will it be a defence of theism against the PoE (i.e., an attempt to state *possible* reasons for God's permission of evil.) Accordingly, the thesis will neither presuppose nor entail a theodicy, and it will not involve any direct defence of theism, even if it might be of apologetic interest to theists.

1.4 Sub-questions

In this section, I will introduce sub-questions which I intend to address in this study. I will list these sub-questions in order from (a) through (k). For sub-question (a), I will ask "What constitutes a *problem* in philosophy?" I will articulate a plausible definition of the term "problem" as it is used in philosophy. This definition will help us to examine the PAE in a careful manner by distinguishing between philosophical problems and non-problems. For (b), I will inquire into the concepts of "objective" and "subjective," providing working explanations for these terms that clarify my investigation. Turning to (c), I will examine the nature of goodness, presenting a plausible account of objective goodness and cataloguing several types of objective goods. Some of these goods

will be cited in abductive arguments which count against the PAE. Regarding (d), I will do much the same for objective evil. Next, I will pursue the questions of whether there are intrinsic and extrinsic values and, if so, how such values differ. I will distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic values based on current philosophical research. For (e), I will explore the bearers of objective goodness and evilness, and I will explain what is meant by a "bearer" of value.

Moving to (f), I will ask about the scope of goodness. I will provide a reasonable account of the scope of objective goodness, discussing the different bearers of value and addressing the topics of value pluralism (VP) and value monism (VM). I will then do the same concerning the scope of evil for sub-question (g). With regard to (h) and (i), I will investigate the distributions of goodness and evil respectively, providing reasonable descriptions for each distribution. VP and VM will be germane to this discussion as well. The treatments of (e) through (i) will be integral for an axiological evaluation of the world. The discussion of (j) will concern the nature of probability, which is critical to the dissertation insofar as it involves an evaluation of a probabilistic argument. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the distinctions between epistemic, subjective, and objective probability based on relevant philosophical research. I will also describe how these kinds of probability relate to the PAE. Lastly, for (k), in Chapter 7 I will explore feasible methods to weigh goodness against evil and to apply this calculation to the PAE.

1.5 Chapter outline

This study concludes that the existence of goodness poses a philosophical problem to the PAE. Below, I will summarise each chapter to provide an outline for the study which builds up to my conclusion. Chapter 1 is an introduction which presents the content covered in the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 is a summary of the PoE, including important distinctions between different versions of the problem. It is important to address these distinctions in order to properly classify the PAE. Chapter 3 addresses crucial assumptions, terms, and working definitions for the dissertation.

Chapter 4 is an extension of the third chapter and emphasises the term "probability". I will examine differences between epistemic, subjective, and objective probability, discuss prominent attempts to explicate each version of probability, and address how they relate to the PAE. I will examine pertinent works from Roderick Chisholm, Peter van Inwagen, Paul Draper, D. H. Mellor,

and Nevin Climenhaga. The chapter will determine which version of probability is most applicable to the PAE.

Chapter 5 addresses five main questions: (A) What is the nature of goodness? (B) How does the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value relate to goodness? (C) What are the bearers of goodness? (D) What is the extent or scope of goodness? (E) What are the gradations of goodness?

Regarding (A), I will discuss the meaning of "goodness". It seems that "goodness" is not a univocal term. There are different kinds of goods. How do they relate? Is there a common factor? How should they be classified? For example, it is plausible to hold that there are at least the following types of goodness: (a) metaphysical goodness, or the good as such; (b) emotional goodness; (c) physical goodness, or the goodness of nature; (d) moral goodness; (e) intellectual goodness; (f) interpersonal/relational goodness; (g) existential goodness; (h) cultural goodness; and (i) aesthetic goodness.

(B) addresses intrinsic and extrinsic values. I will investigate the difference between these kinds of value. I will explore the following questions: What is intrinsic value? What has it? What is extrinsic value? What has it? How does this distinction bear on the kinds of goodness?

For (C), I will investigate the bearers of value. What are the bearers of goodness? In the philosophical literature on this question, abstract objects (e.g., states of affairs, facts) are thought to be value-bearers. However, concrete objects are also considered value-bearers. For example, substances such as persons bear value. In this section, I will address these points.

(D) concerns the extent of goodness. The following questions are pertinent: What is the extent or scope of goodness? How wide is the scope? What is the distribution of goodness? Lastly, (E) is about the gradations of goodness. Is it reasonable to speak of goodness in terms of gradations, such that for two value bearers *x* and *y*, *x* has more goodness than *y,* and thus stands in a relation of axiological comparison to *y*?

Chapter 6 is like Chapter 5, but the emphasis is on evil. These six questions are pursued: (F) What is the nature of evilness? (G) How does the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value relate to evil? (H) What are the bearers of evil? (I) What is the extent or scope of evil? (J) What are the gradations of evil?

Regarding (F), I will discuss the meaning of "evil". It seems there are different kinds of evil. For example, it is plausible to hold that there are at least the following types: (a) metaphysical evil, or evil as such; (b) emotional evil; (c) physical evil, or the evil of nature; (d) moral evil; (e) intellectual evil[1]; (f) interpersonal/relational evil; (g) existential evil; (h) cultural evil; and (i) aesthetic evil.[2]

For (G), I will examine intrinsic and extrinsic evils. How does the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value relate to evil? (H) will concern bearers of evil. What are the bearers of evil? Are they abstract objects such as states of affairs? Are they concrete objects such as substances?

Concerning (I), the extent of evil will be considered. What is the extent or scope of evil? How wide is the scope? What is the distribution? For (J), I will inquire into the gradations of evil. Do some things bear a greater degree of evil than others? If so, what are the gradations of evil?

Chapter 7 builds on the previous chapters to explore the relation between objective value and theism. I will examine whether objective goodness and objective evil cancel each other out and render the probability of God's existence 0.5 from the perspective of axiology, or whether God's existence is more probable given both objective goodness and evil, or whether God's existence is less probable given objective goodness and evil, or whether the complex combinations of objective goodness and evil in the world render the PAE indeterminate and unsuccessful.

I will use the following methods to weigh goodness against evil and attempt to apply these methods to the PAE. First, I will select several goods and explore whether these goods are explained better by theism, thereby counting against the PAE. Second, I will argue that advocates of the PAE often implicitly assume controversial and non-obvious axiological and moral claims, and that such unwarranted assumptions undercut the PAE. Third, I will argue that the world contains a complicated nexus of goods and evils, that the existence of this nexus presents a

[1] We might not use this term to refer to intellectual flaws, weaknesses, defects, or vices. However, there seem to be instances of evil, or negative value, in the category of intellect.
[2] Similarly, we tend not to speak of "aesthetic evil", but we use terms which indicate aesthetic disvalue.

significant problem of combinatorial optimisation, and that this problem poses a difficulty for the PAE, rendering it intractable for human beings.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by summarising the study, identifying questions for further investigation, and addressing the importance of the thesis to the literature on the PoE.

1.6 Method and argument

I will use a combination of the immanent critique, the transcendental method, and the analytic method. I will also use the method of Roderick Chisholm insofar as I will cite pre-analytic axiological data that one is justified in accepting as starting points for philosophical investigation, and I will attempt to select a theory (theism, atheism, or agnosticism) which best accommodates or explains that data.[3] As Chisholm (1979:15) wrote, "we should be guided in philosophy by those propositions we all presuppose in our ordinary activity". Such propositions are "part of our pre-analytic or pre-philosophic data. Any philosophical theory which is inconsistent with any of these data is *prima facie* suspect" (Chisholm, 1979:18). Any theory which one adopts ought to be consistent with the pre-analytic, common-sense data and should sufficiently explain it, all other things being equal. Nicholas Rescher (2014:87-88) agrees, saying that the data of philosophy includes the common-sense beliefs and ordinary convictions of the "plain man" that this common data, is grist for the philosophical mill, and that the data is plausible and deserving of intellectual respect, though not sacrosanct.

It should be noted here that Chisholm did not claim that the propositions we presuppose in daily activity (e.g., that time is objectively real, that the bridge will not collapse when I drive over it, that it is good to help a neighbour, that I am free to choose) are true in virtue of our assuming them. Rather, he held that such propositions guide our practical lives and hence are reasonable to believe in practice, that they are plausible starting points for philosophical investigation, and that one is justified in believing each of them unless presented with sufficient arguments to reject

[3] Again, my goal is not to defend theism. However, suppose *arguendo* that the existence of several important human goods is best explained by theism; in this case, these goods pose an axiological problem to the PAE. This would be a legitimate *philosophical* problem, even if it might be incorporated into a theistic *apologetic*.

them. Chisholm's principle is not about truth, and thus not a claim about alethic universality. It is a claim about what a rational subject is justified in believing. It also concerns the identification of a reasonable starting point for philosophical thinking.

In this study, I will list, categorise, and discuss some of the various kinds of objective goods and evils in our world. These will be examples of goods and evils that human beings commonly assume as good or evil in their ordinary activity. Then, I will weigh these goods and evils, and consider whether (a) goodness and evilness render the probability of God's existence at 0.5[4]; or (b) whether God's existence is more probable than atheism given both goodness and evilness[5]; or (c) whether God's existence is less probable than atheism given both goodness and evilness (i.e., one is more justified in accepting atheism than in accepting theism, though not necessarily more justified in atheism than in agnosticism); or (d) whether goodness and evilness render the PAE indeterminate and therefore unsuccessful.

The specific aspects of the method of weighing goods against evils and applying this calculation to the PAE vary. Some aspects of the method are qualitative, looking at goods and evils in terms of their qualitative intensity or gradations. Other aspects are quantitative, emphasising the numbers of goods and evils which exist, so far as we know. Still other factors involve exploring how goods and evils are combined and distributed in an axiological nexus. Furthermore, I plan to take significant goods, isolate them, conclude the probability of God's existence with respect to these goods, and weigh these arguments against the PAE.

It is anticipated that a merely quantitative method is not feasible, either as a way to count goods and evils, or as a way quantitatively to measure the quality of a specific good or evil; for, as Alvin Plantinga (1977:55) has noted, "there doesn't seem to be any way to measure moral evil – that is, we don't have units like volts or pounds or kilowatts so that we could say 'this situation

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[4] In Chisholm's terms (1989:9), this would mean that the evidence concerning goods and evils is counterbalanced: one is at least as justified in believing that God exists as he is in believing that God does not exist, and vice versa, in which case withholding judgment with respect to the existence of God is reasonable.

[5] In Chisholm's terms (1989:10), one would be more justified in believing that God exists than he would be in believing that God does not exist, though not necessarily more justified in adopting theism than in adopting agnosticism.

contains exactly 35 turps of moral evil'." I would add to Plantinga's point that it is not even clear that the nature of evil, which seems to be a qualitative matter, is such that there *could* be any quantitative units to measure it precisely. Plantinga's point also applies to the measurement of moral goods; we are hard-pressed to say that a particular state of affairs contains, say, exactly 130 excels of moral goodness, as we might do when we say that a person's intelligence is approximately measured with an IQ of 130 quantitative points. Nevertheless, as Plantinga continues (1977:55), in some cases it seems that we can compare situations in terms of their objective morality or axiology, and we can see that one state of affairs contains more evilness or more goodness than another.

I am inclined to believe that the effort to weigh goods against evils in order to measure the nexus of value in the world *in toto* is very much like a 0/1 knapsack problem in combinatorial optimisation. I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 7.

1.7 Contribution of study

In my research, I have done a thorough literature review on the PoE. I have read a considerable number of works in the philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, value theory, normative and applied ethics, epistemology, probability theory, and philosophical methodology.

From this comprehensive review, I have found that the method of weighing goods against the PAE that I intend to use has not yet been applied, nor has anyone evaluated the PAE based on this method. In addition, I am not aware of any attempt to evaluate the PAE in terms of combinatorial optimisation. Richard Swinburne (1998:237-251) has substantively discussed goods and evils within the context of the PoE. However, he did not do so in the way that I will attempt for this dissertation, nor did he specifically weigh goods and evils against the PAE. In other words, he did not explore whether the existence of goodness poses a specific problem to the PAE. Chad Meister (2012:63-77) has evaluated the problem of evil by looking at goodness. But he did not explore the thesis that I plan to defend. Linda Zagzebski (2017) has discussed how normative theories such as consequentialism and non-consequentialism relate to the PoE. I will address her astute approach in Chapter 7 and ultimately go beyond what she has done.

To elaborate on the work which has been done so far concerning the relationship between morality and theism, consider the problem of characterising evil in a world without God. For

example, Meister (2012:64) raises this problem for ontological naturalism[6] by asking if disaster, pain, and suffering are in fact *evil* in a world without God. He proceeds to argue that atheists have a problem in explaining the existence of objective evil because, without God, there is no source or standard for objective morality. Matthew Flanagan (2020:par.3) agrees, arguing that the existence of objective morality depends on the existence of God and that atheistic accounts of objective morality are problematic. As Flanagan notes (2020:par.1), thinkers as diverse as theists Dostoyevsky, Kant, Locke, and Berkeley, and atheists Sartre and J. L. Mackie agree that *sans* God, there cannot be genuine moral requirements or obligations. Without God, we lack an adequate moral ontology that would: (a) explain the existence and nature of normative moral requirements (Flanagan, 2020:par.28), and (b) explain the categorical nature of some moral obligations and prohibitions (Flanagan, 2020:par.32).[7] However, moral objectivity, normativity, and categorical demandingness are "readily explicable if God exists" (Flanagan, 2020:par.35).[8]

Furthermore, as Flanagan notes, atheistic morality faces a problem concerning moral authority. If an act is morally wrong, then we *must not* perform it. But on atheism, why *must* we perform some actions and not perform other actions? What explains such obligations and prohibitions? For instance, if there is nothing but physical objects and space, and if no physical object has the moral authority to demand human obedience, then it is unclear why we have any absolute objective obligations and prohibitions at all. There is no moral authority to place such demands on us. There is no moral authority to enforce these demands. The existence of such an authority is explicable if God exists, but seems inexplicable if there is no God (Flanagan, 2020:par.40).

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[6] Ontological naturalism is the dominant atheistic worldview.

[7] I would add here that a theist can argue that, without a divine creator to design our cognitive faculties, the human ability for moral awareness is hard to explain. Assuming *arguendo* that an atheistic worldview can adequately explain the existence of objective moral values and duties, there would remain a need to explain how we come to know about them. Following a Darwinian version of naturalism, for example, the human abilities to obtain moral knowledge and to engage in moral reasoning are accidental by-products of natural selection. It is unclear what their survival benefits are. If we were to rewind the evolutionary tape and play it again, it is at least to some degree likely that humans would not have developed these abilities at all.

[8] The same can be said of our abilities for moral understanding and reasoning.

Following Kant, John Hare (1997 and 2002:189) holds that morality has a three-part structure: an impartial and absolute moral demand (e.g., Kant's Categorical Imperative), our natural capacities to meet the demand, and the possibility of a holy being, who is the source of the demand. Given that "ought" implies "can" (i.e., if a moral agent morally ought to do *x*, then it is at least possible for him to do *x*), since our natural capacities are insufficient to meet the demand *always* to do what is morally right and *always* to refrain from doing what is morally wrong, we cannot meet the moral demand placed upon us and hence have no obligation to do so – unless we have help from the holy being. But on atheism, there is no holy being to give us grace and efficacious help to meet our moral demands, which makes the moral life practically impossible.[9]

This apparent problem of evil for atheism is not emphasised only by theists. Atheists have also recognised the difficulty. As the self-described "atheist or agnostic" philosopher Michael Ruse (2020:85) writes, "Of course, I believe that there are all sorts of unpleasant things that happen to us … I don't think of them as being evil, in the sense of things that have a value component. They just are." He then agrees with biologist Richard Dawkins that the naturalistic/atheistic world contains no objectively real evil or good, no design or purpose, but only indifference. Ruse concludes that evil "has no objective referent" (Ruse, 2020:101). In addition, consider Richard Taylor (1985:2-3):

> "The modern age, more or less repudiating the idea of a divine lawgiver, has nevertheless tried to retain the ideas of moral right and wrong, not noticing that, in casting God aside, they have also abolished the conditions of meaningfulness for moral right and wrong as well. Thus, even educated persons sometimes declare that such things as war, or abortion, or the violation of certain human rights, are 'morally wrong,' and they imagine that they have said something true and significant. Educated people do not need to be told, however, that questions such as these have never been answered outside of religion."

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[9] In *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant argued that the human commitment to the *summum bonum* requires rational beliefs in God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will. Hare extends this approach to rational theism by arguing that our commitment to the demands of morality also provides a reason to accept theism.

Taylor continues (1985:83-84): *"*A duty is something that is owed … But something can be owed only to some person or persons. There can be no such thing as duty in isolation … the concept of moral obligation [is] unintelligible apart from the idea of God. The words remain, but their meaning is gone." Moreover, according to Schopenhauer (2011:66), "The objection will perhaps be raised that Ethics is not concerned with what men actually do, but that it is the science which treats of what their conduct ought to be. Now this is exactly the position which I deny … the conception of 'ought' is valid only in theological morals, outside of which it loses all sense and meaning."

To elaborate on the difficulty that naturalistic versions of atheism face concerning the existence of morality, consider David Papineau's characterisation of ontological naturalism: "A central thought in ontological naturalism is that all spatiotemporal entities must be identical to or metaphysically constituted by physical entities. Many ontological naturalists thus adopt a physicalist attitude to mental, biological and other such 'special' subject matters. They hold that there is nothing more to the mental, biological and social realms than arrangements of physical entities." (Papineau, 2007:1.1.) David Armstrong (1978:261) provides a similar definition: naturalism is "the doctrine that reality consists of nothing but a single all-embracing spatio-temporal system". Note that on ontological naturalism, the physical world is all there is. According to this view, it seems unreasonable to use objectively evaluative and deontic terms when referring to human life in a naturalistic world. It seems to me that if the world is nothing more than various conglomerations of physical entities moving for no ultimate purpose and according to no morally significant design, the use of normative and deontic language to address objective moral values and duties seems fictional at best, since the realm of objective morality is foreign to a purely physical and non-teleological reality. Ruse (2020:101) seems correct that, for ontological naturalists, evil has no objective reality. It may be subjectively unpleasant, but the unpleasantness has no objective moral significance; it is neither evil nor morally wrong. It just is.

Given the points addressed above, it is plausible that objective moral values and duties are not physical objects, nor are they metaphysically constituted by or supervening upon physical entities in a world void of moral significance and purpose. As such, ontological naturalists face a problem concerning how to understand moral language, belief in objective morality, and objective morality itself. Pertaining to the worldview of ontological naturalism, Mary Midgley has noted: "It is not at all clear how 'we' could somehow stand so far outside the whole cosmic process as to

oppose it." (Midgley, 2002:12.) In a naturalistic world, it seems unjustifiably animistic to speak of real evil or to utter moral condemnations against some aspect of the physical world that we happen subjectively to dislike. Midgley also points out that such moral criticisms are "only available to theists" (Midgley, 2002:14). Arguably, non-theists who do not accept moral objectivism, yet object to evil as if it were objectively real, seem to be merely articulating their subjective tastes (e.g., moral subjectivists) or expressing non-cognitive emotion (e.g., emotivists).

Elizabeth Anscombe (1958:1, 4-5) makes a similar point. The concept of objective moral obligation is intelligible from a theistic perspective, whether Jewish, Stoic, or Christian. In these theistic worldviews, there is a divine lawgiver (of some sort) and a divine law of morality to ground human moral obligations. However, a secular atheistic worldview lacks this divine underpinning and thus should jettison the idea of moral obligation, since it derives from a theistic worldview which secularism does not accept. Daniel McPherson (2020:8) comments that "Anscombe contends that this notion of moral obligation should be jettisoned by secular philosophers since it is only harmful without its original theistic framework … In other words, she wants us to acknowledge the full extent of the disenchantment that she thinks in fact occurs if we have abandoned theism." Moreover, according to McPherson (2020:9), Anscombe asserts that in a non-theistic framework, we can have no objective categorical imperatives, but only hypothetical imperatives such as "If you want to flourish *qua* human being, then you *ought* to cultivate the virtues." For McPherson (2020:10), this non-theistic approach to ethics does not adequately account for the qualitative distinctions of value that shape human life and place normative demands on us, such as distinctions between higher and lower, noble and base, admirable and contemptible, dignified and undignified, and sacred and profane.[10] McPherson holds that ethical naturalism lacks the conceptual space to explain the objective value, dignity, and sacredness of human life.

Recognising the explanatory difficulty underscored by Midgely, Anscombe, and others, theists have used the moral argument for theism against the PoE. This argument is not intended merely to oppose ontological naturalism. Rather, it is an argument against all forms of atheism,

[10] I will return to this point in Chapter 7, Section 2.

since – like ontological naturalism – atheism in general faces a problem regarding objective morality. It should be noted that many atheists are moral subjectivists, such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Mackie, and perhaps the contemporary philosopher Ruse – although Ruse's writing style makes him somewhat hard to categorise. Other atheists are moral non-cognitivists, taking positions like those held by Hume, A. J. Ayer, or Simon Blackburn. Such commitments to moral subjectivism or non-cognitivism enable one to avoid moral objectivism and the difficulties atheists have in defending it. However, there are prominent atheists who defend objective morality. For example, Erik Wielenberg has written several books and articles which rigorously defend objective morality. Russ Schafer-Landau, Thaddeus Metz, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Bernard Gert, Stephen Maitzen, and Sam Harris also defend moral objectivity.

Notice that the strongest versions of the PAE admit the existence of objective evil. Since intellectual fairness advises that a position be evaluated in its strongest form, I will evaluate the PAE on the assumption that morality is objective. Theists have argued against the PAE as follows:

1. Objective evil exists.
2. If objective evil exists, then objective morality exists.
3. Thus, objective morality exists. (from 1, 2)
4. If objective morality exists, then God exists.
5. Thus, God exists. (from 3, 4)

Alternatively, the argument can be constructed in abductive fashion: objective evil exists; hence, objective morality exists; theism explains objective morality better than atheism explains it; therefore, theism is more likely to be true. As J.P. Moreland and Craig note, this argument from evil for theism "constitutes a defeater of any argument from evil against the existence of God, … [demonstrating] the coexistence of God and evil without attempting to give any explanation at all for why evil exists – we, like Job, may be totally ignorant of that – but it nonetheless shows that the existence of evil in the world does not call into question, but on the contrary, implies God's existence" (Moreland & Craig, 2003:550).

The preceding points highlight a challenge to the PAE: how do atheistic worldviews make sense of objective morality? In this dissertation, I will not pursue what these authors have already done. Rather, in this introductory chapter, I address the work of these authors to highlight both an important point and a gap in the literature on the PoE: with respect to the point, matters of value

seem to pose an explanatory problem to atheistic worldviews; with respect to the gap, the relationship between objective goodness and the PAE has not been thoroughly explored. I plan to explore the specific problem of goodness for the problem of evil. I will explore whether the existence of goodness presents a significant problem for the PAE.

The primary emphasis in recent literature on the PAE concerns the argument from gratuitous evil, which can be expressed as follows: if God exists, there is no gratuitous evil; but probably there is gratuitous evil; hence, probably, there is no God. Most of the scholarship on this argument attempts to defend or attack either the first or the second premise of the argument from gratuitous evil. For example, William Rowe (1979) supports both premises. Stephen Wykstra (2017) objects to the second premise on sceptical theist grounds. Peter van Inwagen (1988) denies the first premise, arguing that the coexistence of God and gratuitous evil is compatible.

This dissertation attempts a new course of action on the PAE. I will explore how axiology relates to the PAE. I will analyse the concepts of value, good, evil, and probability; catalogue some of the various goods and evils; inquire whether specific goods are explained better by theism; investigate the PAE in terms of combinatorial optimisation; and evaluate the PAE based on my findings. I anticipate that my scholarship will be a novel contribution to the literature on the PoE. The thesis raises new and interesting questions about the PoE which scholars might desire to pursue.

1.8 Abbreviations

AC argument from consciousness
AE argument from evil
AN axiologically-neutral
AOP axiogenetic optimality principle
CO combinatorial optimisation
COPAE combinatorial optimisation version of the PAE
FSU faith-seeking-understanding
LAE logical argument from evil
LFW libertarian free will
LO law of optimality
LS law of satisficing
MK middle knowledge

NV negatively valued

NVW negatively valued world

PAE probabilistic argument from evil

PAU principle of axiological uncertainty

PoE problem of evil

PV positively valued

PVW positively valued world

VC Value comparabilism

VI Value incomparabilism

VM value monism

VP value pluralism

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to my thesis. I discussed the specific problem addressed in this study, articulated my thesis, covered important sub-questions and abbreviations, and summarised the content of the remaining chapters. In Chapter 2, I will summarise various aspects of the problem of evil. This summary will help the reader to distinguish the PAE from other problems and non-problems of evil in preparation for the arguments I give in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2: Framing the problem of evil

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the problem of evil (PoE) by distinguishing several sub-problems. The PoE is a collection of related problems concerning the difficulty of a world with evil and suffering. The PAE is emphasised at the end of the chapter.

According to Socrates and Plato (2009:860) in *Theaetetus* 155d, philosophy begins in wonder. Insofar as wonder involves the desire to acquire knowledge, philosophy is a systematic and rational activity involving the use discursive reasoning to obtain knowledge about the ultimate issues of human life. Aristotle (1952:499) opened *Metaphysics* by saying that all human beings by nature desire to know. It is natural for human beings to seek knowledge, even if that natural capacity is distracted or disabled. The philosopher's search for knowledge is particularly strong; the philosopher desires to obtain knowledge in a systemic and orderly manner.

Human beings desire, and perhaps even need, comprehensive order. We seek order in every significant domain of human life. We flourish in order. Though a novelist or a filmmaker might begin a story *in medias res*, eventually the narrative demands a structure with a setting, characters, their relations, and a plot to tie everything together. The global economist is not content to understand the economic activity of a single region. He wants to know the economies of every region and to grasp how they form a global economic nexus. The professional athlete must follow a strict regime of order and structure to develop excellence in the athletic craft. The painter is an orderly artist. Even the abstract impressionist takes a thoughtful approach, despite the random appearance of his product. The impressionist might use a spontaneous method of spreading paint onto canvas, but this improvisation is guided by a settled and disciplined choice to create according to the expressionist manner. As Roger Scruton (2011:106) puts it, a sense of structure or fittingness is at the heart of aesthetics. The child needs the order of family life, school, and other structures to develop into a mature adult. Indeed, general education is an attempt to bring some degree of systematicity and completeness to the child's knowledge of the world. Rather than rejecting the events of their lives as random and meaningless occurrences, most adults want to understand these events in terms of a meaningful pattern. The human mind seeks intelligibility of the cosmos and of the human experience. David McPherson (2020) argues that

human beings are *by nature* the meaning-seeking animal. For some, this pursuit is more robust; for others, less so. However, the pursuit is common to humanity.

Philosophy is no exception to the human effort to acquire comprehensive understanding. Rescher (2006:86) puts it as follows:

> "The prime mover of philosophizing is the urge to systemic adequacy – to achieving consistency, coherence, and rational order within the framework of what we accept. Its work is a matter of the disciplining of our cognitive commitments in order to make overall sense of them – to render them harmonious and coherent. And so the demands of rational consistency come to the forefront … The pursuit of rational coherence – consistency, compatibility, comprehensiveness – is the crux of philosophical method."

Philosophy is a rational attempt to establish a systematic, consistent, and intelligible structure for our understanding of reality. However, philosophy is difficult. Although philosophy begins in wonder, and seeks systematicity, it often runs into puzzlement and perplexity (Rescher, 2014:75). In other words, the problems of philosophy tend not to be amenable to immediate solution. Moreover, the solutions that philosophers propose for these problems are usually not matters of deductive certainty which compel every competent philosopher to accept them.[11] Rather, the solutions are plausible to some degree, and philosophers who oppose them are free to offer reasonable objections.

For example, philosophical investigations often involve aporia. Such aporetic situations are puzzling because they involve propositions which are individually plausible but collectively inconsistent, requiring the philosopher to reject one of them in order to maintain a consistent view of the world. Consider the following aporetic triad: (i) Human beings have morally significant free will. (ii) Human choices and actions are determined, either by causally sufficient factors external to the human person (e.g., physical laws), or by causally sufficient factors internal to the human person (e.g., desires). (iii) Morally significant free will require the categorical ability to choose/act

[11] Some problems of philosophy have been answered in such a way that the answers posed have been widely accepted. Such topics tend to be incorporated into the sciences. For example, many problems of astronomy, physics, and psychology were once part of philosophy.

in such a manner that one's choices/actions are not causally determined by external or internal factors.

The acceptance of any two horns of this triad entails a denial of the third. Each horn is individually plausible to some degree (or at least is taken to be plausible by competent philosophers), but they are collectively inconsistent. Moreover, the arguments that philosophers have given to defend these propositions are not deductively compelling in the sense that one denies the argument on pain of irrationality. Rather, the arguments are rationally acceptable despite being open to objection. Thus, to solve an aporia, one must rank its propositions (and their supporting arguments) in terms of plausibility and reject the least plausible option. The result is a consistent set of reasonable beliefs, but not a claim to objective certainty. Here are two more aporetic triads to reinforce the point:

1. Human beings are morally responsible for their actions.
2. Moral responsibility entails libertarian free will.
3. Soft determinism (i.e., compatibilism) is true.

A. The correspondence theory of truth is correct.

B. The correspondence theory entails the objective existence of entities such as propositions and states of affairs (e.g., truth-makers).

C. Propositions and states of affairs do not objectively exist.

To underscore the point about the challenging nature of philosophy, consider Bertrand Russell (1997:155-156), who articulates the difficulty as follows:

> "There are many questions – and among them those that are of the profoundest interest to our spiritual life – which, so far as we can see, must remain insoluble to the human intellect unless its powers become of quite a different order from what they are now. Has the universe any unity of plan or purpose, or is it a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Is consciousness a permanent part of the universe, giving hope of indefinite growth in wisdom, or is it a transitory accident on a small planet on which life must ultimately become impossible? Are good and evil of importance to the universe or only to man? Such questions are asked by philosophy, and variously answered by various philosophers. But it would seem that, whether answers be otherwise discoverable or not, the answers suggested by philosophy are none of them demonstrably true. Yet, … it is part of the

> business of philosophy to continue the consideration of such questions, to make us aware of their importance, to examine all the approaches to them, and to keep alive that speculative interest in the universe which is apt to be killed by confining ourselves to definitely ascertainable knowledge."

The topic of the existence of God is among the most important topics in philosophy of religion. It has proven to be a significant philosophical challenge as well; philosophers are divided on the issue. Philosophers have addressed the issue by analysing the concept "God", reflecting on the attributes of God, and constructing arguments for and against theism. Philosophers and theologians have articulated many arguments for the existence of God. One of the primary objections to theism is the PoE. The PoE has developed over a period of roughly 2500 years and has many facets. Thinkers have reflected on aspects of the problem since at least the writing of the Book of Job in the Near East and the development of Buddhism in India.

This dissertation is an attempt to evaluate one version of the PoE by investigating its axiological framework. My efforts are Socratic in nature. I attempt to wield the tool of *elenchus*, to analyse and evaluate, and to follow the arguments where they seem to lead. I will not dogmatically claim to solve any problems or offer any categorically final words. Rather, any evaluative claim I make regarding the PAE will be a matter of plausibility or reasonable belief. I agree with William Alston (1996:311) that (nearly) all efforts in philosophy are subject to critical comment and counter-comment. In other words, as Robert Nozick (2013:xxii) put it, there is a place in philosophy for words other than last words. A philosopher need not claim to have written a complete work which leaves no questions. Given human fallibility, one should be open to ongoing critical evaluation of philosophical topics.

2.2 What is the PoE?

In this section, I provide an outline of the PoE. I address various aspects of the issue by distinguishing between the intellectual and the emotional problems, and then by discussing different versions of the intellectual problem.

The term "problem of evil" is not univocal. Rather, it is an umbrella term that can be applied in different senses to a range of problems and issues related to the topic of evil. As such, it is important to make appropriate distinctions, lest one confuses the diverse issues. The term "evil" also seems non-univocal. We use it in different ways. For example, we refer to persons as evil,

to their acts as evil, to cultures and societies as evil, and to natural events (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes) as evil. Clearly, for this dissertation, we need a working definition of "evil" to avoid confusion. I will address the nature of evil in depth in Chapters 3 and 6, but it is important to discuss the term briefly here.

By "evil", I generally mean what Peter van Inwagen (2008:4) means by the term, namely "bad things". However, there is more to be said. One might be inclined to hold that the horrific nature of evil goes beyond that which is merely bad. For example, a hangnail or a headache can be called "bad". But one might hesitate to say that hangnails and headaches are *evil*. Instead, that which is evil is *very* bad or *horrendously* bad or inexcusably egregious. John Kekes (2005:xi) notes that evil is an attack on the fundamental conditions of human well-being.[12] For Kekes, evil is best characterised as *moral evil*. Kekes seems Stoic in his suggestion that the only evil is moral evil, or evil done by a person to a person.[13] An evil act, he says, is an inexcusable act done by a human being to a human being which causes serious and excessive harm (Kekes, 2005:1-2). Alvin Plantinga (2017:364) offers the following elaboration:

> "The late and unlamented twentieth century displayed an absolutely appalling amount and variety both of suffering and of evil; no previous century rivals it. As I'm thinking of the matter, suffering encompasses any kind of pain or discomfort: … I'm thinking of evil, on the other hand, as, fundamentally, a matter of free creatures' doing what is wrong and/or displaying vicious character traits. Often pain and suffering is a result of evil, as in some of the events for which our century will be remembered – the horrifying seventy-year-long Marxist experiments in eastern Europe and China with their many millions of victims, the

[12] On pages 1 and 2, Kekes (2005) suggests that an evil act is an inexcusable one which causes serious and excessive harm. The evil act can be explained by a variety of factors – some of which are themselves evil – such as weakness of will, ignorance of the good, defective reasoning, irrational and unreflective dogmatism, hubristic overreliance on reason (e.g., the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution), human destructiveness, bad political arrangements, excessive self-love, immoderate pleasure-seeking, revenge, greed, boredom, enjoyment, perversity, provocation, stupidity, fear, callousness, indoctrination, self-deception, and negligence.

[13] The Stoics held that the only evil is moral evil. They did not admit the existence of so-called natural evil. Rather, for the Stoics, natural evil is a *non-preferred indifferent*.

> Holocaust, genocide in late twentieth-century Europe and Africa, and the like. Of course much suffering and evil is banal, prosaic, commonplace, and is none the better for that."

Roughly, then, the PoE is the puzzle of understanding why the world contains appalling things and events such as the ones Plantinga and Kekes listed. From this broad foundation, we can further analyse the PoE by looking at its different applications.

2.2.1 The emotional problem and the intellectual problem

This section emphasises the distinction between the intellectual and the emotional PoE.[14] In general, the former is a matter of trying to resolve some philosophical question or issue regarding the existence of evil, whereas the latter concerns one's emotional well-being. It is common for contemporary analytic philosophers to distinguish between these versions of the problem. For example, Chad Meister (2009:132, 138-139) divides the PoE into theoretical/intellectual and existential/emotional versions. Similarly, Alvin Plantinga (1977:63-64) writes:

> "The upshot, I believe, is that there is no good atheological argument from evil. The existence of God is neither precluded nor rendered improbable by the existence of evil. Of course, suffering and misfortune may nonetheless constitute a problem for the theist; but the problem is not that his beliefs are logically or probabilistically incompatible. The theist may find a religious problem in evil; in the presence of his own suffering or that of someone near to him he may find it difficult to maintain what he takes to be the proper attitude towards God. Faced with great personal suffering or misfortune, he may be tempted to rebel against God, to shake his fist in God's face, or even to give up belief in God altogether. But this is a problem of a different dimension. Such a problem calls, not for philosophical enlightenment, but for pastoral care".

William Lane Craig (2017:40) captures the distinction as follows: "Contemporary philosophers of religion have found it helpful to distinguish between the intellectual problem of evil and the

[14] It is important here to refer to the definition of "philosophical problem" provided in Chapter 3. According to this definition, the intellectual problem is a genuine philosophical problem, but the emotional problem is not, although it is a problem of another sort.

emotional problem of evil. The intellectual problem of evil concerns how to give a rationally acceptable account of the coexistence of God and evil. The emotional problem of evil concerns how to dissolve the emotional aversion people have to a God who would permit such evil."

In short, the emotional problem is more germane to the disciplines of psychology and counselling than to the discipline of philosophy. It should be noted that some philosophical traditions have attempted to address the human emotional response to evil. For example, the moral psychology of Stoicism contains mental disciplines for the wise person to practice for the sake of managing the emotional challenges associated with moral evils and physical pains.[15] Nevertheless, the emotional problem is not a philosophical problem *per se*. However, the intellectual PoE is a philosophical problem, and it is commonly expressed as an argument to support atheism. This argument can be articulated in either logical/deductive or probabilistic/inductive terms. According to the logical version, the coexistence of God and evil is logically incompatible; since evil exists, God is logically impossible in the way that a married bachelor or a colourless red shoe is logically impossible. According to the probabilistic version, the coexistence of God and evil is logically possible, but the existence of evil makes God's existence improbable.

For this paper, the intellectual problem concerning the relationship between the existence of God and the existence of evil is emphasised. However, the intellectual problem is wider than the attempt to make sense of the coexistence of God and evil. The intellectual problem can also be construed as a general attempt to understand the reason for evil; i.e., one can wonder why evil exists without considering its relation to God. The intellectual problem is a theoretical challenge which requires careful thought to reach a solution, assuming the problem is both genuine and solvable.

2.2.1.1 The emotional problem

[15] Again, the Stoics did not consider physical pain and suffering (i.e., what contemporary philosophers sometimes call "natural evil") to be evil, strictly speaking. The Stoics only admitted moral evil. For the Stoics, only virtuous persons and virtues themselves are good, and only vicious persons and vices themselves are evil. Physical pain and suffering are *non-preferred indifferents* (i.e., they are neither good nor evil, although it is reasonable for a wise person to prefer to avoid them).

The emotional problem is not a search for understanding *per se*; at least, it is not a search for understanding in order to satisfy the intellect or because knowledge is taken to be the goal of the search. Thus, the emotional problem is not a theoretical or academic problem. Indeed, given the definition of "philosophical problem" given in Chapter 3, the emotional problem does not qualify as a philosophical problem. Rather, the emotional problem is a vexatious existential problem; i.e., the experience of evil can be a significant emotional challenge and thus an obstacle to one's emotional well-being. Hence, a resolution of the emotional problem is sought for the sake of emotional flourishing rather than to reach an intellectual conclusion about a puzzling philosophical matter.

For example, a theist who experiences suffering or encounters evil might become angry, sad, anxious, or otherwise vexed about the situation and therefore blame or harbour negative emotions toward God for allowing the suffering. A resolution to this problem likely requires emotional support. As such, the emotional problem is of interest to the counsellor, the psychologist, the therapist, and the pastor. It is not of direct interest to the philosopher *qua* philosopher, who is concerned with the intellectual problem.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky's (2003:326-327) *The Brothers Karamazov* provides an insightful literary example of the emotional problem. Consider a remark from Ivan Karamazov, a main character in the story. Notice that Ivan does not explicitly claim that the existence of evil is evidence against God's existence. It seems Ivan is not an atheist in the sense of believing that there is no God. Instead, Ivan rejects a relationship with God. Ivan is emotionally repulsed at the reality of suffering, and thus refuses to relate with a God who would permit it. Ivan explicitly states that he does not want the *truth*; instead, he chooses to maintain his *anger*, even if he is wrong.

> "I don't want that truth, and I declare in advance that all the truth in the world is not worth the price! … No, I want no part of any harmony. I don't want it, out of love for mankind. I prefer to remain with my unavenged suffering and my unappeased anger – *even if I happen to be wrong*. I feel, moreover, that such harmony is rather overpriced. We cannot afford to pay so much for a ticket. And so I hasten to return the ticket I have been sent. If I'm honest, it is my duty to return it as long as possible before the show. And that's just what I'm trying to do, Alyosha. It isn't that I reject God; I am simply returning Him most respectfully the ticket that would entitle me to a seat."

2.2.1.2 The intellectual problem

As the quotation from Ivan indicates, the intellectual problem of evil differs radically from the emotional problem. The former is a genuine problem in the philosophical sense to be addressed in Chapter 3; the latter is not. The intellectual problem can be subdivided into *the problem of evil per se* and *the problem of understanding the logical consistency of a world which includes both evil and God*. The problem of evil *per se* calls for an attempt to understand why evil exists, but this attempt need not involve thinking about the topic of God or otherwise addressing the issue from a theological context. Thus, the problem of using the existence of evil as evidence against theism does not arise. In contrast, the problem of the coexistence of God and evil involves searching for a reasonable explanation regarding the apparent oddness or inconsistency of this co-existence. Hence, in this problem, one encounters arguments from evil for the non-existence of God, and objections to those arguments – which serve as attempts to defend theism.

Regarding the problem of evil *per se*, traditional Buddhism provides an intriguing and historically influential example. The Buddhist tradition involves attempts to understand why suffering exists and how to overcome it. However, the Buddhist system of metaphysics and ethics does not explore the relationship between evil and God.[16] As Mackinnon and Fiala (2018:29) note regarding the PoE, "Buddhists explain that life is characterised by suffering, or *dukha*. They explain that suffering comes from attachment to the fleeting goods of this world and from wrongful actions. Christians also struggle with the problem of evil … How can evil exist in a world that is supposedly created by a benevolent and all-powerful God?" Both Buddhism and Christianity wrestle with the PoE, but there is a significant difference. Buddhism is, at least for some of its major versions, a non-theistic system; moreover, it is a system which denies the existence of selfhood, whether divine or non-divine. Hence, on Buddhism, the existence of suffering is a puzzle, but the logic of the puzzle does not involve questions regarding how a personal God can coexist with evils that harm non-divine persons or selves.

[16] For an interesting article on the Buddhist approach to the PoE, see Buswell, Jr. (2019). For an interesting article on the Taoist approach to the problem of evil, which is another non-theistic approach, see Ghorban Elmi and Mojtaba Zarvani (2016).

The Buddhist tradition holds that, as a young prince possessing an analytic mind and a sensitive spirit, Siddhārtha Gautama was presented with an opportunity to escape the confinement of his privileged lifestyle and to observe the suffering of persons who lacked such privileges. (Noss, 2003:166) Seizing this opportunity, he travelled from his home into the countryside, where he observed human suffering. For example, he saw an old man experiencing pains associated with aging. He saw a man debilitated by physical disease. He witnessed the corpse of a dead man. Hence, Gautama faced the issues of suffering and death experientially; he observed others who had suffered and died. As the story goes, Gautama had compassion on the suffering persons whom he had observed. He was therefore motivated to understand the source of suffering and to find its cure. Gautama is said to have learned an important lesson from these experiences: that all human beings suffer and die. This lesson was the foundation for the First Noble Truth of Buddhism.

As the story proceeds, after practicing forms of asceticism and meditation, and ultimately rejecting the life of extreme asceticism, Gautama discovered the Four Noble Truths: that all human life involves suffering (*dukkha*); that the cause (*samudaya*) of this suffering is desire for things which are inherently impermanent and thus cannot satisfy the cravings of human agents; that the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering can be achieved by eliminating all desires (or at least the ones for things that cannot satisfy); and that the way to eliminate these desires and the suffering caused by them is to follow the Eightfold Path (*magga*).

Here, I do not claim to provide anything close to a complete description of Buddhism, nor do I attempt to do so.[17] I provide this incomplete summary of Buddhism only to serve as an example of a systematic, historically significant, and religiously influential attempt to understand suffering without thinking about the logical compatibility of the relationship between evil and God.

Another example of the effort to wrestle with the problem of evil *per se* can be found in the *oeuvre* of the German philosopher Artur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer (1818) argued that,

[17] As Noss (2003:164) noted, “The single term *Buddhism* refers to a diverse array of beliefs and practices and implies a degree of uniformity that does not exist.” If this claim is correct, then a complete summary of Buddhism would be quite difficult to provide.

paradoxically, the world as it is objectively (i.e., apart from the way it appears to conscious beings), is fundamentally a non-conscious striving for life. This striving is the source of all suffering experienced by conscious individuals. This desire-driven suffering can be overcome by engaging in asceticism, which enables one to negate the unfulfillable will-to-life. Schopenhauer (2004) underscores the significance of asceticism in *On the Sufferings of the World*. He held that the ascetic traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity are prudent attempts to negate the will-to-life (i.e., to end insatiable desire). Furthermore, in *On the Vanity of Existence*, Schopenhauer (2004) suggests that the evils and sufferings in this world are at least partly explained by its meaninglessness. In Schopenhauer's view, the world is marked by constant striving without satisfaction, by an incessant becoming without being, and by a moment-to-moment passing away. This fugacious world is, for Schopenhauer, vain or meaningless.

This is not an attempt wholly to explain Schopenhauer's worldview. Rather, it is a snapshot of an influential and systematic philosophical effort to understand evil without reference to theism. Despite the interesting philosophical questions regarding the problem of evil *per se*, my goal in this paper is to emphasise the problem of the coexistence of evil and God (hereafter, the intellectual problem). Nevertheless, I will return to Buddhism and to Schopenhauer in Chapter 7; these worldviews represent an objection to arguments I present there against the PAE.

Having made the distinctions above, the intellectual problem of understanding a world which includes both evil and God can be further separated into the faith-seeking-understanding (FSU) version and the argument from evil (AE). The FSU is a matter of religious reasoning on the part of a believer; i.e., it is an attempt, by one who believes in God, to understand why the Deity permits evil. The believer might wonder why God allows evil in general, or why God permits specific cases of evil, or why God allows the cases of evil as they are distributed either quantitatively or qualitatively or both. Marilyn McCord Adams (1999:2) postulates that:

> "Evil belongs to the syllabus of religion, which is expected to say something about its nature, source, and consequences: how and to what extent it takes root in human beings, whether and how it can be eradicated, how in the midst of it we should conduct ourselves through life. Where biblical religions are concerned, with their strong doctrine of an omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good God Who created everything other than the Godself, evil has always been a challenge. The Bible's authors themselves struggle with

it in an impressive variety of ways (contrast Job with Ecclesiastes with the Servant Songs of Isaiah with the synoptic Gospels)."

In contrast, the AE is a type of argument against theism. As such, it can take various tokens, each of which appeals to the existence of evil as evidence against theism. In other words, the AE is an attempt to reason from the data of evil to the non-existence of God. Unlike the FSU, the AE is not a religiously faithful effort to understand why God permits evil. Instead, the advocate of the AE seeks either to show that the existence of evil makes it unlikely that there is a God, or to demonstrate that belief in God is logically inconsistent with belief in evil and thus, given the existence of evil, theism is logically impossible.[18]

The story of Job in the Old Testament is perhaps the most famous version of the FSU. In the narrative, Job is a faithful servant of God who, after a period of prosperity, undergoes several experiences of severe suffering. At various points in the story, Job and his friends ponder God's reasons for permitting Job's suffering. Job's friends suggest that his suffering resulted from some morally wrong act on his part.[19] They seem to argue as follows: if one does what is morally wrong, then he suffers. Job suffers. Thus, Job did what is morally wrong. If this is the basic structure of the argument from Job's friends, then it appears to be a case of the fallacy of affirming the consequent. However, perhaps Job's friends were not presenting a deductive argument. Instead, they might have meant to present an inference to the best explanation (i.e., an abductive argument) for Job's suffering; such an argument looks like this: given the existence of objective morality, moral corruption is (taken by Job's friends to be) the best explanation for human suffering; hence, since Job is suffering, he has probably done something morally wrong. In any case, Job denies any wrongdoing that would warrant such suffering. Job does not seem to believe that his suffering is a consequence of his own moral misdeeds.

Although Job's faith in God is tested throughout the story, he remains a faithful servant of God despite the suffering. At the end of the story, Job's suffering ceases and he is restored to prosperity. The story is an insightful presentation of the FSU. In some respects, the narrative also

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[18] As J. L. Mackie (1971:593) put it, if theism is logically inconsistent with belief in evil, then (given the obviousness of evil) theism is "positively irrational."
[19] For example, see Job 22:5.

illustrates the emotional problem of evil. Job struggles with the emotional challenges of his situation, not merely with the intellectual problem. His friends attempt to comfort him. They even sit with him in silence for seven days before attempting to explain Job's suffering.

> "When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was."[20]

After the seven-day period, Job laments his condition, claiming that he has no peace, rest, or quietness, but only turmoil.[21] After this lament, which may itself be an effective method of dealing with the emotional problem[22], Job's friends begin to speak. The dialogue between Job and his friends alternates between various expressions of the emotional problem and discussions of the FSU.

The story of Joseph in the book of Genesis might be construed as another example of the FSU. Joseph is also a faithful servant of God who, despite birth and upbringing in circumstances of some wealth and privilege, undergoes a long period of suffering. He was the victim of family betrayal, false accusation, unjust imprisonment, and demeaning enslavement. The suffering does not appear to have been caused by any wrongdoing on his part. Yet Joseph remained loyal to God, eventually obtaining a position of great political power: the Egyptian Pharaoh designated Joseph as second-in-command of all Egypt. As such, Joseph was likely one of the most powerful human beings in the world at the time. At the end of the story, Joseph recognised that God did not cause his suffering, but permitted it for the sake of placing Joseph in a position of power. This position enabled Joseph (and, according to the story, God through him) to save the lives of millions in the Eastern Mediterranean region who were facing famine. As Joseph tells his brothers,

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[20] Job 2:11-13 (NIV).
[21] Job 3:26 (NIV).
[22] Philosopher Douglas Groothuis (2013) has written on this topic.

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."[23] One can think of Joseph's statement as an expression of his recognition of the reason for his suffering.

The New Testament also contains passages which address the FSU. For example, consider the following:

"As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' "Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him'."[24]

In this passage, the disciples ask their teacher for an explanation regarding a specific instance of suffering. As theists, the students want to know why God would allow this case of suffering; hence, they ask for an explanation. It is interesting to note that the learners seem to assume that the suffering must be a result of sin, like Job's friends seem to assume about Job. As he did in a similar situation described in Luke 13:1-5, Jesus corrects this assumption by indicating that some instances of suffering do not result from morally wrong behaviour. There are other explanations for human suffering. Despite the interesting philosophical questions regarding this version of the intellectual problem of evil, my goal in this paper is to emphasise the AE. I will introduce the AE in section 2.4. But first, I will briefly discuss the importance of studying the PoE.

2.3 Why study the PoE?

In this section, I provide a short commentary on why studying the PoE is important. Evil and suffering are pervasive aspects of the human experience. There are individual moral evils such as murder and rape, societal evils such as slavery, prostitution, and organised crime, and so-called natural evils such as pandemics and hurricanes. In some cases, ignorance is an evil – in particular, cases of morally culpable and wilful ignorance. Such things are dark stains that mar the canvas of human life. Hume (2006:73) observed, "Were a stranger to drop on a sudden into this world, I would show him, as a specimen of its ills, a hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded

[23] Genesis 50:20 (NIV).
[24] John 9:1-3 (NIV).

with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle strewed with carcasses, a fleet foundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine, or pestilence."

To Hume's list, we can add ills such as the political regimes of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao; the massacre in Nanking during World War II; atrocities such as the genocide in Rwanda; the several mass shootings in the U. S. over the last 15 years; the blight of human trafficking; and the famine in Ethiopia from 1984 to 1985. One reason to study the PoE is to gain understanding about a universal part of the human experience, relevant to Hume as much as to us, even if it is a part of the human experience that ought not exist. Arguably, such understanding is vital for human flourishing and wilful ignorance of such evil is detrimental thereto.

Moreover, as Marylyn McCord Adams (1999:1) has noted, evil is a fascinating topic despite its repugnance. We want to understand evil in terms of propositional knowledge, but not via knowledge by acquaintance. In other words, we want to know what evil is, why evil exists, and how to avoid it; but we do not want to experience it.[25] However, the existence of evil is existentially puzzling in a way that other commonalities of the human experience (e.g., eating, sleeping, and breathing) are not. Evil and suffering harm us physically and mentally. Evil is an obstacle to human flourishing. We want to know why evil and suffering in general exist and why they interfere with human well-being. We seek to understand why particular evils exist and why we suffer in the specific ways that we do. We pursue knowledge about the reasons that evils are distributed in the ways that they are, and why some seem qualitatively worse than others. An honest approach to the PoE, says Adams (1999:16), "requires us to face the fact that horrors are deeply entrenched in the human condition".

Moreover, if we suppose that there is a God, we want to know why evil exists in a world governed by an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and morally perfect being. How can evil coexist with such a being? Hence, a second reason to study the PoE is to make sense of how (or if) the existence of evil is consistent with the existence of a God who possesses the omni-attributes of divinity. Although suffering is ubiquitous to the human experience, the great majority

[25] Indeed, in *Poetics*, Aristotle (2020) claimed that one of the values of the art of drama is that it enables us to undergo catharsis and to become acquainted with evil and suffering from a safe distance.

of human beings throughout history have believed in a divine reality. What sense can be made of theistic belief in a world marred by evil and suffering?

In sum, these are two reasons to study the PoE: to understand a universal part of the human experience and to make sense of the supposed coexistence of evil and God.

Having addressed other versions of the PoE, and reasons for studying it, I now turn to the AE. It is common in the philosophical literature to distinguish between what is called the logical argument from evil (LAE) and the probabilistic argument from evil (PAE).[26] The LAE is sometimes called the "deductive version" and the PAE is sometimes called the "inductive or evidential version" of the argument. It should be noted that these terms are used in a somewhat ambiguous manner. For example, logic applies to both versions, not just to the LAE; evidence is involved in each version, not just in the PAE. I will further discuss the primary differences between the LAE and the PAE in Section 2.4.

2.4 The LAE and the PAE

In this section, I distinguish the LAE from the PAE. This distinction is crucial to understand the arguments against the PAE that I give in Chapter 7. It is said that the AE is the best objection to theism. John Hick (1963:40) argues, "To many, the most powerful positive objection to belief in God is the fact of evil." This claim is reasonable. *Prima facie*, a world in which the Supreme Being coexists with objective evil is a puzzling world. Many philosophers working on the topic hold that the PAE is more effective than the LAE and that the latter fails to establish its conclusion. In this section, I will summarise the LAE and a few common formulations of the PAE.

[26] Peter van Inwagen (2008) has suggested that the division of the AE into the logical and probabilistic versions is not ideal, but that it is better to divide the AE based on the scope of evil, thereby suggesting global and local versions. Most philosophers who address the AE have not followed van Inwagen in this respect. I will address this issue in more detail in Chapter 7.

2.4.1 The LAE

It is standard to distinguish the LAE from the PAE. In the former, the proponent tries to show that it is logically impossible for God and evil to coexist. According to this view, to speak of such a coexistence is to utter contradictory nonsense; it is like saying that square circles, married bachelors, or triangles without angles exist. These are logically inconsistent utterances and thus express impossibilities. As such, we know *a priori* that there are no square circles, etc. Similarly, according to advocates of the LAE, we know *a priori* that God and evil are logically inconsistent. And since evil exists, the advocate of the LAE concludes that it is logically impossible that God exists. There are many instances of evil; the genocide against the Tutsi by the Hutu in Rwanda is an atrocious example. If the coexistence of God and evil is logically impossible, then the genocide in Rwanda is sufficient to show deductively that the existence of God is logically impossible.

It should be noted that those who claim based on the LAE that the existence of God is logically impossible do not hold that the world just happens to lack the existence of divinity. Rather, they assert that the very concept of God is logically incoherent and thus that divinity is necessarily non-existent. Their atheism is not a matter of lacking a belief in something that might exist but contingently happens not to exist, as if they might come to believe in God if they were to discover adequate probabilistic evidence for theism. Instead, they believe that theism is logical nonsense, akin to belief in round squares or colourless red shoes. This is likely what Mackie (1971) meant by theism being “positively irrational”. According to this view, no probabilistic evidence provided by arguments such as the fine-tuning argument can make it likely that God exists.

Much has been written on the existential relation between God and evil. For example, in discussing the nature of the good and its relation to God, Plato (2009:626; *Republic* 379c) wrote that God is the source of good things but never of evil, despite the evils of human life. Socrates notes: “Neither, then, could God [be the cause of evil], said I, since he is good, be, as the multitude say, the cause of all things, but for mankind he is the cause of few things, but of many things not the cause. For good things are far fewer with us than evil, and for the good we must assume no other cause than God, but the cause of evil we must look for in other things and not in God.” This statement from Plato presupposes that the coexistence of God and evil is logically consistent, and indicates that something non-divine must be responsible for evil. The Bible is similarly clear that God and evil are compatible, and that God is the source of good but not of evil. In the

Judeo-Christian tradition, God and evil exist; and since whatever is actual is possible, the coexistence of God and evil is possible.

It has been claimed that Epicurus doubted the logical compatibility of God and evil. Epicurus is said to have articulated the LAE as follows: “Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?” David Hume (2006:75) framed the problem in the following way, which he took to be from Epicurus: “Epicurus’s old questions are yet unanswered. Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”

In the 20th Century, Mackie (1971:593) expressed the LAE as follows: “In its simplest form the problem is this: God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once must adhere and cannot consistently adhere to all three.” In addition, HJ McCloskey (1960:97) articulated the problem thus: “Evil is a problem for the theist in that a contradiction is involved in the fact of evil on the one hand, and the belief in the omnipotence and perfection of God on the other.”

How has the community of professional philosophers evaluated the LAE? After a long period of reflection, the consensus is that the LAE fails. William Lane Craig (2011) concludes, “Most philosophers today, by far the vast, vast majority, be they theist or atheist, recognize that the logical version of the problem of evil has failed.” If this is the case, we might plausibly claim that the work done over the last few decades on the LAE is a significant example that the discipline of philosophy makes progress, over against complaints that philosophy never moves forward. Craig (2020) has found that, “During the last quarter century or so, an enormous amount of philosophical analysis has been poured into the problem of evil, with the result that genuine philosophical progress on the age-old question has been made.” William Alston (1996:97) agrees that the LAE fails, noting that it is widely acknowledged that the LAE is ineffective. According to Alvin Plantinga (2000:490), “At present, however, it is widely conceded that there is nothing like straightforward contradiction or necessary falsehood in the joint affirmation of God and evil; the existence of evil is not logically incompatible (even in the broadly logical sense) with the existence

of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good God." Paul Draper (1996:end note 1) also says: "I agree with most philosophers that theists face no serious logical problem of evil."

In short, the LAE-advocate argues this way: "either God exists, or evil exists, but not both; since evil exists, there is no God." Is this a good argument? Note that there is no explicit contradiction between the propositions "God exists" and "Evil exists." One is not the explicit negation of the other, as is the case with the following propositions: "Lions exist" and "Lions do not exist." Thus, if "God exists" and "Evil exists" contradict each other, the contradiction must be implicit. However, there does not appear to be an implicit contradiction either. Indeed, no one has demonstrated that the two propositions are logically inconsistent. *Prima facie*, the argument does not appear successful.

Moreover, philosophers such as Plantinga and John Hick have provided plausible arguments to indicate the logical possibility that God and evil coexist; they have shown the possibility that God has a morally sufficient reason to permit evil. For example, Plantinga (1977) indicates that if morally significant creaturely libertarian free will (LFW) for human beings is logically possible, then the LAE fails. Moreover, it seems logically possible for God to have created human beings with such libertarian freedom. Such freedom is an endowment of great value, which indicates that God might have good reason for endowing us with it. However, if human beings have morally significant LFW, then it is possible for them to choose what is morally evil. As Solzhenitsyn (2007:75) wrote in *The Gulag Archipelago*, the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. Thus, plausibly, it is possible that God has an adequate reason to allow moral evil. As such, one might argue that God's giving us morally significant creaturely LFW is an objective good which is sufficient to outweigh the moral evil which is a by-product of human free choice.

According to Hick (1963:41), "Christian thought has always considered moral evil in its relation to human freedom and responsibility." Hick proceeds to note that human personhood involves the freedom to act both rightly and wrongly in any morally relevant situation. Thus, the idea of a human being who can be infallibly guaranteed always to act rightly is a self-contradictory idea. Hick (1963:41-43) writes: "It is no limitation upon God's power that he cannot accomplish the logically impossible, since there is nothing here to accomplish, but only a meaningless combination of words – in this case 'person who is not a person.' God can create beings of any

and every conceivable kind; but creatures who lack moral freedom … would not be what we mean by persons."

Hick (1963:43-47) also argues that God has created this world of struggle and pain as a vale of soul-making to prepare us for a future good which is valuable enough to justify what happens to us in this classroom of character development.[27] Hick (1963:44-46) presents what he called the "soul-making" defence, a view which dates at least to Irenaeus (ca. 130 – 202 A. D.). This view indicates that God might have a just reason to permit evil. Elsewhere, Hick (2007, 1966:255-256) writes:

> "The value-judgment that is implicitly being invoked here is that one who has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus by rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations, is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created *ab initio* in a state either of innocence or of virtue … I suggest, then, that it is an ethically reasonable judgment … that human goodness slowly built up through personal histories of moral effort has a value in the eyes of the Creator which justifies even the long travail of the soul-making process."

In Hick's (2007, 1966:258) view, the sufferings that humans experience in this life are instrumental in building the moral and intellectual character of each human being for the sake of preparing us in sanctity and wisdom for the great future that God has planned. Hick (2007, 1996:258) continues that "Men are not to be thought of on the analogy of animal pets, whose life is to be made as agreeable as possible, but rather on the analogy of human children, who are to grow to adulthood in an environment whose primary and overriding purpose is not immediate pleasure but the

[27] Hick's point about soul-making might be especially appealing to a value monist who believes that there is only one value: personal excellence. For example, as Heathwood (2015) notes, there is a version of value monism called "perfectionism". In this view, the only value (at least with respect to human affairs) is the perfection of those objective virtues distinctive of human nature. Plato explores a view like this in *Philebus*. If it is the case that there is only one value, and that this value is excellence, then the value monist could argue that the world is carefully designed by God to achieve excellence for all created personal beings. Hence, although this world of suffering seems to be negatively valued, it is in fact a positively valued vale of soul-making designed to bring about excellence.

realizing of the most valuable potentialities of human personality." Eleonore Stump (1985:409) makes a similar point, emphasising natural evil:

> "Natural evil – the pain of disease, the intermittent and unpredictable destruction of natural disasters, the decay of old age, the imminence of death – takes away a person's satisfaction with himself. It tends to humble him, show him his frailty, make him reflect on the transience of temporal goods, and turn his affections towards other-worldly things, away from the things of this world. No amount of moral or natural evil, of course, can guarantee that a man will [place his faith in God] … But evil of this sort is the best hope, I think, and maybe the only effective means, for bringing men to such a state."

It is important to note that these lines of reasoning need not be characterised as attempts at theodicy; i.e., they need not be construed as claims to *know* why God permits the existence of evil. Rather, they are plausibly taken as defences of theism; i.e., they are modal claims about what is possible concerning God's permission of evil. A plausible defence is all one needs to defeat the LAE. Moreover, Plantinga (1996:70) notes the following regarding why God permit evil:

> "The Christian theist must concede that she doesn't know – that is, she doesn't know in any detail. On a quite general level, she may know or think she knows that God permits evil because he can achieve a world he sees as better by permitting evil than by preventing it; and what God sees as better is, of course, better. But we cannot see why our world, with all its ills, would be better than others we think we can imagine, nor what, in any detail, is God's reason for permitting a given specific evil. Not only can we not see this; we can't, I think, envision any very good possibilities. And here I must remark that many of the attempts to explain why God permits evil – theodicies, as we might call them – seem to me shallow, tepid, and ultimately frivolous."

In short, on the accounts provided by Plantinga, Hick, and Stump, the existence of evil does not deductively guarantee the non-existence of God. As Plantinga argues, it is logically possible that God created us with libertarian freedom. Furthermore, the scenarios of sanctification described by Hick and Stump are logically possible. Hence, as Mackie (1983:154) admitted: "we can concede that the problem of evil does not, after all, show that the central doctrines of theism are logically inconsistent with one another." And as Peter van Inwagen (1996:576) notes, the LAE "is no longer defended". In other words, the consensus among professional philosophers who

specialise in the LAE is that this is not a successful argument. However, the PAE remains a concern. According to R. Beebe,

> "The ease with which Plantinga undermined that formulation of the problem suggests that the logical formulation did not adequately capture the difficult and perplexing issue concerning God and evil that has been so hotly debated by philosophers and theologians. In fact, this is precisely the message that many philosophers took away from the debate between Plantinga and the defenders of the logical problem of evil. They reasoned that there must be more to the problem of evil than what is captured in the logical formulation of the problem. It is now widely agreed that this intuition is correct. Current discussions of the problem focus on what is called 'the probabilistic problem of evil' or 'the evidential problem of evil' … However, we should keep in mind that all parties admit that Plantinga's Free Will Defense successfully rebuts the logical problem of evil as it was formulated by atheists during the mid-twentieth-century."[28]

I shall return to the PAE shortly. But first, it should be noted that, despite the consensus against the LAE, a few philosophers continue to support it. Consider four examples. Richard Gale (1993) addresses the LAE and argues against Plantinga's free-will defence (FWD), thus attempting to keep the discussion alive. In short, Gale argues that if God created human beings and endowed them with LFW, but logically prior to creation, God knew via middle knowledge that those humans would freely go wrong, then God is responsible for the moral evils committed by his human creatures. Furthermore, if God created human beings with LFW, but logically prior to creation lacked middle knowledge and thus did not know with certainty whether those humans would freely go wrong, then God is guilty of recklessness.[29] Gale (1993:134) suggests that in either case, God is morally blameworthy. It should be noted that Gale did not take himself to have conclusively refuted Plantinga, but only to have given the theist something for serious reflection. Gale (1996:206) summarises his point, "In my book, *On the Nature and Existence of God*, I argued that

[28] See Beebe (2020).

[29] For additional information on middle knowledge and on the charge of divine recklessness (i.e., that a creator without middle knowledge who creates persons with LFW is guilty of recklessness), see Crozat (2018) and (2019).

no version of this [Plantinga's] defense works, and thereby the logical problem posed by moral evil is still with us."

Quentin Smith (1997:9) claims to have succeeded where Gale merely raised a concern. Smith claims to refute Plantinga's FWD. Smith articulates certain distinctions between different senses of freedom that, he believes, Plantinga failed to address. In Smith's view, these distinctions enable him to deliver a knockout punch where Gale aimed a strategic jab. Smith writes: "I believe that the distinction I made among external/internal/logical freedoms and the argument I based on this do conclusively refute Plantinga's free will defense, and thus we need not rely on Gale's many arguments to see that the defense does not succeed."

Jordan Howard Sobel (2003) argued that the LAE is successful against perfect being theism, i.e., the Anselmian idea that God is a perfect being and the greatest conceivable or metaphysically greatest being.[30] However, Sobel noted, the LAE might not succeed against a view of God that is less metaphysically sophisticated and thus more appealing to the general population – perhaps some idea of God that falls short of Anselm's view but is religiously accessible for the non-philosopher. Sobel (2003:479) writes:

> "What are we to make of all this? Shall we, because of the problem of evil in its myriad devolutions, give up on the God of the philosophers and classical theologians, that omnipotent, omniscience, benevolent being, that perfect being? I think so … Which is not to say that we should on those general grounds give up on God entirely, including 'the God of the Bible and Rabbis' (Howard Wettstein) 'or something very like Him' (Arthur Hugh Clough). Regarding God, thus understood, and therefore regarding God as understood I suspect by most believers, there is no logical problem of evil, and though there are for the world-wise and reflective evidential problems of evil, these can be for particular persons manageable without confusion … The logical problem of evil is a problem for perfect-being theologies only …"

[30] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the Anselmian idea of God.

It should be noted in response to Sobel that, arguably, the LAE does not refute perfect being theism, which is the Anselmian view that God is the greatest conceivable being. It all depends on the nature of such a being. Yujin Nagasawa (2017) contends (1) that five of the main arguments for the possibility premise (PP) of the modal ontological argument are inconclusive, but (2) that his "Maximal God" thesis entails the PP, (3) that his thesis is true, and (4) therefore, the concept of God as a perfect being is by definition consistent, the existence of God is logically possible, and thus God necessarily exists.

Nagasawa holds that, though the five main arguments offer some degree of support for the PP, they do not deductively entail the PP. I will mention three of the five arguments that he addresses.

Consider the "conceivability entails possibility" argument.[31] Nagasawa distinguishes between *prima facie conceivability* and *ideal conceivability.*[32] The former is an appearance of conceivability but not necessarily a matter genuine of genuine conceivability. The latter is genuine conceivability, which entails possibility. Nagasawa claims that *prima facie conceivability* inductively supports but does not entail the PP. Consider the epistemic right to believe that which I take myself to perceive directly in nature. Suppose I take myself to perceive that there is a tree before me. I believe this because I am *appeared to treely* (i.e., I have an experience of something which I take to be a tree). My belief is *prima facie* justified even if my experience is erroneous and there is no tree there. Similarly, I have an epistemic right to believe that what I *prima facie* conceive to be possible is indeed possible. However, given human fallibility, that which seems conceivable and thus possible might in fact be incoherent. Thus, according to Nagasawa, although the concept of God seems conceivable, for all we know it might turn out to be incoherent. Nagasawa also notes that *ideal conceivability* entails possibility. If one conceives truly that *x* is logically consistent, then since to be true is to correspond with reality, *x* is logically consistent and therefore logically possible. Nevertheless, Nagasawa is concerned that human beings cannot

[31] Some philosophers have held that if one can conceive of something, then that thing is logically possible. Other philosophers have argued that the "conceivability entails possibility" claim is a modal illusion.

[32] One might also think of this distinction as between *subjective* or *epistemic conceivability* on one hand, and *objective conceivability* on the other.

achieve *ideal conceivability* regarding the existence of God. The matter is too complicated for us; we cannot obtain infallible knowledge about it.

In addition, Nagasawa argues that the deontic "ought-implies-can" argument supports but does not demonstrate conclusively the PP, and that Leibniz' argument for the PP is similarly supportive but non-entailing. Basically, the deontic argument is that if God ought to exist, then it is possible that God exists, since whatever ought to be the case is logically possible. But God ought to exist, according to this argument. Therefore, God's existence is logically possible. As for the argument from Leibniz, he held that positive attributes are logically consistent, and that since God's essential attributes are positive, they are consistent. Hence, God is logically possible.

After evaluating five arguments for the PP, Nagasawa articulates his "Maximal God" thesis, claiming that it entails the PP. The idea is that God is, by definition, the metaphysically greatest possible being, and thus that God has the greatest possible, logically consistent combination of great-making attributes (whatever these attributes turn out to be). In other words, God possesses the maximally consistent set of excellent properties such as knowledge, power, and benevolence. Since this combination is and must be consistent, God is logically possible. Nagasawa (2017:p.204) puts it as follows: "In other words, the maximal concept of God is by definition internally coherent because its components are mutually consistent (and internally coherent). This guarantees the possibility of the existence of God."[33]

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[33] It is commonly said that a great-making attribute is one that is better to have than not to have. I believe that a clarification is in order here. There are properties that are better to have than not to have *relative to specific circumstances*, the possession of which entail the possession of defects or weaknesses in the property-bearer. For example, plausibly, it is better to have the property of overcoming an irrational fear (i.e., a phobia) than it is not to have this property. However, the possession of this property entails the possession of both fear and irrationality, which are weaknesses that cannot be had by God. Consider other examples: it is better to have the characteristic of accelerated healing from sickness or injury than it is not to have such a property. This sort of property is often ascribed to fictional superheroes such as Spider-Man or the Incredible Hulk. But God cannot have such a property, since God cannot be sick or injured. It is also better to have heightened physical senses than not (a property also had by Spider-Man and other fictional characters). But God does not have heightened physical senses because God is not a physical entity. God's greatness is not diminished because he lacks an enhanced sense of sight. These examples show that it is not quite enough to say that a great-making attribute is one that is better to have than not to have. It is more precise to say something like the following: a great-making attribute is one that is better to have than not to have, as long as the possession of such a property does not entail a defect, weakness, or any other lack of excellence.

According to Nagasawa (2017:204), his “Maximal God” thesis can be used by the perfect being theist to refute every atheistic argument that the concept of God is somehow incoherent. Nagasawa asserts that his thesis enables a method of refutation against the atheist that is simpler and thus preferable to the demand of responding to each atheistic argument one by one. Furthermore, compatible with my argument in this paper, he states that the Maximal God approach makes it more difficult to defend the AE. The scope of this dissertation, however, does not allow me to spend more time on the LAE. I now turn my attention to the PAE.

2.4.2 The PAE

We have seen that the LAE is widely considered unsuccessful as an argument against theism. However, notwithstanding Nagasawa’s argument, the PAE remains an open debate. In this section, I briefly summarise three versions of the PAE to give the reader a sense of its variety and its force. Above, reference was made to Beebe’s comment regarding Plantinga’s “easy undermining” of the LAE. For Beebe, the failure of the LAE has highlighted important points regarding the problem of evil that can be articulated in a probabilistic version of the problem.

In the PAE, the existence of evil is claimed as inductive evidence against the existence of God. According to this argument, the data of evil indicates that it is *to some degree probable* that God does not exist. For example, William Rowe (1979:336) has argued as follows: Probably, there are instances of intense suffering which God could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse. But an omniscient, omnipotent, wholly good God would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering, unless God could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse. Thus, probably, there does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good God. Here is a simplified version of the argument: probably, there are instances of gratuitous evil; but God would not permit any instances of gratuitous evil; hence, probably there is no God. In short, the argument is that the coexistence of God and gratuitous evil is logically impossible; so, either God exists, or gratuitous evil exists, but not both; probably, gratuitous evil exists; hence, probably, God does not exist. This is called the probabilistic argument from gratuitous evil.

According to another common version of the PAE, the logical possibility that God and evil coexist is explicitly admitted, but the existence of evil is said to make God’s existence improbable. For instance, Justin McBrayer (2020) has summarised this formulation of the argument as follows:

"According to the evidential argument from evil, while it is logically possible that both [sic] God and evil coexist, the latter is evidence against the former." He (2020) has also articulated it in this way: "The defender of the evidential argument from evil, on the other hand, grants that it is possible that God and evil co-exist, but he insists that it is very unlikely that God exists given the extent and degree of evil actually observed."[34] Nick Trakakis presents a similar articulation by concluding that the argument "seeks to show that the existence of evil, although logically consistent with the existence of God, counts against the truth of theism."[35] Richard Otte (2000:1-10) puts the matter as follows: "According to this argument the evil in our world is evidence against the existence of God, even though evil is logically consistent with God's existing." I call this the possible-but-improbable (PBI) formulation of the PAE. In this formulation, the coexistence of God and evil is explicitly admitted as logically possible or logically consistent, but the existence of God is taken to be improbable to some degree.[36]

Lastly, Paul Draper (1996) argues that our knowledge of pain and pleasure poses a problem for theists. He notes that this is not a logical problem of the sort that can be expressed as a LAE. Rather, it is a probabilistic problem. Draper compares theism with the hypothesis of indifference (HI) to see which best explains O: the observations one has made of humans and animals experiencing pain or pleasure, and the testimony one has encountered concerning the observations others have made of sentient beings experiencing pain or pleasure. The HI holds that neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of benevolent or malevolent actions performed by nonhuman persons. HI is consistent with naturalism and with nontheistic forms of supernaturalism, but HI is not consistent with theism, since (for Draper) theism is the view that God exists, and God is the omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect creator of the universe who cares for human beings. For Draper, HI explains the facts reported by O better than theism explains those facts. Alternatively, O is more probable on the assumption

[34] See McBrayer, *Van Inwagen on the Problem of Evil: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*.
[35] See Trakakis, *The Evidential Problem of Evil*.

[36] One might wonder here how the existence of a logically possible, necessary being can be improbable. But that is a question for another thesis.

that HI is true than on the assumption that theism is true. Draper's argument is thus a version of the PAE which emphasises pleasure and pain.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter included a summary of various important aspects of the PoE. It also addressed reasons for studying the problem. The PoE can be divided into the emotional problem and the intellectual problem. Concerning the intellectual problem, there is a problem of explaining the existence of evil without respect to God, and there is the problem of explaining the coexistence of God and evil. Regarding the latter problem, there is the "faith-seeking-understanding" challenge and there is the argument from evil against theism. The argument from evil can take the form of the LAE or of the PAE. The consensus (or near-consensus) among contemporary analytic philosophers is that the LAE is unsuccessful, but that the PAE is a live issue. This dissertation emphasises the PAE. In Chapter 3, I will discuss important assumptions, terms, and working definitions for the dissertation that will provide a foundation for evaluating the PAE.

Chapter 3: Terms and assumptions

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses important assumptions, terms, and working definitions for the dissertation. Chisholm (1979:21) is of the opinion that readers of a philosophical thesis have the right to know how the writer is using important terms. Hence, in this chapter I will provide a discussion of some terms that will be crucial for understanding the content of subsequent chapters.

3.2 God

By “God”, I mean the God of perfect being theology. This conception was introduced in Chapter 2. According to Mark Murphy (2019), perfect being theology is a project of philosophical theology and conceptual analysis which attempts to make the nature of God more explicit by identifying God as an absolutely perfect being and working out what features an absolutely perfect being must exhibit. This conception of God has been articulated by past thinkers such as Anselm and contemporary thinkers such as Alvin Plantinga and Yujin Nagasawa. Anselm (1078) described God as the greatest conceivable being (Latin: *Aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari posit*). For Plantinga (1977:108), God is the maximally great being. To be maximally great is to be maximally excellent in every possible world; to be maximally excellent is to exist in some world W and to possess every great-making property (e.g., omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence) in W. In Nagasawa’s terms (2017:79), God is the metaphysically greatest possible being. This conception is prominent among contemporary analytic philosophers.

3.3 Moral realism, cognitivism, objectivism, and subjectivism

For this dissertation, I will operate on the assumption that moral realism and moral cognitivism are true, and that morality and axiology are objective. As indicated in Chapter 1, the strongest versions of the various arguments from evil, including the PAE, operate on the assumption that morality is real, that it is a cognitive matter, and that it is objective. Plausibly, any argument from evil which holds that morality is completely subjective, or that value is completely subjective, would be less effective as an objection to theism. Such an argument would hold that evil is merely subjectively unpleasant, thus appealing to subjective tastes and preferences as a reason to conclude that God probably does not exist. However, via appeal to Hick (2007, 1966), the theist

can respond that we are not God's pets; he did not create us to live in a hedonistic cage in which we experience only comfort and pleasure. Rather, he created us to be autonomous agents and to achieve moral and intellectual maturity. The meaning of human life, McPherson (2020) argues, is to achieve a transcendent type of *eudaimonia* characterised by moral and intellectual wholeness. Hick writes: "Men are not to be thought of on the analogy of animal pets, whose life is to be made as agreeable as possible, but rather on the analogy of human children, who are to grow to adulthood in an environment whose primary and overriding purpose is not immediate pleasure but the realising of the most valuable potentialities of human personality." (Hick, 2007, 1966:258.) With these points in mind, it becomes evident that an argument from evil which holds that morality as such is not even real in the objective sense, or that morality is merely a non-cognitive emotional matter, would be difficult to wield against theism.

Moreover, if value is merely subjective, then the claim that the world is negatively valued (NV)[37] because of its quantity, intensity, or kind of evil is merely a subjective claim; thus, by definition, the truth of the claim is dependent on the desires or beliefs of the claimant. I.e., the meaning of such a claim is something like this: "I dislike the world" or "I desire some other world" or "I arbitrarily believe that the world is NV." But another claimant can disagree and hold that the world is positively valued (PV); he might respond: "I like the world" or "I desire this world" or "I arbitrarily believe that the world is PV." Such claims have no objective truth regarding the actual value of the world and thus seem ineffective at demonstrating the falsity of theism. Indeed, if value is merely subjective, a matter of mere likes and dislikes, then the theist could claim that God subjectively likes and desires the world that he created, and that he does so for his own reasons or purposes, regardless of whether we like or desire it. The absence of objective value would make it impossible for us to appeal to some objective standard to oppose evil. It would be a case of human subjective dislikes against divine subjective likes, and there would be no objectivity to settle the difference. Indeed, there would be no real debate to be had, for, as the Latin maxim indicates, *de gustibus non est disputandum*. In any case, since intellectual charity and fairness

[37] See Chapter 7 for a detailed treatment of the claim that the world is NV. In short, a positively valued world is one in which its objective goods outweigh its objective evils. A world which is not positively valued is either axiologically neutral (AN) or negatively valued (NV). If a world is NV, then it is neither PV nor AN.

call for the evaluation of an argument according to its strongest version, I will evaluate the PAE on the assumption that morality and value are real, cognitive, and objective features of the world.

By "objective", I mean something that exists in such a manner that the truth-values of the propositions which describe it do not depend on human consciousness (e.g., thoughts, beliefs, desires, choices). In other words, for any object *x*, *x* is objective iff the truth-values of the propositions that describe *x* are independent of human consciousness. Such objects can include contingent entities (e.g., Napoleon Bonaparte), contingent facts (e.g., Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo), necessary beings (e.g., God, abstract objects), and necessary truths (e.g., that 2 + 2 = 4). For example, the Sun, a contingent entity, exists objectively; its existence as a mid-sized star located in the Milky Way Galaxy does not depend on human desires or beliefs. In fact, the astronomical and anthropological evidence indicates that the Sun existed long before humans were around to have mental states about it. By "subjective", I mean assertions which are taken to be true (or otherwise accepted) by a person such that the supposed truth values of those propositions are relative to the conscious agent and his own mental states (preferences, desires, etc.), and those supposed truth values can vary from person to person. In other words, a claim is subjective if it corresponds to a mental act such as a belief, desire, liking, or preference such that the mental act is relative to the person and the mental act serves as a pro-attitude which inclines the person to affirm the assertion. For instance, suppose Smith prefers coffee over tea. Smith's preference for coffee is real, but it is dependent on his own subjective tastes. Indeed, it exists as a mental state in Smith's mind. It does not exist independently of Smith and his psychological states. If there were no Smith, then Smith's preference for coffee would not exist. If Smith were to say: "Coffee is tasty" or "Coffee is better than tea", such claims would be taken as true by Smith, but they would be subjective (i.e., relative to his own likings and preferences). They would not be objectively true. Smith pro-attitude toward coffee, exemplified by his liking of coffee or his preference for coffee, incline him to affirm that coffee is tasty, etc. However, the propositions "Smith likes coffee" and "Smith prefers coffee to tea" would be objectively true .[38]

[38] This discussion of objectivity and subjectivity is important with respect to the discussion of probability in Chapter 4 and with respect to the axiological arguments provided in Chapter 7.

Moral objectivism and moral subjectivism are cognitivist theories of morality, unlike non-cognitivist views such as emotivism. Moral cognitivism is the view that moral propositions are truth claims which address facts about the world and thus are either true or false. Thus, moral cognitivism is a form of (or at least a necessary condition for) moral realism, which is the ontological claim that moral facts or states of affairs exist. For example, the proposition "Murder is morally wrong" is true and the proposition "*Schadenfreude* is a moral virtue" is false. These propositions are cognitive matters that one can think about, believe, and assert; furthermore, their truth values depend on corresponding objective moral facts. Moral non-cognitivism denies moral cognitivism, holding that moral utterances are not about facts and hence are neither true nor false. Rather, moral utterances merely express non-cognitive mental states such as emotions (emotivism), non-authoritative commands or imperatives (imperativalism), or desire-based pro-attitudes and con-attitudes (expressivism). For an emotivist, the utterance "Murder is morally wrong" is just an expression of emotion, like "Booh and yuck for murder!", which itself has no truth-content. For an imperativalist, "One ought to keep his promises" just means "Keep your promises, I command you!"; again, this has no alethic content. And for an expressivist, "*Schadenfreude* is a moral vice" means "I have a negative attitude toward *schadenfreude*" or "I don't like *schadenfreude* and I want people to avoid it".

Moral objectivism is the theory that moral values and duties exist independently of human mental states or attitudes about them, and that moral propositions address value facts about the mind-independent moral world. Hence, moral values and duties are independent of human consciousness, and moral propositions are true or false independent of human beliefs, preferences, etc. Take the proposition "Genocide is morally wrong": according to moral objectivism, the truth of this proposition does not depend on human attitudes toward genocide. Rather, the proposition is true insofar as it corresponds to extra-mental facts about the world. Indeed, "Genocide is morally wrong" is a necessary truth, holding in every possible world, including those in which no human beings exist.

Moral subjectivism is the claim that moral statements do not express information about the mind-independent world. Rather, they express contingent psychological information about the mental states or attitudes of the speaker. Therefore, the truth or falsity of moral claims is relative to the conscious states (e.g., beliefs, desires, attitudes) of the individual subject. Shakespeare

(1599: Act 2, Scene 2) astutely aphorised moral subjectivism via the character of Hamlet: “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”

To elaborate on moral subjectivism, consider language about pain: the claim “Pain is evil” does not refer to extra-mental reality. Rather, it refers to the subject’s contingently held beliefs or desires about pain. If Smith claims that “Pain is evil”, then what he means (according to moral subjectivism) is “Pain does not feel pleasant” or “I don’t like pain”. Smith’s dislike of pain is real, and thus his claim “Pain does not feel pleasant” is true for him, but the claim is not about the objective moral world. Rather, it is about Smith’s subjective dislikes, which are matters of Smith’s psychological makeup. Hence, the truth of Smith’s statement “Pain does not feel pleasant” is dependent on and relative to Smith’s psychological state. If there were no Smith, there would be no instance of the Smithian dislike of pain (assuming there are no other Smiths who dislike pain).

To reiterate, the distinction between moral objectivism and moral subjectivism is important for the problem of evil because that problem has more force against theism if evil is objective. However, if evil is merely subjective, and thus relative to the person and variant from person to person, then the problem of evil loses much of its force and becomes a person-relative matter of subjective preferences, likes, and dislikes about the world. The theist could reasonably respond that some person’s subjective dislike of the world that God has created cuts no ice with the theist and gives the theist no reason to conclude that there is no God.

3.4 Philosophical problems

This dissertation is entitled “The problem of goodness for the problem of evil.” In this paper, I am investigating whether goodness poses an axiological *problem* for the PAE. It is therefore fitting to address the question: what is a philosophical problem? There are many kinds of problems – what distinguishes philosophical ones? Robert Amico (1993:4) notes that there is very little philosophical writing about the nature of philosophical problems. Amico (1993:7) states that the English word “problem” comes from the Greek *problema*, which refers to a hurdle or impediment. There are various kinds of hurdles, such as health problems, financial problems, and family problems. According to Amico (1993:9), in the philosophical sense, a problem is an *intellectual* hurdle; it is a theoretical challenge which cannot be solved merely by empirical means. A philosophical problem is a conceptual obstacle for a person at a time which can be solved either conclusively or plausibly. However, at the point of recognising the problem, one cannot

immediately solve it because one has rational doubt or rational uncertainty about the solution.[39] Hence, mental effort in the form of reasoning and conceptual analysis is required. The intellectual hurdle must be solved by skilful mental hurdling.

Amico (1993:7) also notes that a problem is akin to a question. A question, in the philosophical sense, is a search (quest) for a solution to a philosophical problem. The search permits rational examination and can be settled by definitive answer or plausibly resolved by some degree of reasoned judgment. For Amico (1993:10-11), a philosophical solution is a representation (e.g., a statement or series of statements) that: (1) is or can be expressed as a semantically appropriate response to a question; (2) answers the question; (3) is true (i.e. corresponds to reality); and (4) removes rational doubt.

For this dissertation, I will adopt these working definitions of "problem", "question," and "solution". Hence, if the axiology of the PAE poses a philosophical problem for the PAE, then there are conceptual obstacles in axiology which are such that they raise rational doubt about the success of the argument.

3.5 Further axiological and mental topics

An obligation is a requirement to act, or to refrain from acting, in accordance with a moral command; i.e., a duty. If an action *p* is obligatory, then it is not permissible to do not-*p*. A virtue is an intellectual or moral excellence of character, such as wisdom, love, courage, or self-control. Character is a person's internal mental, emotional, and volitional condition; it is a person's set of habits of thought, belief, desire, feeling, choice, and behaviour. One's character is observable in one's habits of thought, desire, choice, and behaviour. Moreland and Craig (2017:469) explain that character is the sum of one's habits, insofar as a habit is a disposition to think, feel, desire, and act in a certain way without having to will consciously to do so. Dallas Willard (2020) describes character as follows: "That internal, overall structure of the self that is revealed by our long-run

[39] Amico (1993:9) defines rational doubt as follows: S has rational doubt about P = def. S is more justified in withholding belief in P than in accepting P or rejecting P.

patterns of behaviour and from which our actions more or less automatically arise. What we will seriously think about is one of the strongest indications of how our character has grown." A person is a being which possesses a rational nature, moral agency, and relational capacity (or at least the capacity for these).[40]

According to Moreland (2014:194), "will" is the mental faculty of choice; will is volition, or the faculty of endeavouring to do a certain thing, usually for the sake of some end. Moreland (2014:195) defines "desire" as the appetitive mental faculty that inclines a person toward or away from some thing or experience. In this sense, a desire is self-oriented. He defines "belief" as a person's perspective, accepted to varying degrees of strength, of how things really are. Moreland (2014:200) characterises a "thought" as a mental content that can be expressed in a sentence and that only exists while it is being had. He defines a "sensation" as a state of awareness, which can be perceptual (e.g., a visual sensation) or non-perceptual (e.g., an emotional sensation).

The concept of "good" has been discussed since at least the time of Plato, who held that the Good (or the Form of the Good) is the fundamental aspect of reality. Plato (2009; Republic) compared the Good, which in his system is found in the intelligible realm, to the sun, which is accessible to human beings in the visible part of reality. For humans, physical light from the sun makes visible objects visible to us via the sense of sight. Similarly, rational light from the Good makes intelligible entities intelligible to us via the faculty of reason; such intelligible entities are not visible, since they are not themselves physical entities which can be seen. Nevertheless, according to Plato, intelligible entities reflect the intellectual light of the Good and can be thereby grasped by the intellect.[41] For Plato, the Good is the cause of all things right and beautiful, and the source of truth and reason; anyone who is wise, he says, "must catch sight" of the good.[42]

Aristotle defined the good as "that at which all things aim", and he defined the chief good as an intrinsic value which, as such, is desirable for its own sake; i.e., the good is that which is

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[40] For example, see Boethius (2020), *De Duabis Naturis*. See also Aquinas (2020), who defends Boethius's definition in *Summa Theologiae*, First Part, Question 29.
[41] See Plato (2009), *Republic*, 508c-518c, for a detailed discussion of the Good. This section contains Plato's famous Divided Line and Cave representations of reason, knowledge, and the Good.
[42] *Republic*, 517c.

worthy of being valued.[43] For Aristotle, the primary instance of good available to human beings is happiness. His conception of happiness is represented by the Greek term "*eudaimonia*".[44] Etymologically, this term means something like "the objective state of having a good soul". For Aristotle, the happy human being is the one who lives excellently and achieves his function or *telos* (end, purpose). Human beings are by nature beings capable of rationality. Hence, for Aristotle, human happiness is an activity of the rational aspect of the human soul; i.e., the human good of *eudaimonia* is "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue (excellence) in a complete life."[45] The person of *eudaimonia* is the one who has cultivated a character of moral and intellectual excellence and is thus a flourishing human being.

In various places throughout his *oeuvre*, Aquinas associates the good with being, indicating that in some sense, goodness is interchangeable with being. In *Exposition of 'On the Hebdomads of Boethius'*, Aquinas reasons as follows: "Things which are, are good. For all the learned are agreed that every existing thing tends to good and everything tends to its like. Therefore, things which tend to good are good." (Aquinas cited in McInerny 1999:152.) He continues, citing Aristotle: "But whatever is, tends to the good. This invokes the second common conception of the learned, for at the outset of the Ethics, the Philosopher says that the wise declare the good to be that which all things desire. For good is the proper object of the will, as sound is the proper object of hearing …" (Aristotle cited in McInerny 1999:153.) In *The Human Good*, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that the good is that which all things seek. (Aquinas cited in McInerny 1999:262) He states that "to be perfected is what we mean by being good" (Aquinas cited in McInerny 1999:263) and that intellectual contemplation of wisdom (which for Aquinas is contemplation of "things divine") is the highest good for human beings, since

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[43] See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I. The idea that the good is that at which all things aim raises the question: is goodness good because we aim at it, or do we aim at goodness because it is good (i.e., worthy of our aiming)? Aristotle's claim that the good is desirable for its own sake indicates that his answer is the latter. This idea is sometimes referred to the fitting-attitude (FA) analysis. According to the FA analysis, the good is that which is worthy of (i.e., fitting for) our pro-attitude. In other words, the good is that which is worthy of a person's valuing (fitting for a person to value). See Zimmerman (2015:21-22) for a detailed discussion of the FA analysis.

[44] I will discuss this term in more detail in Chapter 5.

[45] See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1. Aristotle recognises that the common human conception of happiness is that happiness is a matter of achieving pleasure, wealth, etc. However, Aristotle holds that true happiness is eudaimonia.

we are intellectual substances (Aquinas cited in McInerny 1999:280).[46] In *Summa Theologiae*, Part I, Question 5 (entitled: *On Goodness in General*), Aquinas argues as follows, again citing Aristotle:

> "It should be said that good and being are the same in reality and differ only in account. Which is clear from this: the notion of good consists in this that something is desirable, which is why the Philosopher, in Ethics I, says that the good is that which all things desire. But it is manifest that a thing is desirable insofar as it is perfected, for all things desire their own perfection. A thing is perfected to the degree that it is actual; … So, it is obvious that good and being are really the same, but good adds the note of desirableness, which being does not." (Aquinas cited in McInerny 1999:344-345.)

Here, Aquinas claims that goodness and being are the same in ontic terms, although they differ epistemically.

Based on these sections from Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas, we might say that the good as such is identical to wholeness of being according to nature, which is something worthy of or fitting to be valued.[47] As applied to human nature, the good is a matter of human excellence or *eudaimonia*. In this view, any instance of goodness in the human realm will in some sense contribute to *eudaimonia*, either instrumentally (i.e., as a means to eudaimonia) or intrinsically as an aspect of human flourishing which is good for its own sake. This point will be important to keep in mind for Chapter 5 and for Chapter 7. In trying to determine of the world is positively valued, arguably one must factor in concepts such as *eudaimonia* and flourishing in a complete human life.

G.E. Moore thought that goodness is a simple and unanalysable property. For Moore, goodness is abstract and undefinable in terms of essential definition.[48] In this thesis, I will not

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[46] Note that Aquinas holds that the highest good for human beings is the rational or intellectual *contemplation* of ultimate reality (or divine things). However, according to Aquinas, happiness is not the *perfect knowledge* of this highest reality, because human beings cannot attain such knowledge.
[47] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the fitting analysis (FA) view on goodness.
[48] In this view, one might hold that we can know goodness experientially, and that we can define goodness ostensively, i.e., by pointing to obvious instances of goodness.

adopt Moore's view of goodness, for, as Willard (2018:Introduction) has argued, Moore's view of goodness "makes it impossible to construct a plausible moral epistemology, because Moore offers no intelligible account of how goodness relates to its instances". According to Willard, this collapse of moral knowledge "sets the stage for moral nihilism, in the form of emotivism and other varieties of noncognitivism". Since this thesis assumes moral realism, moral objectivism, and moral cognitivism, and since Chapter 5 discusses goodness as such as well as particular instances of goodness, I will not adopt Moore's approach to goodness, despite its influence in the 20th century.

The term "good" seems non-univocal. "Goodness" is used in different ways. There are good persons, good animals, good cellular phones, good movies, good food, good pieces of music, good computers, and many other things which we call "good". What is goodness itself? I will address this point in detail in Chapter 5, but a few words are in order here. As we have noted, according to Aquinas, goodness is being; i.e., goodness is wholeness of being, excellence, or actuality according to nature. Hence, a good person is a fully actualised person, a good cat is a healthy and mature cat, and a good cellular phone is a fully functioning one which does what it was designed to do. This is a general conception of goodness. We will take up this topic in more detail in Chapter 5, but an example might suffice to underscore the point here.

Consider the conception of a good person as a fully actualised person, one who is whole according to nature. Willard defines a morally good person as one who is intent upon advancing the various goods of human life (i.e., things that are good for human beings and enable them to flourish) with which he is effectively in contact, in a manner that respects their relative degrees of importance and the extent to which the actions of the person in question can actually promote the existence and maintenance of those goods. According to Willard (2020), the morally bad or evil person is one who is intent upon the destruction of the various goods of human life with which he is effectively in contact, or who is indifferent to the existence and maintenance of those goods.[49] Truth and reasoning, he writes, are among the most important human goods.

Reminiscent of Kant, Willard suggests that a good person is a person of good will, and that a person is good to the extent that the person is morally and intellectual excellent.

[49] This definition of an evil person is consistent with Kekes's (2005) definition of evil.

Interestingly, Willard holds that all the goods of the moral life (e.g., moral values, virtues, obligations, rights) can be understood only by recognising and beginning with the distinction between a good and a bad will or person. McPherson's (2020) view of a good human being is similar.

The term "evil" is addressed in detail in Chapter 6. Like "goodness", "evil" seems non-univocal. We use it in different ways. For example, we refer to persons as evil, personal acts as evil, cultures and societies as evil, institutions as evil, periods of time as evil, and natural events as evil (e.g., hurricanes). Clearly, for this dissertation, we need a working definition of "evil". Use of the term has varied widely in the history of philosophy. The Stoics held that the only evil is moral evil. Kekes (2005) holds a similar view. In Chapter 3 of the *Enchiridion*, Augustine (2020) stated that evil is a privation of the good (*privation boni*); i.e., evil an absence of goodness where goodness ought to be. According to Peter van Inwagen (2008:4), in the context of the problem of evil, the term "evil" refers to "bad things".[50] However, one might be inclined to hold that the horrific nature of evil exceeds that which is merely bad. Rather, that which is evil is appalling or *very bad*. Kekes (2005) observes that evil is an attack on the fundamental conditions of human well-being. Plantinga (2017:364) distinguishes between "suffering" and "evil":

> "The late and unlamented twentieth century displayed an absolutely appalling amount and variety both of suffering and of evil; no previous century rivals it. As I'm thinking of the matter, suffering encompasses any kind of pain or discomfort: … I'm thinking of evil, on the other hand, as, fundamentally, a matter of free creatures' doing what is wrong and/or displaying vicious character traits …"

We might also work with an essential definition posed by Alan Rhoda (2010): "An evil=$_{\text{def.}}$ An event-token which is such that, in relation to the Good, it is objectively better that it *not* occur, than that it occur."

Roughly, then, the problem of evil is the question of why the world contains very bad things and events of the sort that Plantinga addressed. Such things are destructive of well-being for

[50] Peter van Inwagen (1996) also characterized evil as "undeserved pain and suffering".

human beings, and some might argue, for sentient beings in general. It is objectively better that these things not exist. At this point, let us adopt a broad working definition of “evil” as “something that is very bad” in the sense described above. We will discuss the nature of evil in more depth in Chapter 6.

“Intrinsic value” is used in different senses. Scholars debate the proper use of the term. For Michael J. Zimmerman (2019), for example, something has intrinsic value if it is good “in itself”, “for its own sake”, “as such” or “in its own right” rather than for the sake of something else. In this sense, something (e.g., a person) has intrinsic value if it is by nature an end in itself or valuable for its own sake. I call this “intrinsic value 1”. In contrast, extrinsic value is non-intrinsic worth. Something has extrinsic value insofar as it is axiologically related to something else in an appropriate way; it is not good for its own sake, but is good insofar as it relates to something else which has value

One way of having extrinsic value is instrumental. An instrumental value is something which is good for the sake of accomplishing some valuable end. For example, a pencil has instrumental value insofar as it can be used as a tool to achieve a sketch of a person’s face, a written essay, and the like. However, a value can be extrinsic without being instrumental. For example, suppose that a student takes a test and earns a grade of “excellent”. The student has thus demonstrated knowledge in the subject. Suppose that knowledge is an intrinsic value. Arguably, the grade itself is not intrinsically valuable. However, neither is it instrumentally valuable. The grade is not a means to the end of knowledge. Rather, the grade is a sign or indication of the possession of knowledge. The grade has value insofar as the grade is a credential or symbol of the knowledge possessed by the student. In other words, the grade bears value in virtue of the relation in which it stands with a relatum (say, propositional knowledge) which possesses intrinsic value.

“Intrinsic value” is sometimes used as a synonym of “inherent value” such that the latter term refers to underived worth. Some entity has underived worth if it does not receive its value from something else, but possesses it without needing to borrow it. In other words, the entity has something like value aseity. In this sense of “intrinsic value” (which I call “intrinsic value 2”), for example, God (according to perfect being theology) has underived value, but other things (e.g., created persons) possess derived value. This derived value is consistent with intrinsic value 1.

Arguably, created persons and art objects have intrinsic value 1 and derived value. As such, intrinsic value 1 contrasts with extrinsic value, but intrinsic value 2 contrasts with derived value.

A value-bearer is something which possesses worth, either intrinsically or extrinsically. Value bearers are thought by philosophers to be either substances, properties, tropes (property instances, such as the concrete instance of redness in a red apple), or states of affairs; or perhaps more than one of these entities can be a value-bearer.[51] As Nien-he Hsieh notes (2016), the term "bearer of value" should be understood broadly. The concept of value-bearer will be an important part of arguments I give in Chapter 7.

In the philosophical sense, a substance is a property-bearer. A substance is a concrete object which bears properties, remains the same through change[52], and stands in relations. If a substance is a unity of parts, that unity is based on its nature rather than on some externally imposed structure. Hence, a substance differs from things such as heaps, artifacts, machines, and other artificially ordered structures.

Roughly, a state of affairs is an abstract object which can be characterised as a logically consistent way things are, a fact (which is a state of affairs that obtains), a possible fact, or an ontological situation. For example, it is a historical fact that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B. C.; hence *Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 B.C.* is a state of affairs. If a shirt is blue, then *the shirt's being blue* is a state of affairs. If the Brazilian national soccer team won the soccer World Cup in 2002, then *the Brazilian national soccer team's winning the 2002 World Cup* is a state of affairs. States of affairs are abstract objects and thus exist necessarily; they are such that some but not all of them obtain. According to Chisolm (1979:117), an entity is a state of affairs iff it is possible that there is someone who accepts it. I.e., a state of affairs is that which may be believed by a rational agent. For E.J. Lowe (2002:128-129), a state of affairs is a possible ontological situation; a state of affairs which obtains is a fact, and facts are what make propositions true or false. A state of affairs which does not obtain is not a fact, but it could have been one. It is

[51] See Section 4 of Zimmerman (2019) for a discussion of value-bearers.
[52] By "change" I mean the coming to or going from of a property with respect to an object at a time.

a possible fact. In sum, states of affairs are ontological situations which either obtain (i.e., facts) or could obtain (merely possible facts).

The concepts addressed in this section – such as obligation, virtue, intrinsic value, extrinsic value, value-bearer, and state-of-affairs – are crucial to clarify for the arguments that I present in Chapter 7.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented several crucial assumptions, terms, and working definitions for the dissertation. Some of the most important of these concepts include “philosophical problem”, “moral objectivism”, “intrinsic value” and “value-bearer”. These terms will be central to my arguments in Chapter 7. I now proceed to Chapter 4, which is similar to Chapter 3 insofar as it will address important concepts concerning the nature of probability. Since my dissertation addresses the *probabilistic* version of the problem of evil, it is critical that I examine the concept of probability.

Chapter 4: Probability

4.1 Introduction

Like Chapter 3, this chapter addresses important definitions. Chapter 4 examines the nature of probability via an investigation of how the term is used in philosophy. I will distinguish between important senses of probability by considering the works of philosophers such as Chisholm, van Inwagen, D.H. Mellor, Paul Draper, Darrel P. Rowbottom, and Nevin Climenhaga. In particular, I will discuss the differences between objective probability, subjective probability, and epistemic probability. I will also comment on how epistemic probability is germane to the PAE. Since probability is a crucial concept for the PAE, this concept must be addressed carefully. Consequently, I will devote an entire chapter to probability.

4.2 Probability in general

Upon initial consideration, it might seem that probability is merely a mathematical or statistical concept, that the concept is univocal, and hence that all cases of probability are of the same kind. However, like other terms in this dissertation, the term “probable” is not univocal. It is used precisely and loosely, and in different senses, to address a range of issues and circumstances. For example, the following kinds of claims are common: “It will probably rain tomorrow”; “The team will probably win tonight”; “The coin will probably land on heads this time”; “I’ll probably go to the movies today”; and “Given the evidence, the accused person is probably guilty”. These claims represent a range of meanings for the term “probably”. There is disagreement among theorists regarding the nature of probability; presently, the matter is an open question.

There are at least three conceptions of probability: (a) epistemic probability, (b) objective probability[53] and (c) subjective probability. It is difficult to make clear distinctions between these conceptions. Objective probability is relevant to subjective and epistemic considerations; epistemic probability can be construed in ways that emphasise subjectivity or objectivity;

[53] Rowbottom (2018) substitutes the term “aleatory” for “objective”.

subjective probability is germane to epistemic probability. Below, I will discuss this matter in more detail.

4.3 Epistemic probability

Let us start with a working definition of epistemic probability, factoring in other views as we proceed through Chapter 4. Chisholm (1989:10) defines epistemic probability as follows:

> *p* is probable for S = Df S is more justified in believing *p* than in believing the negation of *p*.

Russell (1997:Ch.6) wrote that probability is always relative to certain data. The epistemic conception of probability is relative to a person's background (evidential) information, experience, education, and level of intelligence.[54] This combination of factors constitutes an epistemic situation from which one forms beliefs about the world. This point is crucial to understand epistemic probability; as Rescher (2014:xiv) notes, it would be irrational for one to hold a philosophical position that is at odds with his overall corpus of experience and evidence, so long as that corpus is sufficiently broad in scope and relevant to the position held.

Epistemic probability can also be characterised counterfactually in terms of what a completely rational person would believe or be willing to do on the basis of his belief. For example, Draper (1996:27) characterises epistemic probability as follows: "The concept of epistemic probability is an ordinary concept of probability for which no adequate philosophical analysis has, in my opinion, been proposed. As a first approximation, however, perhaps the following analysis will do: Relative to K, p is epistemically more probable than q, where K is an epistemic situation and p and q are propositions, just in case any fully rational person in K would have a higher degree of belief in p than in q." Emphasising the link between belief and action, van Inwagen (1998:71) has addressed epistemic probability in counterfactual terms as a matter of what an ideally rational

[54] Or at least relative to the logical ability of the investigator, as Swinburne (2001:68) notes. As I will indicate in Chapter 5, logical ability is a key aspect of general intelligence. Hence, it is not unreasonable to say that epistemic probability is at least partly related to one's intelligence.

person (e.g., an ideal bookmaker) would be willing to do (e.g., to bet) based on his beliefs. He writes:

> "The epistemic probability of *p* relative to (the epistemic situation) K = df (1) 0 if a fully rational ideal bookmaker in K would be willing to give any odds to a client who bet that *p*; (2) 1 if a fully rational ideal bookmaker in K would be willing to give any odds to a client who bet that not-*p*; (3) n/(m+n) otherwise, where m and n are determined as follows: m to n are the highest odds that have the following property: A fully rational ideal bookmaker in K would be willing to give a client who bet that *p* any odds lower than those odds."

Van Inwagen (1998:72-73) proceeds to argue that epistemic probability is ultimately explained in terms of objective probability, and that there are some cases of objective probability about which human beings are not in the appropriate epistemic position to make judgments. He generalises that epistemic probabilities exist only in cases in which it is possible to make reasonable judgments about objective probabilities. Regarding objective probability, he provides a modal account: the objective probability of *p* given *q* is the proportion of logical space (i.e., a set of possible worlds) in which both *p* and *q* are true.

In addition to the views of Chisholm, Draper, and van Inwagen, epistemic probability can be expressed in terms of the specific degree of confidence that *all* rational agents would ascribe to a given proposition if each were to have access to the same relevant evidence. Here, it should be noted that it seems more precise to speak in terms of *degrees of confidence that one places in a proposition which one believes* than to speak in terms of "degrees of belief". To believe *p* is to accept that *p* is true. Hence, one either believes *p* or does not believe *p*.[55] If it is correct that one either believes *p* or does not believe *p*, then beliefs themselves are not degreed-things. Rather, the subjective level of confidence that one places in a believed proposition is a degreed-thing. Van Inwagen (1998:69) put the point well: "I face a difficulty right at the outset: I do not understand the notion of 'degrees of belief'. It seems evident to me that to believe that p is to accept the proposition that p, and that acceptance of a proposition is not a matter of degree: One

[55] One can qualify as not believing *p* either by: (a) believing that *p* is false or (b) neither committing to *p* nor committing to not-*p*.

either accepts a given proposition or one does not accept it (which, of course is not the same thing as accepting its denial)."[56]

For example, suppose I believe that the Los Angeles Lakers will make the 2021 NBA Finals, and my confidence is at 75%. I believe this proposition. My confidence is placed at a specific degree; in this case, it is at 75%, which means that I am not 100% confident. Perhaps there is good evidence for my belief (e.g., the Lakers have a good roster, they performed well in 2019-2020 season, etc.) However, I might have reason to doubt that the Lakers will make the finals (e.g., I might not be sure that there will be a 2021 NBA Finals given the COVID-19 pandemic, or I might be concerned about the team's level of fitness given the hiatus from playing time, or I might worry about injury to a key player, etc.)

In any case, notice that the concept of one's *belief in relation to the available and pertinent evidence* is central to each of the senses of epistemic probability provided by Chisholm, Draper, and van Inwagen. Epistemic probability is a matter of plausibility for a person or group of persons given the pertinent evidence or background information, the rationality or intelligence of the person (group), etc.

Consider further examples of epistemic probability. Here is one: given the evidence that Smith was at the murder scene and had a motive for committing murder, Smith probably committed the murder. Alternatively: the proposition "Smith committed the murder" is the best explanation for the relevant data (which might be construed as a set of propositions) concerning the murder; therefore, the proposition is probably true. Here is another example of epistemic probability: given the proposition "The baseball hit the window at 50 mph," the proposition "The window broke upon impact" is probably true.[57] Here is a third example: given that Smith bought the item of merchandise on a Sunday in Denver, Colorado and that Denver General Store is the only store open on Sundays in Denver, Smith probably bought the item at Denver General Store. And a fourth example: Son: "Daddy, will we go to the park tomorrow?" Dad: "Probably. It depends

[56] I came to this conclusion before reading van Inwagen and was interested to note his agreement with my view.
[57] One might think of this example in terms of states of affairs instead of propositions.

on Mommy's schedule." Son: "When are we gonna know for sure?" Dad: "Let's talk to Mommy about it later today. She can tell us about her schedule."

4.4 Objective probability

Objective probability is, roughly, an aspect of reality (often, physical reality) which holds regardless of what anyone thinks about the matter.[58] In other words, the probability of an event occurring is such independently of what we might believe, know, think about, or desire; whereas, with subjective probability, the probability is person-relative and is – at least in cases of rationally-guided subjective probability – based on relevant evidence or background information.[59] As Mellor (2005:8) notes, objective probabilities (or what he calls "chances") "are real features of the world … Chances are what they are whether or not we ever conceive of or know about them, and so they are neither relative to evidence nor mere matters of opinion, with no opinion any better than any other."

The concept of objective probability is sometimes described in terms of the frequency with which an event occurs in space and time; this might be called the *frequentist theory* of objective probability. In this view, the probability of A is a matter of the frequency with which A occurs given some type of situation involving relevant and repeated events. Alternatively, objective probability might be characterised as a matter of a physical object's mind-independent tendencies or propensities to behave in particular ways under specific conditions over time. This might be called the *propensity theory* of objective probability. For example, a baseball player's batting average or a basketball player's free-throw shooting percentage might be construed as matters of objective probability in the frequentist sense. In contrast, a fair coin toss might be construed as a matter of objective probability in the sense of propensities; i.e., the physical characteristics of a genuine

[58] See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of "objective" and "subjective".
[59] It seems that subjective probability can be rational or irrational. In cases of rational subjective probability, one believes a proposition based on supporting evidence. In cases of irrational subjective probability, one believes a proposition regardless of the evidence. For example, a wishful baseball fan believes that his team will make the playoffs despite the fact that the evidence indicates that the team will not make the playoffs. This might be referred to as "wishful thinking".

coin are such that if the coin is tossed fairly, it will land according to a probability fixed by its physical characteristics.

There are other conceptions of objective probability. Michael Tooley (2019:56) provides the following example, which he calls “logical probability”. This example is something like the “chances” sense of objective probability addressed by Mellor.

> “There is a bag and a supply of red and green marbles, ten of which are to be put into the bag, and you get to specify how many of each color, the only constraint being that there must be at least one of each color. Suppose that you specify seven red marbles and three green ones. You must then play the following game. You decide on what odds you want to assign to the case that a marble that you yourself, without looking, draw from the bag will be red. Another person then decides whether you must bet that the marble you draw from the bag will be red, or, instead, that it will be green. If you are a rational person who has an aversion to losing money, can you select any odds other than seven to three that the marble that you draw from the bag will be red rather than green?”

Tooley proceeds to note that this kind of probability is applicable in his equiprobability-based probabilistic argument from evil. In such arguments, if the existence of God is said to be improbable to some degree less than 1, then God’s existence is probable to some degree greater than 0. Being probabilistic in nature, such arguments are not designed to claim that God’s existence has a probability of 0 and that God’s nonexistence has a probability of 1. Rather, such arguments indicate that God’s existence is possible (i.e., it does not have a probability of 0) but improbable to some degree.[60] It should be noted that, unlike epistemic probability, objective probability is not directly a matter of evidence or justification. Rather, it concerns mind-independent states of affairs.

A summary of Van Inwagen’s (1998) view of objective probability might be helpful here. For him, objective probability is a matter of the non-subjective probability of one proposition *p* given another *q*. He characterises this idea in terms of the proportion of possible worlds in which

[60] One might wonder how a necessary being whose existence is possible can turn out to be improbable to some degree.

both *p* and *q* are true. For example, suppose there is a set *s* of 100 possible worlds. In exactly 17 of the worlds in *s*, both *p* and *q* are true. Thus, according to this view of objective probability, there is a 17% (.17) objective probability that *p* is true given *q*. Suppose that given a set of 100 possible worlds, there are exactly five that contain God and horrendous evil: in this case, the objective probability of God and horrendous evil is 5% (.05).[61]

4.5 Subjective probability

In addition to objective probability and epistemic probability, there is another type of probability which Mellor (2005:9) calls "credence". This is a measure of how strongly one believes a proposition; one might call this a "degree of belief" or a "degree of confidence" approach to probability. This type of probability is subjective, since it depends on the subject's own mind-dependent level of confidence in a proposition which the subject believes. Such confidence is relative to the person who has it, and thus can vary from person to person.

Nevin Climenhaga (2019) has aptly summarised the probabilities of frequency (objective), tendency (objective), and degree-of-belief (subjective): "Three popular theories analyse probabilities as either *frequencies*, *propensities*, or *degrees of belief*. Suppose I tell you that a coin has a 50 per cent probability of landing heads up. These theories, respectively, say that this is: (i) The *frequency* with which that coin lands heads; (ii) The *propensity*, or tendency, that the coin's physical characteristics give it to land heads; (iii) How *confident* I am that it lands heads."[62]

To elaborate on the third kind of probability addressed by Climenhaga, given the assumption that beliefs (or, more precisely, the confidence that one places in a belief) come in degrees of strength and thus that confidence is a *degreed* kind of thing, one can believe a

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[61] This admission seems to entail that God exists in at least five possible worlds, which means that God exists in some possible world. Since God is a necessary being who exists in all possible worlds if in any, it follows that God exists in every possible world and thus in the actual world. Hence, arguably, if Van Inwagen is correct that epistemic probability reduces to objective probability as he has explained it, then it seems the PAE advocate who admits that God and evil coexist in at least one possible world ought also to admit that God exists in every possible world and thus in the actual world.

[62] See also Climenhaga's (2020) *Epistemic Probabilities are Degrees of Support, not Degrees of (Rational) Belief*.

proposition with any degree of confidence greater than 50 percent. For example, one might believe with 55 percent credence that the teacher will assign homework on Friday, with 75 percent confidence that the Dodgers will win the baseball game tonight, with 99 percent credence that the sun will rise tomorrow, and with 100 percent confidence that there are no square circles for sale at the local department store. Credence might, but need not, be a matter of one's evidential justification. Therefore, credence is not the same as rationally epistemic probability, which is about evidential justification. It could be the case that *p* is not epistemically probable for S given S's evidence, yet S places 100 percent credence in *p* because S is engaging in wishful thinking and desires that *p* is the case, regardless of the evidence for *p*. For example, suppose S is playing a lottery. Given the number of people playing the lottery, it is epistemically highly improbable that S wins. Nevertheless, S is a wishful thinker and hence places 100 percent credence in the proposition "I will win this lottery." Like objective probability, credence is not essentially a matter of evidence. Unlike objective probability, credence is not mind-independent. Rather, it is subjective.

4.6 The evidential interpretation of epistemic probability

Climenhaga (2019) has introduced another kind of probability, which he calls a "degree-of-support" interpretation of epistemic probability. Rowbottom (2018) refers to this kind of probability (or something like it) as "logical probability". In accordance with this view, as Climenhaga (2019) notes, "probabilities are understood as [mind-independent/objective] *relations of evidential support* between propositions. 'The probability of X given Y' is the degree to which Y evidentially *supports* the truth of X. When we speak of 'the probability of X' on its own, this is shorthand for the probability of X conditional on any background information we have."[63] Such relations of evidential support can be entailment relations, in which case the probability of *q* given *p* is 1, since *p* entails *q* – or, if *p* and *q* are logically inconsistent, then the probability of *p* given *q* is 0. However, relations of evidential support might be non-entailing; i.e., they can be inductive relations such

[63] See also Climenhaga (2020).

that the probability of *p* given *q* is, say, 0.75. This is, arguably, an effective *explanans* of epistemic probability, since it emphasises one's mind-independent evidence or reason for holding a belief, rather than merely describing one's subjective level of confidence (as in the degree-of-belief view). Nevertheless, the degree-of-support and degree-of-belief views are consistent, since "most advocates of the logical interpretation [i.e., degree-of-support interpretation] have held that our personal degrees of belief should map on to the equivalent logical relations in order to be rational … If *p* entails *q* and I'm certain that *p*, then I ought to be certain that *q*." (Rowbottom:2018:420.) John Broome (2005:322) holds a similar view about epistemic rationality: "it is intuitively plausible that epistemic rationality requires the following: if you believe *p* and you believe (if *p* then *q*), and if it matters to you whether *q*, then you believe *q*."

In sum, there are three categories of probability: objective (mind-independent), subjective (mind-dependent), and epistemic. The frequentist and propensity theories are in the objective category. The "degree-of-belief" (i.e., credence, degree-of-confidence) view is in the subjective category.[64] The "degree-of-support" view falls into the non-subjective category of epistemic probability. This category includes objective and subjective aspects: the propositions and the relations of support or justification involved in the "degree-of-support" interpretation of probability are objective entities; however, persons may (and ought) to draw conclusions or form beliefs – which are subjective/psychological entities – based on these mind-independent propositions and evidential relations.

As noted, the degree-of-belief (or credence) view is a subjective kind of probability. The degree-of-support view is in the epistemic category; it is a non-subjective epistemic probability which regulates and validates one's rational degree-of-confidence. Arguably, one's rational degree of confidence/credence should correspond to the status of one's degree of support. I.e., for propositions *p* and *q*, if the probability of *p* given evidence *q* is 0.75, then the degree of

[64] The subjective category includes psychological objects (e.g., beliefs, judgments, thoughts). However, it should be emphasised that mental entities themselves (beliefs, etc.) are arguably not the kinds of things which can be probable or improbable. One can place degrees of confidence in these items (e.g., one can be more or less certain about the truth of one's belief), but the items themselves are neither probable nor improbable. Rather, it is the *propositions* which we believe or think about that are the entities which, precisely speaking, we take to be either probably true or probably not true.

confidence that one rationally ought to place in his belief that *p* given his belief that *q* is also 0.75 (or roughly so).

Chisholm's view of probability noted at the outset of this chapter falls in the epistemic category; although Chisholm's analysis of epistemic probability does not specifically refer to *evidence* or *support*, his reference to "justified belief" indicates that his analysis is most akin to the degree-of-support view.

4.7 Probability and the PAE

Often, in discussions of the PAE, an explicit statement is lacking regarding the sort of probability under consideration.[65] For instance, the possible-but-improbable (PBI) version of the PAE typically holds that, despite the possibility of God's existence, the evidence of evil makes it reasonable to believe that God's existence is improbable. However, it is usually left unstated as to how this improbability should be construed. Arguably, it is implicit that one or more of the interpretations of epistemic probability is the relevant concept at work. The PAE is not about merely subjective degrees of confidence, since such degrees might be based on wishful thinking. And the PAE does not seem to concern objective probability, since it is not about matters of physical frequency or propensity, although Van Inwagen's view of epistemic probability as reducible to objective modal probability seems compatible with reasoning about the PAE, even if ultimately problematic for the PAE. Draper (1996) has indicated that epistemic probability is the working concept in the PAE. But which conception of epistemic probability? Van Inwagen (1998:69) has also stated that epistemic probability is the relevant concept, although he suggests that "epistemic probability" is not an unambiguous concept. Apparently, the topic of probability is fraught with disagreement and uncertainty. What kind of epistemic probability, then, *is* at work in the PAE?

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[65] Three significant exceptions are Plantinga's (1996) "Epistemic Probability and Evil", van Inwagen's (1996) "Reflections on the Chapters by Draper, Russell, and Gale" and Draper's (1996) "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists". Plantinga (1996) thoroughly discusses the kind of probability relevant to the PAE, noting that our understanding of probability is not sufficiently strong to warrant a robust PAE, and that epistemic probability seems to be the relevant concept for the PAE.

It seems that philosophers are discussing the relation between pertinent and accessible evidence for theism, and a subject's degree of justification for believing in the existence of God. We are not addressing objective events, frequencies, or tendencies of behaviour. Thus, it is reasonable to rule out the frequentist and tendency conceptions of probability. That eliminates objective probability. Moreover, we are not discussing the psychology of how strongly people believe in theism. Such psychology would not serve as a robust objection to theism. Hence, we can rule out the subjective degree-of-belief/degree-of confidence sense of probability. Instead, we are treating the evidence-based, epistemic support for theism. Hence, it is plausible to take some version of epistemic probability as the appropriate conception for the PAE.

For this dissertation, I will adopt Chisholm's handy definition supplemented by Climenhaga's "degree-of-support" interpretation as a working model to clarify what is meant by saying that the existence of evil makes it *probable* that God does not exist. I will work with the following conception of epistemic probability:

> *p* is epistemically probable for S = Df S is more justified in believing *p* than in believing the negation of *p,* given *S*'s access to background information K which is evidentially supportive of *p*, and given the degree of support K provides for *p*.

The sort of justification involved in this definition is a relation of support between propositions such that one proposition makes another proposition plausible to some degree. This is a normative sense of probability. Consistent with this view, the supporter of the PAE holds that, upon fair consideration of all the relevant evidence available to him, he is more justified in believing the proposition "God does not exist" than in believing its negation, and he is more justified in believing "God does not exist" than in remaining uncommitted to the proposition. Such a person is not an agnostic who finds the proposition counterbalanced vis-à-vis the evidence. I.e., he does not hold that the propositions "God exists" and "God does not exist" are equally justified given the evidence, and hence that he ought to withhold belief. Rather, he takes the evidence to show that he is more justified in believing the latter than the former proposition.

It is worth emphasising that Chisholm (1989:10) himself took his definition to be an epistemic sense of probability rather than a statistical or objective one. He noted that "We must take care to distinguish this fundamental epistemic sense of "probable" from the sense that that expression has in statistics and in inductive logic. In those disciplines "probable" is defined in

terms of frequency of occurrence – sometimes in terms of “the limit of relative frequency in the long run”. But the epistemic concept of probability “is a concept of a very different sort” (Chisholm, 1989:10).

Although mind-independent, this epistemic account of probability is both person-relative and evidence-relative; that is, it is dependent on a person’s epistemic circumstances, such as those of experience, education, accessible evidence, intellectual capacity, reasoning ability, available time for study and reflection, etc. It is also dependent on a person’s will to seek out and sufficiently study the evidence. Each person is influenced by the situations he has experienced. For example, some have experienced combat and others have not known such experiences. Those who have engaged in combat might be inclined to see the world and interpret life differently compared to those without combat experience. Moreover, each person has a specific educational background. The person educated in philosophy is probably better equipped to evaluate arguments in philosophical theology or to explain Book I of Plato’s *Republic* than, say, the person educated in urban geography would be equipped to do so. The geographer would be wise to consult the philosopher about Plato’s view of justice. In contrast, the urban geographer is probably better prepared to provide an analysis of the urban planning and development of Los Angeles or Copenhagen; the philosopher would be wise to consult the geographer on this matter. It should also be noted that the willingness, desire, determination, and long-term perseverance of each person may differ regarding a careful study of the evidence.

4.8 Probability and truth

Epistemic probability is essentially related to the concept of truth. For present purposes, I assume that some version of the correspondence theory is the correct position on truth. Truth is a relation of correspondence or matching between a truth-bearer (e.g., a proposition) and a truth-maker (i.e., the fact or state of affairs which the truth-bearer is about and in virtue of which the truth-bearer is true). When one says that some proposition is epistemically probable, he means that, given the evidence, that proposition is probably true. Since truth is integral to epistemic probability, any reference to epistemic probability is also a reference to truth, and thus a reference to both objectivity (e.g., the propositions and justification relations involved in the degree-of-support interpretation, and the objective fact or state of affairs which is the truth-maker) and to subjectivity (e.g., the subject’s belief or thought that is true).

If a philosopher who understands the complexities of the PoE claims that God's existence is improbable given evil, it is reasonable to assume he makes this claim based on a diligent consideration of the *full scope* of pertinent evidence, a consideration that is shaped by the philosopher's training, experiences, and time for reflection and study. Rescher (2014:21) puts it well: "Rational inquiry is a matter of doing no more – but also no less – than the best we can manage to realize in its prevailing epistemic circumstances." Often such circumstances are, as he notes, information-deficient, evidentially underdetermined, and short of logical guarantee. Given the many arguments for the existence of God, the claim that God's existence is improbable given evil is an intrepid assertion. It places significant probative weight on the data of evil as opposed to the data involved in the many arguments for God; it is tantamount to the claim that the evidence of evil is stronger than the complete set of available evidence for the existence of God – a set which includes arguments such as the various versions of the cosmological, moral, fine-tuning, and ontological arguments.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed objective, subjective and epistemic conceptions of probability. I also addressed the work of Chisholm, van Inwagen, Rowbottom, Climenhaga, and Mellor, and I concluded that epistemic probability is the conception most germane to the PAE. Hence, the arguments that I provide in Chapter 7 will count against the conclusion of the PAE that atheism is probably true in this epistemic sense. In the next chapter, I examine the topic of goodness.

Chapter 5: Goodness

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature and extent of goodness by addressing the following main questions: What is the nature of goodness? How does the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value relate to the various kinds of goodness? What are the bearers of goodness? What is the extent or scope of goodness? Are there gradations of goodness and, if so, what are they? This chapter is important as a prolegomenon to the arguments I provide in Chapter 7. Those arguments examine how goodness poses a problem to the PAE. Several aspects of goodness addressed in this chapter will show up in Chapter 7, such as happiness, freedom, and meaning.

5.2 The objectivity of goodness

In this section, I address the objectivity of goodness. Note that my thesis presupposes the objectivity of value and morality. Nevertheless, I will provide a few reasons to support that presupposition in case the reader is hesitant to accept it. As indicated in Chapter 1, the strongest version of the PAE seems to presuppose that morality is objective, and the principle of charity requires that one evaluate the strongest argument for a given position. If morality and value are merely subjective human constructs, then a subjective construct such as “evil” is, in objective reality, merely a matter of subjective human dislike. In this sense, evil is like the bitter experience of the taste of brussels sprouts or cranberries – both of which are healthy in appropriate doses despite their bitterness. The experience of bitterness is real, but it exists in the taster’s mind, not in the vegetable/fruit. Many people dislike the taste of bitterness, but the taste itself is not morally wrong or evil in an objective sense. Moreover, some people like bitter foods such as brussels sprouts – perhaps they have an acquired taste.

In any case, if morality and value are subjective matters of like and dislike, then one could develop a subjective like of what people call “evil”. Who is to say that such a liking is morally unacceptable, if morality and axiology are completely subjective? Here, the Latin maxim holds: *De gustibus non est disputandum* – there is no dispute over taste. With regard to moral and axiological subjectivism, it is unclear why a subjective construct such as “evil” poses a robust objection to theism. As such, it is better to treat the PAE according to moral and axiological objectivism.

There are additional problems with the view that morality and axiology are subjective. First, subjective morality and axiology are changeable, like the rules of a game. Consider basketball or hide-and-seek. Humans invented the rules of basketball (hide-and-seek), and humans can change these rules whenever we decide to do so. Similarly, if moral rights and values are human constructs, then we can change them, too, since we invented them in the first place.[66] Suppose human beings were to decide arbitrarily to change human rights such that the list of rights includes the right to steal cars from neighbours. Then, theft would become a moral right simply in virtue of a subjective choice, which seems absurd from the perspective of common moral experience. Or suppose we were subjectively to prefer cowardice or hatred over courage or love. Then, these vices would become virtues insofar as we have subjectively preferred them. Again, it seems absurd to uphold cowardice and hatred as virtues.

Second, consider moral obligations. If these are merely subjective, then we seem to lack an adequate explanation for the categorical nature of some obligations and prohibitions. For example, moral experience indicates that we are categorically prohibited from murder and genocide, and that we have a categorical obligation to avoid violating the rights of other persons. It is hard to see how there could be such deontic absoluteness if moral obligations are mere human inventions.

Third, consider again moral rights. If moral rights are subjective human constructs, then it seems that there is no sufficient moral authority to enforce them. Suppose James, Jones, and Smith are competent human adults. Why should Jones respect the rights of Smith if such rights were invented by James (or by some group of humans which includes James), who is Jones's equal? Why should Jones obey James? One might say that Jones should follow James if Jones wants to live without fear of harm, since respecting the subjective, invented rights of others makes

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[66] I grant that such subjective rules might be collectively subjective, such as in basketball. In such cases, a decision to change the rules might require collective agreement. Nevertheless, the rules can be changed subjectively, even if collectively. However, other subjective practices can be changed arbitrarily by the individual without requiring intersubjective or collective agreement, such as the customs of fashion. For example, it might be customary for a man to be clean-shaven and to wear a tie when eating at a specific restaurant. However, he might arbitrarily decide to grow a beard and not wear a tie for dinner that the restaurant. The restaurant patrons might not like his decision, but he has not broken any objective moral law. Perhaps he will start a new trend at the restaurant.

it more likely that one will remain safe in a Hobbesian world in which human life is a war of survival, with everyone fighting against everyone. But suppose Jones is very wealthy. Jones has plenty of resources, including a personal army to keep him safe and secure. Hence, Jones has no fear of being harmed. Why then should Jones obey James? Why can Jones not commit theft and murder if he wants to, if there are no objective moral prohibitions against such acts? He is not afraid of being harmed. Like Gyges and the ring of power in Plato's parable from *Republic*, Book II (2009:607-608), Jones has the power to do whatever he wants without risk of suffering retaliation. In the absence of objective morality, Jones thus has no reason to follow the subjective opinions of James. However, moral experience indicates that some moral obligations and prohibitions are authoritative and that some moral rights ought never to be violated, even if one can get away with violation. Moral subjectivism fails to explain these aspects of moral experience.

Fourth, suppose John holds that selfishness is a moral virtue and that selflessness is a moral vice. Jim holds the opposite: that selflessness is a value and selfishness a vice. If morality and axiology are merely subjective, then it seems we must conclude that selflessness and selfishness are both virtuous and not virtuous, which seems contradictory. The subjectivist might respond that there is no contradiction when we factor in the subjective opinions and preferences of John and Jim. But then moral subjectivism becomes vulnerable to objections 2 and 3 above; it is difficult to see how moral subjectivism explains the categorical, authoritative, and universal nature of some moral duties, rights, and prohibitions.

Fifth, moral subjectivism suffers from what is called the reformer's dilemma. If morality is merely subjective, then there is no such thing as objective moral reform or moral progress. There is only change of descriptive behaviour such that the original behaviour is neither better nor worse than the new behaviour. For example, if moral subjectivism is true, then the changes from apartheid to integration in South Africa, from racial segregation to integration in the U. S. South, and from genocidal to non-genocidal activity in Rwanda were not cases of objective moral improvement or objective moral reform. Rather, they were only changes from one subjective, preference-based construct to another, neither of which is objectively superior in a moral sense. But this seems absurd. Clearly, these were cases of objective moral improvement and reform. Moreover, if moral subjectivism is true, then persons cannot improve in any objectively moral sense. They can only replace one subjectively-chosen set of behaviours with another, none of which are objectively better than the others. Again, this seems absurd.

Sixth, if what James and Stuart Rachels (2010:34-36) have called “simple subjectivism” is true, then everyone’s sincere moral evaluations are always correct and it is impossible for anyone’s sincere moral beliefs to be false. But our sincere moral beliefs are sometimes false. For example, as Rachels notes, some people sincerely believe that homosexual activity is objectively morally permissible and some sincerely believe that it is objectively morally impermissible. But it cannot be the case that both positions are true. Thus, simple moral subjectivism is false.

Francis Beckwith (2020) takes an abductive approach to arguing against moral subjectivism and for moral objectivism. Abductive reasoning involves drawing an inference to the best explanation. In short, four steps are essential to the abductive process: (1) gather the relevant facts; (2) consider the feasible hypotheses for explaining these facts; (3) evaluate the hypotheses; and (4) select the hypothesis that best explains the facts. The first step is a matter of compiling relevant facts to be explained. The second step involves thinking critically, creatively, and comprehensively about the possible hypotheses to explain these facts. Step (3) requires evaluation. According to C. Behan McCullagh (1984:19), the process of evaluation requires identification of the hypothesis with the greatest explanatory scope and power, the highest degree of plausibility, and the least degree of being *ad hoc*. The hypothesis must also be disconfirmed by fewer accepted beliefs than the other hypotheses.[67] Step (4) is to choose the best explanatory option.

An example might be beneficial. Suppose you awake one morning to find your driveway wet. You wonder why it is wet. What is the explanation? You reflect as follows: perhaps your next-door neighbours washed your car before you woke, or your sprinklers were activated at an unplanned time (suppose that they normally run in the late afternoons), or it rained, or there was a water-balloon fight on your driveway during the early morning. Each option would explain the

[67] I will use abductive reasoning in Section 2 of Chapter 8. Abductive reasoning is a kind of logic used by philosophers, historians, and other thinkers to evaluate and explain data. This form of argument, being non-deductive in nature, does not provide deductive certainty. Rather, it is an effort to establish that the conclusion is more reasonable to believe than not to believe. As Aristotle said, a rational person tailors his arguments and expectations to the nature of the subject matter. In mathematics, we expect certainty and precision, but in less precise matters, the goal is to find the most reasonable conclusion.[67] As Rescher (2014:4) puts it, philosophers often must seek rationally defensible or tenable answers where logically airtight guarantees are unavailable.

wet driveway. However, you check the weather report and find that it did not rain that morning. Moreover, the street in your neighbourhood is not wet, nor are the houses, which is another reason to conclude that it did not rain. In addition, you know that your next-door neighbours are on vacation in California, and that, in any case, he normally does not wake up early. You conclude that the wet driveway is not explained by his washing of your car. Next, you reason that there are no residents in your neighbourhood under 60 years of age, and that it is highly unlikely that any of your neighbours would participate in a water-balloon fight on your driveway during the early morning.

You then notice that your lawn is wet, and you check your mailbox to find a note indicating that your community has switched the sprinklers to run in the early mornings rather than the late afternoons. You conclude that the best explanation for your wet driveway is that the sprinklers ran in the early morning.[68]

Beckwith (2020:40) expresses the opinion that "in arguing that morality is objective, the best we can do is to show that belief in its truth explains a lot more than the belief that it is false". For his abductive argument, Beckwith gathers relevant moral data. For example, he asks us to consider the following propositions: "Courage is a virtue, and cowardice is a vice;" "It is wrong to kill human persons without justification;" and "One should not take another's property without good cause." These propositions, Beckwith says, are uncontroversial. He then asks whether moral subjectivism or moral objectivism best explains these propositions. He concludes that the truth of these propositions is best explained by moral objectivism. Indeed, even the effort to disagree about them often seems to presuppose moral objectivism.

In sum, these are some concerns I have with the view that morality is subjective. I thus believe that a PAE which presupposes subjective morality is weakened by that presupposition. Intellectual fairness requires that an argument be evaluated according to one of its strongest

[68] Other examples might help: the police detective concludes that the chef is guilty of the murder, since that hypothesis best explains the relevant data; the automobile mechanic tentatively concludes that the vehicle has an oil leak, because that hypothesis best explains the problems that the customer describes.

versions. Hence, I will assume that morality is objective for the sake of evaluating a strong version of the PAE. The reasons given above support my position.[69]

5.3 Metaphysical goodness

In this section, I address the nature of goodness itself. It seems that "goodness" is not univocal. There are different kinds of goodness. How do they relate? Is there a common factor? How should they be classified? To answer these questions, let us examine various kinds of goodness. There are at least the following: metaphysical goodness, emotional goodness, physical goodness (or the goodness of nature), moral goodness, intellectual goodness, interpersonal/relational goodness, existential goodness (e.g., meaning of life, purpose of life), cultural goodness, and aesthetic goodness. How do these relate? What is the nature of goodness in general?

Consider Aquinas's view that goodness is interchangeable with being.[70] In other words, something is good to the extent that it is whole or fully actual according to its nature. A human being is good to the extent that he or she is morally, intellectually, and physically mature;[71] a good oak tree is healthy according to its oakish nature, and so on. Alternatively, goodness is that which is desirable or worthy or our pro-attitude. This view provides us with a working definition of metaphysical goodness, or goodness as such. But what about the other kinds of goodness?

5.4 Emotional goodness

In this section, I begin my discussion of the different kinds of goods. I start with emotional goodness. Assuming that value pluralism (VP) is the case[72], there are many intrinsic goods. Philosopher William Frankena (1973:87-88) has compiled a list of intrinsic goods, which includes

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[69] These reasons can be used, mutatis mutandis, to support the objectivity of a general axiology which goes beyond morality. McPherson (2020:42) argues that our evaluative experiences presuppose some ontological structure which can make sense of them.
[70] See Chapter 3.
[71] David McPherson (2020) argues that human wholeness or eudaimonia requires spiritual as well as moral and intellectual excellence.
[72] According to Cowan (2020), most philosophers are value pluralists. VP is the view that there are many types of intrinsic value, such as knowledge, happiness, and human life. VP is opposed to value monism (VM), which is the position that there is only one type of value, say, pleasure (hedonism).

the following: life, consciousness, activity, health, strength, pleasure and satisfaction, happiness, beatitude, contentment, truth, knowledge, true belief, understanding, wisdom, beauty, harmony, proportion in objects contemplated, aesthetic experience, moral virtues, mutual affection, love, friendship, just distribution of goods and evils, power and experiences of achievement, self-expression, freedom, peace, security, adventure, novelty, good reputation, honour, and esteem.

There are several goods on this list which might be characterised as emotional goods, such as a subjective conception of happiness or contentment (in contrast to an objective conception such as eudaimonia), and the emotional goods associated with satisfaction, affection, love, friendship, peace, adventure, and novelty.

There are different emotional goods – for example, there are positive emotions such as cheerfulness, joy, and happiness (in the subjective sense of desire-satisfaction). A substantive discussion of all the emotional goods falls beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I will consider the topics of happiness, joy, and peace, each of which is a fundamental human good whether taken in the subjective/emotional sense or not. This discussion should suffice for a sketch of emotional goodness in general.

5.4.1 Happiness

"Happiness" has been characterised in different ways by philosophers and theologians. Take a moment to reflect on the views of human happiness raised by Job's story, articulated in Chapter 2. The story raises questions about the nature of happiness. Is happiness merely a matter of the positive emotion produced by pleasure and desire-satisfaction in this world, as hedonists claim?[73]

[73] As an axiological theory, hedonism asserts that only pleasure is intrinsically good or valuable; that all pleasure is intrinsically valuable; that only pain is intrinsically bad; and that all pain is intrinsically bad. Hedonism is a version of VM; it holds that there is only one value: pleasure. This view is implausible for several reasons. First, arguably, there are other values, as Frankena's list indicates. Cowan (2020:17) also notes that most philosophers are value pluralists. Second, it seems that some pains are not intrinsically bad, such as growing pains and other sorts of pains associated with exercise and development. Moreover, pain often serves as a warning sign for significant bodily damage and thus can be an instrumental good. In addition, it seems that some pleasures are not intrinsically good, such as the various pleasures of moral debauchery.

Or is happiness an objective matter, as Aristotle held? Could it be that both conceptions of happiness are accurate in their own ways?

Suppose Job's suffering involves a loss of hedonistic happiness, since he lost his sources of health, pleasure, honour, and security; that is, he lost his bodily health, his wealth, and his high social position. His relationship with his wife also seems to have been negatively affected, and he lost his children. Based on a hedonistic interpretation, God permitted Job to lose his hedonic happiness. However, if Job maintained his commitment to virtue and to the noble human life as McPherson (2020) characterises it, then Job might have been objectively happy in the eudemonistic sense, even in the midst of suffering, although he probably was not subjectively happy.

Suppose that happiness is a matter of something like eudaimonia, which is what Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and the Biblical tradition teach, and what McPherson (2020) advocates. The eudemonistic conception holds that happiness is a matter of human flourishing that comes with the development of moral, intellectual, and perhaps spiritual virtue. For example, Socrates seems to have held that virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness[74], while Aristotle held that virtue is necessary even if not sufficient for happiness. For Aristotle, human beings need a modicum of physical resources in addition to virtue. However, both Socrates and Aristotle were eudaemonists. They agreed that virtue is a necessary condition for happiness and that happiness is not merely a matter of pleasure maximisation and desire satisfaction.

In the Bible, the book of Proverbs and Jesus's Sermon on the Mount teach a virtue ethics that involves a eudaemonist view of happiness. Accordingly, this view is not pleasure-oriented; it is centred on *arête* and is compatible with suffering; indeed, it enables one to stand when the storms of life occur. Proverbs exhorts us to obtain wisdom, not to seek pleasure and desire satisfaction. In Matthew 5, Jesus commands us to be perfect (whole) and indicates that one can

[74] If it is unclear that Socrates held this position, we have reason to believe that at least some Stoics advocated it.

be blessed and eudaimonia-happy despite suffering. Chapter 5 of the New Testament book of James asserts that trials develop perseverance and eventually perfection of character. [75]

If happiness is not a matter of hedonism but instead is about virtue, then we can make sense of Job's story by thinking of God as permitting Job to suffer for the sake of character development and knowledge of the divine reality. Suppose that human beings develop character in this life and take that character with us into the afterlife, including all the virtues we cultivate before death. Perhaps God thus allows us to develop the virtues we will need in the afterlife, even if this process of development comes at a high price in the classroom of life prior to death. From this view, it is plausible to hold that God permitted Job the opportunity to develop virtues he needed for the afterlife. This period of virtue development requires – in Hick's sense – a vale of suffering. In Job's case, the suffering was intense. But enabled with an *arête* crafted in the kiln of suffering, Job was morally sanctified and made wise. He was thereby prepared to know God, which on the Christian view leads to an everlasting happiness in heaven.

In sum, it is plausible to say that there are two positions on the conception of happiness: objective and subjective. Objective happiness is something like eudaimonia, well-being, or human flourishing. What, then, is subjective happiness? Subjective happiness is aptly characterised by Verhoef (2014:1-10) as "an emotional state of well-being that is characterised by pleasant emotions such as joy". Verhoef also refers to transcendence (i.e., a relation with something greater than ourselves, something that lies beyond the physical or mundane world and is greater than it) as being essential to the highest form of happiness, at least according to religious worldviews such as Christianity. McPherson (2020) seems to agree with Verhoef here, noting that genuine happiness in the sense of eudaimonia requires a transcendent feature whereby one makes sense of one's life by relating it to a transcendental reality which gives it meaning, value, and coherence. Perhaps, as Kant (2004) held, ideally these two conceptions of happiness meet in the afterlife as a divine gift to human beings who have lived for virtue. In Kant's view, for the sake of achieving the *summum bonum*, God gives complete subjective happiness – which cannot

[75] John 17:3 (NIV).

be achieved in this life – to those who have cultivated the objective happiness of a virtuous character.

5.4.2 Joy

Like happiness, joy seems to be amenable to both subjective and objective descriptions. Consider Willard (2020): “Joy is not pleasure, a mere sensation, but a pervasive and constant sense of wellbeing. It claims our entire body and soul, both the physical and the non-physical side of the human self. Hope in the goodness of God is joy's indispensable support.” This is a theistic and hence transcendent conception of joy. For a non-theist, the last line might be modified as follows: “Hope in objective goodness is joy's indispensable support” or “Hope in the goodness of reality is joy's indispensable support.”

In any case, this characterisation of joy seems open to both subjective and objective interpretations. Notice the references to a “sense of well-being” and to “well-being”: a sense of well-being is a mental state, and thus subjective. In this way, joy is a subjective good. However, it is dependent on an objective state of well-being, something like eudaimonia. Hence, joy is akin to happiness insofar as both states have subjective and objective aspects.

5.4.3 Peace

“Peace” is not a univocal term. It can refer to an objective state of freedom from standing in relations of hostility, whether at the personal level or the level of state. Alternatively, peace can be what the ancients called *ataraxia*, which has long been considered a significant good of human life. The Stoics and the Epicureans valued *ataraxia*, which they held to be something like serenity, calmness of mind, tranquillity, or the state of being imperturbable. Contemporary society continues to desire this kind of peace, as evidenced by the large number of people who take antidepressant medications. For example, in November 2017, the American Psychological Association estimated that 12.7% of the U. S. population over 12 had taken antidepressant medication in the previous month. Given the overall population of the U. S., that is a large number of people seeking peace, or at least freedom from being perturbed or anxious. This is, at least in part, a subjective kind of peace.

Consider Willard (2020) again, who provides a definition of peace which captures the essence of *ataraxia*: peace is “the rest of will that results from assurance about how things will

turn out". Like happiness and joy, peace has both subjective and objective aspects. Insofar as peace is a rest of will or freedom from mental disturbance which results from assurance (or reasonable belief) that things will turn out well, peace is fundamentally a mental state and therefore subjective. However, the mental state of peace rests upon beliefs about objective reality, namely, the well-being or eudaimonia of the person who is at peace – as well as (arguably) the well-being of that person's community. Therefore, peace is like joy and happiness insofar as these states have subjective and objective elements.

5.5 Physical goodness

In this section, I discuss various aspects of physical or natural goodness. I emphasise physical health, human development, and the goodness of the physical world. These topics should provide an illustration of physical goodness in general.

5.5.1 Physical health and human lifespan development

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) has defined "health" as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Catherine M. Capio, et al. (2014:209) hold that physical well-being consists in the ability to perform physical activity and carry out social roles unhindered by physical limitations and bodily pain. Psychologists hold that emotional wholeness or health, along with cognitive and physical health, compose a fundamental aspect of human development, which is a field of study devoted to understanding constancy and change throughout the lifespan (Berk, 2005:5). According to theorists, this development is lifelong, multidimensional, and affected by many interacting forces. During each period of life, human beings develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially. Given that the development is lifelong, such development is highly plastic. In a wholistic sense, human health is a matter of plasticity rather than a static factor; and, furthermore, biological, historical, social, and cultural forces influence human development at each stage (Berk, 2005:8, 10). Physical development is an essential aspect of this process.

Psychologist Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of human development captures this idea of lifelong growth. According to Berk (2005:17), Erikson's outline of lifespan development captures the essence of personal growth during each major period of life. According to Erikson, each period is marked by specific physical and mental needs and the development of certain abilities if those

needs are met. From birth to 1 year of age, infants require warm and responsive care, both physical and mental. If those needs are fulfilled, the infant develops a healthy sense of trust. From 1-3 years of age, children need to master their new mental and motor (physical) skills, and they want to exercise free choice in areas in which they are able. If given appropriate freedom, they will likely develop a healthy sense of autonomy. From 3-6, children learn to take initiative and act responsibly, so long as their needs for play and creativity are encouraged. Between 6 and 11, children develop the capacity to work with others. During this time, they develop a realistic sense of competence. In adolescence, children require freedom to ask and answer the questions "Who am I, and what is my place in society?" In early adulthood, young adults endeavour to establish intimate physical and emotional ties to others, some of which will support them later in life. In middle adulthood, adults desire to contribute to the next generations by parenting, teaching, and other forms of productive work that help younger people, some of which are physical processes. As with the other stages, success in this stage requires success in previous stages. For example, if a middle-aged adult did not learn anything productive during the previous stages, he or she will not be able to achieve generativity (i.e., beneficial contribution to younger generations) and thus will become stagnate. In late adulthood, elderly adults reflect on their lives and the characters they have developed for themselves. A sense of integrity results from seeing that their lives were lived well (or virtuously/excellently). Failure at any of these levels can produce stunted growth or even despair (Berk, 2005:17).

Human lifespan development is itself a good of human life. If human beings develop physically, mentally, emotionally, morally, and socially in the appropriate ways, their lives will be more likely to flourish. As physical beings, physical development is an important aspect of the good of lifespan development.

5.5.2 Environmental goodness

In this section, I address goods of the physical realm such as non-human animal health, plant health, environmental health, and the order or fine-tuning of the universe.

Erikson's theory underscores the importance for human beings of physical health, in addition to wholeness in the mental, moral, and other arenas. However, people often speak of actions and things that are "good for the environment". In this sense, the natural environment is a physical good. Since human beings live in the natural environment and relate to it in multiple

ways, the natural environment is also good for human beings. According to the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) in the U. S. (2020), environmental health (EH) is the science and practice of preventing human injury and illness and promoting well-being by: identifying and evaluating environmental sources and hazardous agents; and limiting exposures to hazardous physical, chemical, and biological agents in air, water, soil, food, and other environmental media or settings that may adversely affect human health. It is clear that the goodness of the environment is good for human life, as well as for non-human animal and plant life. Consider the NEHA references to hazards of nature, to healthy air, water, and soil, and to the availability and purity of our food. Human beings and other organisms rely on the physical environment for the things we need to survive.

Many philosophers and cosmologists hold that the universe is finely tuned for human life. Such fine-tuning is a physical good which enables the good of human physical and conscious life. According to Moreland and Craig (2017:493-494), “fine tuning” refers to the fact that “the physical laws of nature, when given mathematical expression, contain various constants or quantities, such as the gravitational constant or the density of the universe, whose values are not mandated by the laws themselves [such that] small deviations from these values would render the universe life-prohibiting”. Craig (2008:158) notes elsewhere that there are various examples of fine-tuning: the law of gravity, the strong and weak nuclear forces, the ratio between the mass of a proton and the mass of an electron, and the specific entropy conditions of the universe are such that our universe seems properly fit for human life, not to mention plant and non-human animal life. “When one assigns different values to these constants or forces, one discovers that the proportion of observable universes, that is to say, universes capable of supporting intelligent life, is shockingly small. Just a slight variation in some of these values would render life impossible.” When one considers all the human goods that rely on the possibility of human life existing in a universe like ours, it becomes clear that the fine-tuning of the universe it itself a good. It is also a good with respect to non-human animal and plant life.

5.6 Moral goodness

This section emphasises moral character and moral virtue in general, and specific moral virtues such as courage and self-control. I also examine moral rights.

5.6.1 Moral character

As noted in Chapter 3, character is one's set of habits of thought, belief, choice, desire, and action. Character is an integral good in human life which has repercussions in family relations, friendships, professional settings, education, athletics, and so on. We say things like "He has good character", "She provided a character witness" and "He was acting out of character when he did that." We discuss "character education" in schools and sports. In these types of statements, by *character* we mean a person's patterns of thinking, believing, feeling, choosing, acting, and desiring. Character thus has both intellectual and moral traits.

5.6.2 Moral virtue

Robert Adams (2006:1) points out that one's moral character is commonly seen as determining the extent to which one is a morally good person. A moral virtue (from the Latin *virtu*, which means excellence; the Greek equivalent is *arete*) is an excellent trait of the moral aspect of one's character. Moreland and Craig (2017:469) define a virtue as "a habit of excellence, a beneficial tendency, a skilled disposition that enables a person to realise the crucial potentialities that constitute proper human flourishing according to ideal human nature. Put more simply, a virtue is a skill that suits one for excellence at life. Virtues go beyond moral virtues. For example, there are rational virtues such as the desire to seek truth, to be rational, and so forth." Adams (2006:1) defines moral virtue in terms of persisting in excellence in being for the good. The Roman Catholic Church (2020) provides the following definition: "A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions." This conception of human excellence or virtue is compatible with the conceptions offered by McPherson (2020) and Adams (2006).

There are many moral virtues and I do not have the space to discuss them all here. I will limit my discussion to the cardinal virtues, which are considered paradigm cases of virtue. I will start with three of the four cardinal virtues: courage (or fortitude), justice, and temperance (or moderation, self-control). The virtue of wisdom will be covered in the subsequent section on intellectual goods. I will discuss different ways in which philosophers have treated these virtues, and examine their importance in human life. It is important to note here the difficulty in arriving at universally accepted and clear definitions of these virtues, given the scholarly disputes. Aristotle's

advice is helpful: We must be content in speaking of such subjects roughly and in outline; for it is the mark of an educated person to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits.[76]

5.6.2.1 Courage

In Plato's *Laches* (2009), the interlocutors in the dialogue suggest several definitions of courage (Greek: *andreia*), such as: courage is that which enables a soldier to fight; courage is endurance of the soul; and courage is knowledge of goods and evils past, present, and future. Socrates criticises these definitions respectively as being too narrow, too broad, and seemingly identical to virtue itself. In keeping with its aporetic quality, *Laches* ends without a definition rationally acceptable to Socrates and his *elenchus* (Plato, 2009).

Aristotle held that courage was the reasonable mean between the defective vice of cowardice and the excessive vice of rashness or recklessness. For Aristotle, the courageous person endures or fears the right things for the right purpose in the right manner at the right time. Courage, he says, is the observance of the rational mean in relation to things which inspire confidence or fear.[77]

For this thesis, we might roughly characterise courage as the practical knowledge of when it is morally obligatory to act in the face of fear, plus the will to do so. There are both moral and intellectual forms of courage, and each is integral for human flourishing in a world of suffering. Moral courage enables the soldier, police office, and firefighter to risk life and limb to save or protect others. It serves the statesman in difficult diplomatic negotiations, the athlete during a key moment in a championship match, and the parent in raising a child. Intellectual courage enables an intellectual leader such as Socrates and Einstein or a moral reformer such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. to seek and to speak the truth in the face of threats to life, health, or freedom.

[76] See Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1.
[77] See Nicomachean Ethics, Book 3.

5.6.2.2 Justice

"Justice" is another term which has several meanings. For example, distributive justice refers to the scope in which benefits and duties are shared among members of a society. Retributive justice concerns the assignment of reward and punishment such that rewards are commensurate with rewarded acts and punishments fit their crimes. These senses of justice are relevant but less broad than the cardinal virtue of *dikaiosune* (sometimes translated as righteousness). Justice as *dikaiosune* was a primary subject of Plato's *Republic* (Plato, 2009). Early in the dialogue, the search for an essential definition of justice (*dikaiosune*) begins. Cephalus defines justice as "the returning of what one owes". Socrates rejects this definition with a counterexample: if sane person A lends a weapon to sane person B, but then A becomes insane and threatens to harm others, moral rightness and justice require that B not return the weapon to A unless and until A regains sanity.

Impatient with Socrates and his elenchic method, Thrasymachus asserts that justice is nothing but whatever happens to benefit the stronger in a given situation; i.e., justice reduces to power. Socrates rejects this view as well, identifying flaws in Thrasymachus's reasoning. For Plato and Socrates (as a character in the dialogue), justice is a matter of wholeness or integrity, either at the individual level as integrity of soul, or at the social level as integrity of the body politic. For the person, a just soul is one in which its three parts (reason, spirit, and desire) perform their natural functions in a cooperative but non-interfering manner. For the society, justice requires similar harmony and cooperation between its parts.

For Aristotle, as for Aquinas later, justice as an individual character trait is the virtue of rendering to each person his due. Aquinas, however, was also influenced by the Biblical conception of justice, expressed in the words of Jesus, who taught his students to seek the Kingdom of God and its *dikaiosune*,[78] and who claimed that the entire moral law is summarised in the commandments to love God and to love other persons as one loves oneself.[79] The latter

[78] Matthew 6:33.
[79] Matthew 6:33; Luke 10:27; Matthew 7:12. Jesus's articulation of the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12 is this: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." (NIV.) This articulation is

commandment, popularly referred to as the Golden Rule, is similar to Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative (CI): "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law."[80] For Kant (1999:231), justice is concerned with following the CI: "Every action is just that in itself or in its maxim is such that the freedom of the will of each can coexist together with the freedom of everyone in accordance with a universal law."

We have addressed several related conceptions of justice. There are many more. My intention is not to evaluate each of these conceptions. Rather, I will claim that each is plausibly taken to be an important element of goodness in human life. We seek just societies, ones in which distributive and retributive justice are achieved as appropriate. We seek personal relationships with people who are just and fair, both in Plato's sense and in Kant's. And we seek to be just persons, or persons of moral and intellectual integrity. Clearly, justice is a significant good that must be factored when evaluating the world. I will elaborate on this evaluation in Chapter 7.

5.6.2.3 Self-control

The Greek term *sophrosune*, for the cardinal virtue of self-control, temperance, or moderation, refers to self-discipline or self-mastery. It is the opposite of the vice of immoderation, lack of self-control, profligacy, or wantonness. Self-control is critical in human life, given the powerful temptations of the physical senses. The Ancient Greeks knew these temptations, as does the contemporary world. Aristotle distinguished between pleasures of the body and pleasures of the soul, holding that self-control is important for both; for him, temperance is a virtue pertaining to "the irrational parts of the soul … the observance of the mean in relation to pleasures; and profligacy also is displayed in the same matters" (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book One 2020:1117b). Aristotle held that self-control is a noble virtue, and thereby a significant good for human life. Self-control is not an absence of desire, an absence which is sought in Buddhism or

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similar to Plato's articulation in *Laws*, Book 11, v. 913: "and may I be of a sound mind, and do to others as I would that they should do to me."

[80] The so-called "humanity" formulation of the Categorical Imperative is also similar to the Golden Rule.

in Schopenhauer's system. Rather, "the temperate man desires the right thing in the right way at the right time" (Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics, Book One, 2020:1119b).

Arguably, the goods of courage, justice, and self-control are both intrinsic and instrumental values. In addition, they seem to be goods which, at least in some cases, require the existence of evil, suffering, or temptation. Plantinga (1979:23) pointed out that:

> "Certain kinds of values, certain familiar kinds of good states of affairs, can't exist apart from evil of some sort. For example, there are some people who display a sort of creative moral heroism in the face of suffering and adversity – a heroism that inspires others and creates a good situation out of a bad one. In a situation like this the evil, of course, remains evil; but the total state of affairs – someone's bearing pain magnificently, for example – may be good. If it is, then the good present must outweigh the evil; otherwise the total situation would not be *good*. But, of course, it is not possible that such a good state of affairs obtain unless some evil also obtain. It is a necessary truth that if someone bears pain magnificently, then someone is in pain."

Consider another example: it is good to be contrite and to seek forgiveness and reconciliation. It is also good to be forgiving, willing to forbear offenses. But these goods require the existence of moral wrongness. Similarly, courage is a good of human life, but it seems to require the possibility of harm, and perhaps the actuality of harm.

5.6.2.4 Honesty

Honesty is in one sense a moral virtue, since it concerns the will. However, it might also be called an intellectual virtue, since it has to do with truth, belief, and other aspects of the mental life. In short, we might say that honesty is the virtue of being truthful. In any case, intended truthfulness (if not actual truthfulness) is a necessary condition for honesty. An honest person speaks the truth, or at least speaks what he believes is true, even if the information spoken is false. For example, an honest person who is ignorant of the geography of North America might (honestly, but falsely) claim that Mt. Whitney is in Canada, although it is in California.

Honesty is a crucial virtue for human life, required in interpersonal relations at the family, friendship, community, and professional levels. Our most cherished institutions require honesty, such as financial institutions, academic institutions, medical institutions, journalism,

historiography, politics, and law. Gallagher and Jago (2016:3) point out that honesty is most particularly prized in professional life, especially in areas such as politics, medicine, education, science, and law. According to Kant in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, no one would rationally choose to live in a world in which dishonesty is a universal practice, a world in which deceptive promises are the rule. The institution of banking, for example, could not survive such a world.

Because truthfulness is closely related to honesty, our discussion of honesty raises the question of truth. As noted earlier in this study, I am assuming the correspondence theory of truth.[81] Following this view, truth is a matching relationship between a truth-bearer and a truth-maker. A thought, belief, or statement is true if and only if it matches the fact to which it points. For example, the statement "Grass is green" is true if and only if grass really is green.

In this view of truth, what makes a thought or belief true is the relevant fact. One cannot make something true just by believing it. If one's gas tank is empty, one cannot make it full by believing it is full or by desiring it to be full, regardless of how hard one believes or desires. As such, beliefs are not true just because one has them; rather, they are true iff they match the relevant facts. In short, honesty is the virtue of truthfulness, and truthfulness is a matter of speaking in accord with the relevant facts, or at least intending to do so. Both honesty and truth are goods associated with the intellect, which I will address in the next section.

5.6.3 Moral rights

Roughly, a moral right is a privilege or freedom to perform an activity or to access a benefit; the privilege is held by a person in virtue of existing as a person (i.e., a rational moral agent). Moral rights differ from legal rights. A legal right is also a privilege or freedom to perform an activity or to access a benefit; but the privilege is possessed in virtue of its being granted by state authority.

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[81] I recognise that there are competing theories of truth, such as cognitive relativism, pragmatism, and the coherence theory. The sense of "truth" captured by the correspondence theory seems most amenable to what we mean by "truth" and "truthfulness" and "honesty" in everyday language. I will appeal to Chisholm's principle here, namely, that one is justified in holding to common-sense views unless those views are shown to be false via a sufficient argument. Moreover, there are many defences of truth as correspondence. For example, see Chapter XII, "Truth and Falsehood", in Bertrand Russell (1912, 1997).

Legal rights are given by and dependent on the government. Moral rights are possessed in virtue of being a moral agent and are therefore independent of government.[82]

Moral rights are moral goods. Legal rights are moral goods in the sense that it is morally good that a government protects genuine moral rights by establishing them as legal or civil freedoms. Specific legal rights can be moral goods, depending on whether the legal right corresponds to a morally permissible action. However, a specific legal right can be a moral evil if it legally enables a person to violate the moral rights of another person. For example, the practice of slavery was a legal right in the antebellum U.S. South. But that specific legal right was an objective moral evil.

This section has emphasised moral character, virtue, and rights. Each of these is crucial for human life and flourishing. A comprehensive evaluation of the world would need to account for the existence and distribution of goods such as these. I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 7.

5.7 Intellectual goodness

This section emphasises intellectual virtue in general and specific intellectual virtues such as consciousness, self-consciousness, intelligence, wisdom, insight, understanding, and rationality. According to philosopher and critical thinking scholar Richard Paul (2009:p.37), “intellect” refers to the ability to reason, understand, or perceive relationships and differences between concepts. “Intellect” also refers to the part of the mind which reasons, knows, and understands. Intellectual goods, then, are goods associated with the human faculties of knowing, understanding, and reasoning.

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[82] One can argue that moral rights and legal rights differ. Consider the following argument: according to Leibniz’s principle of the indiscernibility of identicals, for any two things x and y, if x and y are identical, then they are coextensive; i.e., they share all and only the same properties. Hence, whatever is true of x is true of y and vice versa, since they are the same thing. Therefore, if moral rights and legal rights are the same, then everything true of moral rights is true of legal rights and vice versa. However, it is not the case that everything true of moral rights is true of legal rights and vice versa. Legal rights are dependent on government. Moral rights arguably are not. Some legal rights are morally unacceptable, such as the legal right to practice slavery, which existed in the antebellum U.S. But moral rights are never morally unacceptable. Thus, moral rights and legal rights are not identical, but different.

5.7.1 Consciousness

I start with a discussion of consciousness and self-consciousness. It is hard to provide a non-circular, essential definition of consciousness. As such, I agree with Moreland (2014:77-78) that consciousness is best defined ostensively, i.e., by pointing to specific examples such as sensations, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and volitions.[83] Paul's (2009:37) definition of the human mind is similar to Moreland's characterisation of consciousness: the human mind is "that which thinks perceives, feels, wills; the seat of conscious and unconscious activity". Arguably, consciousness is a basic mental good. It is intrinsically good, as Frankena (1973) notes, and it is instrumentally valuable insofar as it enables other goods, such as self-consciousness, knowledge, wisdom, happiness, science, technology, and even civilization itself.

Self-consciousness is higher-order consciousness such that the one who has it is not only aware of the external world, but also aware of himself as a thinking thing that is aware of the external world.[84] Self-consciousness is first-person awareness of oneself as an "I" or a subject of awareness. Lower animals are aware of the external world but arguably not aware of themselves as centres of awareness in the world. Self-consciousness enables introspection, metacognition[85], self-evaluation (e.g., of one's own thoughts, reasoning, beliefs, desires, choices, conscience, and behaviours), and moral agency. Moreover, as Scruton notes, self-consciousness can be considered an interpersonal good[86], since it is a necessary condition for communal life. Scruton (2017:57-58) argues that, via self-consciousness, one is

> "capable of the free dialogue in which I take charge of my presence before the presence of you. That is what it means to understand the first-person case. And it is because I

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[83] Moreland (2014:77) defines consciousness as "what you are aware of when you engage in first-person introspection". This is an adequate working characterization of consciousness. Arguably, however, if taken as an essential definition, the characterization is circular. "Aware" is a synonym of "conscious". Hence, to say that consciousness is what you are *aware* of when you engage in first-person introspection is to say that consciousness is what you are *conscious* of when you engage in first-person introspection. This will not suffice as a precise definition, since consciousness is defined in terms of being conscious.
[84] This is merely a working characterization of self-consciousness. It will not work as an essential definition, since self-consciousness is defined in terms of awareness (i.e., consciousness).
[85] According to Paul (2009:49), "metacognition" is awareness and understanding of one's thinking; it is a person's thinking about his own thinking.
[86] See Section 5.6 for more information on interpersonal goods.

> understand the first-person case that I am immediately aware of my condition…Moreover, I respond to others as similarly present to themselves, able to answer directly to my inquiries, able to tell me, without further inquiry, what they think, feel, or intend. Hence, we can address each other in the second person, I to you. On those facts all that is most important in the human condition has been built: responsibility, morality, law, institutions, religion, love, and art."

5.7.2 Intellectual virtue

An intellectual virtue is an excellent trait of the intellectual and thus conscious aspect of one's character. Paul (2009:42) defined "intellectual virtue" as a trait of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking. Both Paul and philosopher/psychologist Steven Bartlett (2017:6-7) have provided helpful lists of intellectual virtues. Moreover, philosopher Gary Atkinson (2015) has articulated a list of virtues which qualify one as a good dialectician and a competent researcher in philosophy; presumably, these skills would help thinkers in other fields, too.

For Bartlett (2017:6-7), there are several basic intellectual virtues (excellences or skills). Bartlett holds that these virtues, when combined and possessed by a single mind, constitute a minimal set of epistemological abilities. Some of Bartlett's virtues are: (1) a commitment to logical coherence and alertness to inconsistency; (2) a commitment and a sensitivity to identify beliefs that are rationally unjustified; (3) a commitment and a will to eliminate unjustified beliefs from one's own thinking; (4) a commitment to revise or replace unjustified beliefs; (5) an ability to recognise that all claims to knowledge are made from the perspective of a conceptual framework; (6) a heightened awareness of the ways in which some scientific and many commonly accepted and widely used concepts trespass beyond the frameworks they presuppose; (7) a mental skill to invest credence only in rationally justifiable ways of understanding and rationally justifiable claims that can be made on this basis (Bartlett, 2017:4).

According to Paul (2009:38-41), there are several intellectual virtues, many of which overlap with those from Bartlett. The intellectual virtues include the following: intellectual sense of justice; intellectual perseverance; intellectual integrity; intellectual humility; intellectual empathy; intellectual courage; intellectual civility; intellectual responsibility; intellectual curiosity; intellectual discipline; intellectual confidence in reason; and intellectual autonomy.

Atkinson (2015:125-126) identifies a number of virtues that one needs to operate successfully as a dialectician and a rational investigator in philosophy (and presumably other relevant areas). Again, there is an overlap with the ideas of Bartlett and Paul[87]: (1) an understanding of the logical patterns of sound argument; (2) a readiness to demand logical consistency for the positions held by any given participant in a dialogue, whether oneself or others; (3) the ability to ask the right questions and to ask them in the right order; (4) the ability to distinguish what is relevant to the truth/falsity of a position from what is not relevant; (5) specific abilities in logic and dialectic, including the ability to: recognise the direction of causal (or explanatory) order; recognise the "structure of ordered properties" in a thing; be clear about the point at issue; be clear about the meaning of the terms used in the discussion, recognising the importance of definition; recognise the order in which a discussion should proceed; use hypotheses effectively; recognise the level of precision and certitude that a particular topic permits; recognise what forms of refutation are "worthless so far as truth is concerned"; (6) the possession of relevant knowledge and expertise (Atkinson, 2015:125-126).

Atkinson, Bartlett, and Paul provide us with a substantive (though likely not comprehensive) tally of specific intellectual virtues. As virtues, these are instances of goodness in human life as it relates to the intellect. It should be noted that many of the intellectual virtues covered in this section have moral significance. According to Willard (1999),

> "To <u>be</u> logical no doubt does require an understanding of what implication and contradiction are, as well as the ability to recognise their presence or absence in obvious cases. But it also requires the <u>will</u> to be logical, and then certain personal qualities that make it possible and actual: qualities such as freedom from distraction, focused attention on the meanings or ideas involved in talk and thought, devotion to truth, and willingness to follow the truth wherever it leads <u>via</u> logical relations. All of this in turn makes significant demands upon moral character."

[87] Both Atkinson and Paul look to Socrates as a model of intellectual virtue.

5.7.3 Intelligence

I now return to the topic of intelligence.[88] Intelligence is a mental ability and, given the centrality of intelligence and rationality in human life, intelligence is a significant good. As Aristotle held, human beings are by nature rational, or at least capable of rationality. Scholars disagree on how specifically to define the term "intelligence". According to psychologist Peter Lanz (2013:19), there is no widely accepted definition in either psychology or philosophy. For Paul (2009:37), intelligence is the ability to learn or understand from experience, to acquire and retain knowledge, to respond quickly and successfully to new situations, and to think critically. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2020), "intelligence" refers to intellectual or cognitive functioning, which can be measured effectively using IQ tests. According to influential psychologist Robert J. Sternberg (2012:19), "intelligence is the ability to learn from experience and to adapt to, shape, and select environments".

Psychologists often refer to intelligence as "general intelligence" or *g*. Psychologists divide *g* into crystallised (Gc) and fluid (Gf) intelligence, each of which can be measured as IQ.[89]. For the purposes of this dissertation, the definitions of intelligence from the APA and from Sternberg should suffice, as should the characterisations of crystallised and fluid intelligence.

5.7.4 Rationality

Rationality is another intellectual good of human life. In general, rationality is a matter of being guided by the intellect or reason; it involves the ability to think well, and thus is fundamentally related to intelligence. (Paul, 2009:60) In particular, it is commonly held that there are two senses of rationality: epistemic rationality and practical rationality. The former is about belief. The latter concerns action.

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[88] Recall that I indicated in Chapter 4 that intelligence is related to one's ability to reason probabilistically.
[89] Gc is a matter of one's accumulated knowledge and vocabulary, which normally increases over time. Gc can be measured by general IQ tests and verbal IQ tests. Gf is the ability to reason (i.e., the mental process of drawing conclusions from reasons or evidence, either deductively or inductively), learn, recall, think abstractly, and solve problems. Gf can be measured with general IQ tests and with tests such as Raven's Progressive Matrices. Some tests are said to measure both Gc and Gf, such as the Miller Analogies Test.

To elaborate, epistemic rationality is a matter of holding justified beliefs. Chisholm (1989:8) suggested that "the term 'justify', in its application to a belief, is a term of epistemic appraisal: it is used to say something about the reasonableness of that belief." Such justification can range from being probable to being certain (Chisholm, 1989:16).[90] This system of epistemic rationality provides a range that may apply to any rational agent, depending on the evidence available for his or her beliefs. Each of these levels of rational justification is itself an intellectual good.

Practical rationality is a matter of selecting achievable ends and appropriate means; that is, if one intends an end which requires certain means, then one wills those means. Thus, if one does not will the means, rationality requires that he not pursue the end. Broome (2010:289) maintains that "It is commonly recognised that rationality requires you to intend what you believe is a necessary means to an end that you intend." R. Jay Wallace (2020) writes: "Instrumental rationality, in its most basic form, instructs agents to take those means that are necessary in relation to their given ends. In the modern era, this form of rationality has widely been viewed as the single unproblematic requirement of practical reason." Moreover, a practically rational person wills the necessary means based on knowledge that they are means toward the end he intends. The following, then, is a working characterisation of practical rationality: a person is practically rational if and only if, when he freely wills an end requiring some means, he wills those means based on knowledge that they are in fact means toward his end. A person who freely pursues an end but refuses to pursue the requisite means is practically irrational (at least in that situation).

5.7.5 Knowledge

Knowledge is also an intellectual good. It is widely held by philosophers that there are at least three kinds of knowledge: propositional knowledge, knowledge by acquaintance, and know-how.

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[90] If a belief in *p* is epistemically probable for S, then S is more justified in believing *p* than in believing the negation of *p*. If *p* is epistemically in the clear for S, then S is not more justified in withholding (i.e., remaining uncommitted to) *p* than in believing it. If *p* is epistemically beyond reasonable doubt for S, then S is more justified in believing *p* than in withholding *p*. If *p* is epistemically evident for S, then for every proposition *q*, believing *p* is at least as justified for S as is withholding *q*. If *p* is epistemically obvious for S, then for every proposition *q*, S is more justified in believing *p* than in withholding *q*. If *p* is epistemically certain for S, then for every *q*, believing *p* is more justified for S than withholding *q*, and believing *p* is at least as justified for S as is believing *q*. (Chisholm, 1989:8-16)

Propositional knowledge is knowledge that can be expressed in a complete sentence and is generally held by epistemologists to be at least a matter of justified, true belief (JTB). In other words, to know a proposition, at least three conditions must hold: (a) one believes the proposition (i.e., take it to be true); (b) the belief is true (i.e., it corresponds with reality); and (c) the belief has adequate justification (e.g., evidence, experience, etc.).[91]

Knowledge by acquaintance is direct, unmediated awareness, such as the visual sensation of the redness in an apple or the olfactory sensation of cinnamon. Know-how is skill or ability to perform an action, such as knowing how to ride a bicycle or how to bake a cake.

Think of all the goods of knowledge: each item of propositional knowledge is a good. Reflect on how many items there are – for example, consider how many people know that George Washington was the first President of the U.S., that Alexander the Great defeated the Persians at the Battle of Gaugamela, that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a civil rights leader, that Ernest Hemingway wrote *The Old Man and the Sea*, that water is identical to H2O, and that Mars is the fourth planet from our sun. For each person who knows these propositions, each instance of knowledge is a separate item of knowledge and thus a separate good. Moreover, consider knowledge by acquaintance. Virtually every human being who has ever lived has, every day and throughout each waking day, nearly constantly obtains knowledge by acquaintance: the redness that one observes in an apple via visual sensation, the scent of cinnamon that one takes in via the olfactory sensation, the sound of a friend's voice that one experiences via the sense of hearing, the texture of a steering wheel that one feels when driving[92], and the taste of a lemon that one knows by acquaintance via the sense of taste. Each of these items of knowledge by

[91] This analysis of propositional knowledge as JTB goes back to Plato (2009), who articulated it in his *Theaetetus* and *Meno*. Plato's view was generally accepted for over 2300 years until the American philosopher Edmund Gettier (1963) presented two apparent counter-examples to the claim that JTB is sufficient for propositional knowledge.

[92] Note that driving is itself a good which requires the further intellectual goods of propositional knowledge, knowledge by acquaintance, and know-how.

acquaintance is a good, and each depends on the physical goods of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. There are countless cases of knowledge by acquaintance, each of which is a good.[93]

Furthermore, over the course of life, human beings develop many instances of know-how. We learn how to walk, how to run, how to drive, how to ride a bicycle, how to play a sport, how to cook a meal, how to solve a problem in mathematics, how to speak, how to read, how to write, how to reason, how to perform a job, how to make a friend, and so forth. These are vital skills for human life, and thus integral intellectual goods. If we think only of the goods of knowledge, it might well be the case that these goods alone are beyond human ability to count; *a fortiori* if we factor in all of the other moral and intellectual goods from this chapter.[94]

5.7.6 Wisdom, understanding and insight

Wisdom, understanding and insight are significant intellectual goods as well. The term "wisdom" has been defined in different ways. Wisdom is sometimes said to be properly applied knowledge. For example, according to psychologist Jeffrey Dean Webster (2020), a leading scholar on the topic of wisdom, the term "wisdom" is defined as "competence in, intention to, and application of critical life events to facilitate the optimal development of self and others".[95] This view of wisdom corresponds to the ancient Greek concept of *phronesis* (wisdom in the sense of prudence). Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 2020:Book 6) characterises phronesis as follows: "Now it is thought to be the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is

[93] I.e., the number of these goods cannot be counted by human beings. I.e., human beings cannot complete an exhaustive search (or brute-force search) with respect to the number of knowledge-based goods in the world.

[94] This point is relevant to one of the arguments I give in Chapter 7. The goods and evils of the world, and their relations to one another, are beyond our ability to know and measure. In terms of combinatorial optimization, they constitute a "combinatorial explosion". This is a term from mathematics used to denote a feature of a systems-related problem in virtue of the exponential increase of the possible combinations of factors in that system. The feature obtains in virtue of the high number of factors in the system. This status justifies the conclusion that a brute-force or exhaustive solution for weighing the factors and their combinations is intractable.

[95] Webster is a recognised expert in psychological scholarship on wisdom. He has developed the Self-Assessed Wisdom Scale (SAWS) for measuring an individual's wisdom.

good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of thing conduce to the good life in general."

In other circumstances, "wisdom" refers to deep knowledge in a specific area (e.g., economics or history), or to deep and broad knowledge in many areas, or to accumulated experience in life. Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 2020:Book 6) addresses the sort of wisdom that requires deep philosophical knowledge (i.e. *sophia*); he notes that philosophical wisdom or *sophia* is knowledge of "the things that are highest by nature", and that the person of sophia "must not only know the conclusions that follows from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves". This sort of wisdom involves knowledge of philosophical issues and logical ability to draw correct conclusions from such knowledge.

According to philosopher Sharon Ryan (2013), there are the following five approaches to understanding the nature of wisdom: (1) wisdom as epistemic humility, (2) wisdom as epistemic accuracy, (3) wisdom as knowledge, (4) a hybrid theory of wisdom, and (5) wisdom as rationality. The first approach is based on Socrates's view of wisdom as represented by Plato (2009) in *The Apology*; this approach requires one to recognise the limits of his knowledge. The second approach is a matter of having rational or epistemically justified beliefs (see the discussion of epistemic rationality above). The third approach holds that wisdom is a matter of one or more of the three kinds of knowledge (see the discussion of knowledge above). The fourth approach is a combination of approaches (1) - (3). The fifth approach is a matter of having deep and comprehensive epistemic and practical rationality.

Like "wisdom", the term "understanding" is treated in various ways. According to scholar of education, David Perkins (1993:40), "understanding is the ability to think and act flexibly with what one knows". This definition is like that of practical wisdom. Philosopher Stephen R. Grimm (2006) argues that understanding is a species of knowledge. Other philosophers disagree: Mikael Janvid (2003) holds that understanding is a kind of mental grasping, something like direct insight or philosophical intuition, while philosopher Jonathan Kvanvig (2003:192-193) claims that "understanding requires, but knowledge does not, an internal grasping or appreciation of how various elements in a body of information are related to each other in terms of explanatory, logical, probabilistic, and other kinds of relations that coherentists have thought constitutive of justification". Kvanvig's characterisation of "understanding" is akin to the ancient Greek *sunesis*, which is something like what psychologists call "fluid intelligence" or "sheer intellectual power"; as

noted above, this is the mental ability to reason or to put things together deductively and inductively.[96] For this thesis, we need not settle the dispute about whether understanding is a species of knowledge. Either way, like wisdom, knowledge, rationality, and the like, understanding is clearly a mental or cognitive good that is integral to human life.

I have indicated that some philosophers associate understanding with insight or philosophical intuition. Thus, a brief commentary on insight is in order here. Paul (2009:36) defines "insight" as "the ability to see clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of underlying truth of things; penetrating mental discernment". For Paul, insight is a kind of understanding or discernment, or at least closely related to these goods.

5.7.7 Conscience

Conscience is a morally significant intellectual good. This is a type of moral intelligence; i.e., it is an ability of the intellect to gain moral knowledge. The popular conception of conscience is that it is a moral sense of what is morally permissible and what is not. According to dictionary.com, conscience is "the inner sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action". In the Medieval Scholastic tradition, conscience is related to practical moral reasoning. According to Christopher Toner (2020), "Conscience is the habit of drawing the right conclusions about what is to be done by means of the practical syllogism. As such it depends upon knowledge of the first principles of practical reason, and synderesis is the habit of knowing these." According to Tobias Hoffman (2012:256-257), Aquinas and other scholastics held that synderesis is infallible moral knowledge or awareness of basic moral principles such as "Do the good and avoid the evil" and "live according to reason", whereas conscience is the mental act of applying moral knowledge or synderesis to specific cases. Clearly, the existence of conscience contributes to the good of the world. It is widely held that conscience, like other intellectual goods, is crucial for the moral and interpersonal aspects of human life. We will turn to the latter topic in the next section.

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[96] For example, a prodigious level of the mental ability of *sunesis* is ascribed to the 12-year-old Jesus of Nazareth in Luke 2:47.

5.8 Interpersonal goodness

This section addresses the goods of interpersonal relationship such as friendship, autonomy, moral agency, and humour. As noted in Chapter 3, I agree with Boethius that a person is a substance of a rational nature. Hence, personal relationships are those standing between rational beings. Clearly, family relationships, friendships, relations between colleagues, acquaintances, neighbours, and others in a community are important goods for human life. Rather than discuss in detail each of these kinds of personal relation, I will address Aristotle's view on friendship as an influential treatment of interpersonal goodness. Aristotle's view can serve as a representation of personal relations in general. Indeed, Aristotle discusses friendship as a type of relationship which can be exemplified in relations between family members, neighbours, colleagues, foreigners, and even states. Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 2020:Book 8, Ch. 1) suggests that, at least ideally, every human being can be near and dear to every other.

5.8.1 Friendship

In Book 8 of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle examines the interpersonal good of friendship. He holds that friendship is a prominent virtue and a significant good of human life. Aristotle (2020) opens Book 8 with a commentary on the noble nature of friendship:

> "After what we have said, a discussion of friendship would naturally follow, since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living."

Aristotle distinguishes between three types of friendship: of utility, of pleasure, and between the virtuous. A friendship of utility is a relationship in which friends value each other for what one can do for the other; i.e., this is a friendship of merely instrumental value whereby the friends do not love each other as ends in themselves, but rather value the end of utility and use each other as a means to that end. Given the lack of depth in this kind of friendship, it is easily dissolved. Similarly, friendships of pleasure are instrumental and easily dissolved, for "those who love for the sake of utility love for the sake of what is good for themselves, and those who love for the sake of pleasure do so for the sake of what is pleasant to themselves, and not in so far as the other is the person loved but in so far as he is useful or pleasant … Such friendships, then, are easily dissolved, if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him." (Nicomachean Ethics, 2020:Book 8, Ch. 3.)

A friendship between virtuous persons is, for Aristotle, a perfect friendship between persons who are good and alike in moral and intellectual excellence. In McPherson's (2020) terms, such friends are individuals who are living the higher form of human life. These are enduring partnerships between persons who are noble/virtuous and who value each other as intrinsic values; such friends have good will toward each other for their own sakes. Friendship between the virtuous can produce utility and pleasure as by-products of the intrinsic goodness of such relationships; nevertheless, the relationships are not formed for the sake of utility or pleasure. Alas, friendships of virtue are as infrequent as they are highly valuable because, according to Aristotle (2020), excellent persons are rare and relationships between them require time, familiarity, and a stability forged via loyal support through times of hardship.

Aristotle's views on the value of friendship and on the types of friendship are plausible.[97] As such, it is reasonable to hold that friendship is a significant good of human life. Moreover, it is likely that most people have had at least one of the three types of Aristotelian friendship, thereby making friendship of one type or another both common and axiologically valuable. Like conscience, friendship contributes to the value of the world.

5.8.2 Personal autonomy, moral agency, and rational agency

In this section, I address the goods of personal autonomy, moral agency, and rational agency. These goods might also fall under the categories of moral and intellectual goodness, but they are relevant to interpersonal goodness insofar as persons are moral agents, rational agents, and (at least ideally) autonomous agents who live in communities. I will address the topic of autonomy here as a segue between interpersonal goods and existential goods, since autonomy has existential relevance.

Philosopher Jane Dryden (2020) provides a working definition of personal autonomy as an individual's capacity for self-determination and self-governance; autonomy is the personal capacity freely and rationally to decide for oneself and, based on that decision, to pursue a worthy

[97] There might be additional types of friendship, but it seems evident that there are at least the types addressed by Aristotle.

course of action in one's life. Plato and Aristotle both held that this sense of autonomy is essential for eudaimonia; it involves a sort of rational self-mastery and self-governance which can be represented by Plato's (2009:Republic, Book IV) tripartite theory of the soul. Kant elaborated on the concept of autonomy by characterising it as germane to rational agency, moral agency, and free will – each of which themselves are goods. For Kant, autonomy is the ability to be the free author of one's actions, the capacity for morally responsible agency, and ultimately the ability and will to live according to the Categorical Imperative.

For Kant, personal autonomy is at the heart of human dignity and respect – which are essential human values in the intrinsic sense. Personal autonomy is coextensive with rationality; it involves rationally and responsibly making one's own choices without undue reliance on external authority and direction. Kant's view of autonomy is characterised by his dictum: *sapere aude!* (Dare to know!) According to Kant (1784): "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance … *Dare to know!* (*Sapere aude!*)."

Rightly understood and promoted, autonomy, rational agency and moral agency are correlated goods which are highly valuable in human life. Indeed, contemporary scholars have placed significant value on autonomy in the areas of psychological development, bioethics, and political philosophy. Philosophers from Harry Frankfurt, Kurt Baier, and Gerald Dworkin to Roger Scruton, Laura Ekstrom, and Susan Wolf have addressed the value of personal autonomy. In addition, psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Erik Erikson have found a crucial place for autonomy in their views on human development. However, it should be noted that Carol Gilligan and Emmanuel Levinas have warned against overemphasis on autonomy to the detriment of community. The good of personal autonomy must therefore be properly balanced with the good of community.

In sum, both community and autonomy are goods of human life which, if properly pursued, are compatible and essential for human flourishing. Moreover, the concepts of free will, moral agency, and autonomy have been raised in discussions about the meaning of human life, as has friendship – which according to Aristotle (2020:Book 8, Ch. 1) is so valuable that without it, one would not choose to live though he possesses all other goods. I will turn to existential goodness in Section 5.9. However, before doing so, let me say a word about humour, which can also be

categorised as an interpersonal good insofar as it is a good that can be shared socially and can unite people in friendship.

5.8.3 Humour

It has been said that human beings are the only animals capable of laughter. (Aristotle, On the Parts of Animals, 2020:Book 3) Scruton (2017:24) has claimed that humour is an interpersonal good which has a beneficial effect on human communities. In the philosophy of humour, there are four main theories. The first is called the superiority theory. In this theory, humour is reduced to a feeling of superiority over others or over a former state of oneself. The second is the relief theory, according to which laughter is a way to release nervous energy. This is not an influential account of humour. According to John Morreall (2016), "almost no scholar in philosophy or psychology explains laughter or humour as a process of releasing pent-up nervous energy". The third is the incongruity theory. This theory holds that we find matters humorous, and that they are worthy of being found humorous, when they present a sufficient incongruity to our minds. For example, a joke is witty when its setup is incongruous with its punchline. This theory seems to have been held by philosophers from Aristotle to Kant and from Schopenhauer to Kierkegaard. The fourth theory is that humour is a sort of mental play. I do not attempt here to determine which theory of humour is best. Rather, I present the theories to give the reader a sense of what philosophers have done to provide a philosophical account of humour. In any case, humour is a basic good of human life which fosters friendship and helps to make life worth living. The ability to laugh seems a valuable part of human nature. The value of humour is in part interpersonal insofar as humour can unite persons in community.

5.9 Existential goodness: Meaning

In this section, I will address the topic of human meaning as an important example of existential goodness. According to psychologist Viktor Frankl (1946), human beings are by nature motivated by a will-to-meaning. McPherson (2020) notes that we are essentially and internally driven to find the meaning of human life. The topic of human meaning was addressed by Ancient Greek and Medieval philosophers, although not thoroughly or systemically. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Camus, and Sartre held that human life is objectively meaningless, although they did not address the topic in the method of analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophers of the 20th Century largely

ignored the topic[98], especially those guided by logical positivism – which held that the question of life's meaning is nonsense, since it is not one which can be answered by empirical investigation or logical tautology.

Today, philosophers take the topic of life's meaning more seriously that they did during the mid-20th Century. Joshua Seachris, David McPherson, Thaddeus Metz, and David Benatar are influential contemporary analytic philosophers who have addressed the issue in depth.[99] Seachris (2019:363) disagrees with the positivist tradition that the topic of human meaning is itself a meaningless topic. He writes that "claims that talk of life's meaning is misguided, unmanageable or, worse, nonsensical, are overblown … The meaning of life is perfectly intelligible, and is centred on a cluster of ideas encapsulated by what I call the "meaning triad". Seachris notes that the term "meaning" is ambiguous. We use the term to refer to meaningful language, meaningful choices, meaningful experiences, meaningful information, etc. In each case, the meaning can be a matter of intelligibility and fittingness, of purpose, or of value and significance. Intelligibility or fittingness, which Seachris calls "I-Meaning" (Intelligibility Meaning), is a matter of something's coherently fitting into some larger or broader framework, which gives that thing a sense of context. According to Seachris (2019:365),

> "Ascertaining meaning, then, is often about fitting something into a larger context or whole: words into sentences, paragraphs, novels; musical notes into measures, movements, and symphonies … Dissonance results when there is a lack of such intelligibility. It is much the same with life's meaning. We can plausibly view our requests for the meaning of life as attempts to secure the overarching framework or context through which to make sense of our lives in this universe … We want life to make sense, and when it does not, we are haunted by the specter of meaninglessness."

For Seachris, if the various parts of human life do not fit together, and/or do not fit into some larger framework, then human life is meaningless in the sense of being unintelligible or failing to fit into

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[98] Kurt Baier, Robert Nozick, J. P. Moreland, and William Lane Craig are notable exceptions.
[99] See Seachris's *From the Meaning Triad to Meaning Holism: Unifying Life's Meaning*, Craig's *The Absurdity of Life Without God*, Moreland's *Scaling the Secular City*, Chapter 4 (God and the Meaning of Life), Metz' *Meaning in Life*, McPherson's *Virtue and Meaning*, and Benatar's *The Human Predicament*.

a sense-giving context. For this reason, Seachris (2019:366) remarks, “many think that a naturalistic story of the universe is, at heart, an absurd tale told by an idiot”.

When it comes to meaning in the sense of purpose, or what Seachris (2019:367) calls P-Meaning, human talk of meaning indicates a search for life’s purpose. Although I-Meaning and P-Meaning often overlap, P-Meaning is often what people have in mind when thinking of the meaning of human life:

> “The connection between P-MEANING and life’s meaning has always been largely taken for granted, so I will say very little here. If you ask people what they think the question ‘What is the meaning of life?’ means, they will very often respond that it is about the purpose(s) of life.”

In addition to meaning as intelligibility and meaning as purpose, the triad is completed by thinking of meaning as value or significance. Seachris (2019:368) calls this “S-Meaning,” which “tracks a related cluster of notions like mattering, importance, impact, salience, being the object of care and concern, and value, depending on the context”. To these concepts, we might add the concepts of the dignity and respect possessed by persons, a concept emphasised by Kant. This sense of meaning as significance or value brings with it a status of normativity. Such meaning is not merely valuable in the axiological sense, but is significant in the deontic sense as well. According to S-Meaning, human life matters in an objective sense, and objectively ought to be treated in a manner which corresponds with its objective value.

In sum, this triad of intelligibility, purpose, and value holds regarding the question of life’s meaning, as it does with respect to questions of meaningful language, behaviour, experience, and information.[100]

There are various approaches to theorising about the meaning of life. According to Seachris (2020), one can view the meaning of life according to a supernaturalist worldview, a subjective naturalist worldview, and objective naturalist worldview, a hybrid naturalist worldview,

[100] Craig (2013) makes a similar point about human meaning, noting that an objectively meaningful life is objectively valuable and purposeful.

or a pessimistic/nihilistic worldview. For Moreland (1987), the division is between naturalistic nihilism, optimistic humanism, immanent purpose transcendentalism, and cosmic purpose/theism. According to Metz (2013), theories of human meaning are classified as either supernaturalism, naturalism, or nihilism. Supernaturalism can be either God-centred or soul-centred. Naturalism is either subjectivist or objectivist. And according to nihilism, human life is objectively meaningless because the factor or factors that would make human life objectively meaningful either cannot obtain or as a matter of fact simply never obtain. For nihilism, there is no objective meaning, value, or purpose to human life.

As indicated above, some theories of objective human meaning emphasise a transcendent purpose to human life. Among these, some may be classified as "purpose theories". The term "purpose theory" (PT) was coined by Thaddeus Metz. In PT, God's existence, God's telic creation of human beings, and human libertarian free will (LFW) are necessary conditions for human life to be objectively meaningful.[101] Theories of human meaning need not appeal to the divine or otherwise transcendent. Some theories of human meaning might be subjective rather than objective, and thus need not appeal to anything other than human constructs.

We might also discuss the practice of philosophy and/or religion as a meaningful way of life. Such practices have been taken to be existential goods. Pierre Hadot (1995) has argued that ancient philosophers in the traditions of Socrates, Plato, and the Stoics were philosophers not only in the modern (intellectual) sense, but also in the ancient sense of being practitioners as well as thinkers. If philosophy is the careful and rigorous thinking about the ultimate questions of human life, then the philosophers in these traditions (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Epictetus, etc.) were philosophers in this sense. They pursued questions in metaphysics, ethics, logic, and epistemology. But they also practiced philosophy as a way of life and a spiritual discipline (*askesis*) in pursuit of wisdom, virtue, and *ataraxia*. In addition, Hadot (1995:128) claims, the early

[101] For more on PT, see Chapters 5 and 6 in Metz (2013). See also Metz, "Could God's Purpose Be the Source of Life's Meaning?" in *Exploring the Meaning of Life: An Anthology and Guide,* ed. Joshua Seachris, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). And see Crozat (2018).

Christian tradition was considered a philosophy in this ancient sense of being both a tradition of thought and of practice:

> "In order to understand the phenomenon under consideration, it is essential to recall that there was a widespread Christian tradition which portrayed Christianity as a *philosophy*. This assimilation began with those Christian writers of the second century who are usually referred to as the Apologists, and particularly with Justin … They believed that that which had been scattered and dispersed throughout Greek philosophy had been synthesized and systematized in Christian philosophy. Each Greek philosopher, they wrote, had possessed only a portion of the Logos, whereas the Christians were in possession of the Logos itself, incarnated in Jesus Christ. If to do philosophy was to live in accordance with the law of reason, then the Christians were philosophers, since they loved in conformity with the law of the divine Logos."

In any case, ancient philosophical and religious traditions such as Stoicism and Christianity have provided existential goods – such as the practice of philosophy – that have benefited human beings and human life in a variety of ways.

In sum, this section addresses the topic of human meaning. Human meaning can be thought of as either an objective reality or as a merely subjective reality. Moreover, human meaning seems to involve a triad of conceptions which must be combined for a holistic sense of meaning. This triad includes meaning as intelligibility, meaning as purpose, and meaning as significance. Objective human meaning, if it exists, is a great good of human life. Subjective meaning is also important. If meaning is objective, it still must be either freely accepted or freely rejected by the individual at the subjective level. If there is no objective meaning, but only the subjective exists, then it is still plausible to hold that subjective meaning is a valuable aspect of the human experience. Human spiritual development contributes to a meaningful life and has benefited from philosophical and religious guidance from the traditions of Socrates, the Stoics, the early Christians, and others. I will discuss the topic of human meaning in Chapter 7, appealing to the good of meaningfulness as an abductive argument against the PAE.

5.10 Cultural goodness

In this section, I address cultural goods such as human civilization, leisure, law, good customs, the practical and fine arts, the sciences, engineering, technology, politics, education, and the like.

I start with a working definition of human culture as a society's set of collective patterns of thinking, believing, and acting. Roughly, culture is to society as character is to person. Next, I address some primary aspects of culture that can be considered goods. I start with the topic of civilization.

5.10.1 Civilization

As Brummett, *et al*. (2005:10) indicate, scholars disagree on how best to define the term "civilization". However, it is widely accepted that a civilization is the product of a group of persons with a high degree of sociocultural complexity characterised by urban life and capable of sustaining the economic, social, political, and religious needs of its members. Civilization also includes artistic and intellectual development, such as writing, architecture, sophisticated technology, and widespread agriculture. Duieker and Spielvogel (2006:8-9) note that civilization includes the following characteristics, each of which is a good:

1. Civilization has an urban focus.
2. Civilization involves political and military structures.
3. Civilization requires a social structure based on economic power.
4. Civilization involves the development of material complexity.
5. Civilization includes a distinct religious structure.
6. Writing is crucial for civilized life.
7. Civilization leads to new and significant intellectual and artistic activity, such as architecture, mathematics, and literature.

In these descriptions of civilized life, there are many examples of goods discussed earlier in this section. For example, there is a basis for moral goods, intellectual goods, and existential goods. Consider the genesis of civilization in Sumeria, one of the world's first civilizations. Sumerian civilization produced what might be the first law code. The Sumerians developed organised city-states, an abstract form of writing, a sophisticated literature, complex architecture, and an advanced form of mathematics. The Code of Ur-Nammu and the Code of Hammurabi addressed moral goods such as justice (particularly, retributive justice). These goods were codified into a legal system, thereby addressing the significance of legal as well as moral goods in Sumeria. The Sumerians constructed ziggurats and other sophisticated buildings, developed cuneiform writing, and produced literary works and religious myths such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* – which addressed the religious and existential needs of the Sumerian people. The Sumerians also

developed rigorous systems of metrology, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry, which enabled their practices of astronomy, engineering, architecture, economics, banking, and trade.

5.10.2 Leisure

According to the 20th Century German philosopher Josef Pieper (2009:19), leisure is a foundation of human culture. For Pieper, leisure is not idleness, nor is it fundamentally a matter of time off from work. Rather, leisure is something like *ataraxia*. Leisure is a "mental and spiritual attitude" of inward calm, of silence, and of "not being busy"; it is a contemplative mindset that is the prerequisite of the apprehension of reality. (Pieper, 2009:46)[102] Leisure is a prerequisite for philosophy, the arts, the sciences, engineering, technology, and the other goods of civilized culture. Moreover, according to Pieper, leisure is necessary to prevent the attitude and habit of reducing human life to a merely functional system of utilitarian work, which Pieper calls the life of "total labor". This conception of human life dictates that human beings are mere servile functionaries, mechanistic producers of utilitarian economic items for consumption, rather than free and rational beings capable of engaging in the higher activities of the liberal arts. The life of total labour hinders personal autonomy and genuine human culture (Pieper, 2009:53).

For Pieper, leisure is a great and essential good of human life; it is necessary for all the goods of human culture and civilization, and it is required to prevent human life from descending into a subhuman and nonpersonal world of mere work. Such a world is a kind of cultural evil, a topic upon which I elaborate in Section 6. Pieper characterises this evil by construing that the world of "work" and of the "worker" is an impoverished world, despite its richness in material goods; and such a wholly utilitarian world makes the higher form of human life impossible (Pieper, 2009:68).

5.11 Aesthetic goodness

In this section, I address aesthetic goods such beauty and art. Aesthetics, or the philosophy of art, is a branch of philosophy which undertakes to examine critically our beliefs concerning

[102] This sense of "leisure" might also count as an emotional good.

questions about the nature of beauty, the nature of art, the human experience of art, our evaluation of art, and the nature of aesthetic taste of judgment (Stolnitz, 1960:6).

5.11.1 Beauty

In *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas (2020:First Part, Q. 5, Art. 4) held that beauty and goodness are in some sense identical, although their concepts differ epistemically, since goodness is related to the human faculty of desire and beauty to the human faculty of cognition. He defined beauty as "that which gives pleasure when seen".[103] For Aquinas, "beauty consists in due proportion".[104] The definition of beauty as that which gives pleasure when seen is, arguably, too narrow, since things which are not visible can be beautiful, such as music, poetry, and mathematics.[105] Scruton (2011:1) proposes that "we discern beauty in concrete objects and in abstract ideas, in works of nature and works of art, in things, animals and people, in objects, qualities and actions". The list of beautiful things includes nearly every ontological category, including propositions, logical proofs, and even deaths. (Scruton, 2011:1) Anthony Flew (1979:39) provides a broader definition of beauty as "the sensible condition of aesthetic excellence considered to arouse the keenest pleasure". Although Flew's definition is more comprehensive than that of Aquinas, it is not broad enough to include the beauties of mathematics, logic, and philosophy, which are not sensible excellences.

However, Michael R. Spicher explains that Aquinas's definition can be understood more broadly. The term "seen" in Aquinas's definition can be understood in terms of contemplation. Spicher (2020) cites Jacques Maritain's (1930:23) definition that "beauty is essentially the object of intelligence": according to Spicher (2020), the knowledge or recognition of beauty is an activity of mind. Kant (2005:22), likewise, held that human beings judge beauty by the mental faculty of judgment he called "taste". For Aquinas, beauty is an objective property which, as such, resides

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[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Bertrand Russell (1907) claimed that mathematics is beautiful: "Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty…" Here, Russell also refers to "the beauty of human existence". If mathematics and human existence itself are beautiful, then beauty cannot be merely a matter of visual pleasure, as Aquinas suggested.

in the object which has beauty. However, the recognition of beauty is a subjective matter, as Kant would agree, since such recognition occurs in the mind. Tolstoy (1892:34) similarly held that beauty has both objective and subjective aspects. Spicher (2020) observes that according to the Thomistic tradition, the criteria involved in beauty are actuality (or being); proportion (or symmetry); radiance (i.e., that which seizes the attention of the beholder), and wholeness (or integrity).

Beauty is a significant good of human life. It is found in nature, in persons, in the practical and fine arts, and in intellectual endeavours such as mathematics. Moreover, the mental faculty of recognising and judging beauty is itself a good which enables human beings to become aware of and to appreciate the beauty of nature, the arts, etc.[106] Any evaluation of the world as a whole would need to include an evaluation of its beauty.

5.11.2 Art

Having examined the good of beauty, I turn to the good of art. Thomas Adajian (2018) stresses that the definition of art is controversial in contemporary philosophy. For Plato, art is ontologically dependent on, and imitative of, physical objects which are themselves ontologically dependent on and imitative of the Forms. For Kant (2005:111), beautiful art (as opposed to mechanical art and merely pleasant art) is "a mode of representation that is purposive for itself, and which, although devoid of [definite] purpose, yet furthers the culture of the mental powers in reference to sociable communication". Such art has for its standard "reflective Judgment and not sensation". We might say, roughly, that art is the intentional activity of creating beautiful objects. Since beautiful objects are themselves good, the intentional creation of such goods is itself a good. Hence, art is a good. The argument might be put more completely as follows: art is the intentional activity of creating beautiful objects; every beautiful object is a good; hence, art is the intentional activity of creating that which is good; every intentional creation of that which is good is itself good; therefore, art is good.

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[106] The mental faculty of recognising beauty, which Kant called the judgment of taste, can also be placed into the category of intellectual goods, addressed in Section 5.5 above.

Art objects are plausibly taken as exemplifications of aesthetic goodness. According to Carol S. Gould (2020:penultimate paragraph), “A sentence from Nabokov, George Eliot, Plato, or Chekhov can bring powerful aesthetic gratification.” These and other great works of art are intrinsic values of significant artistic and cultural worth which can be the occasion of profound aesthetic experience for those who attend to them.

We have seen in this section that there have been several attempts to define or otherwise characterise beauty, the faculty of recognising beauty, and the activity of art. My intention is not to settle the disagreements about these issues, but rather to point out the common factors. It is evident that beauty, the faculty of judging beauty, and the nature of purpose of art are human goods. Aside from thinking of beauty and art in scholarly terms, if we reflect on the role that these play in human life, it is evident that they are goods. Think of music, literature, cinema, and architecture. We seek these out in our leisure. We admire them. Sometimes, we reside or labour in beautiful works of architecture, thereby demonstrating the aesthetic and practical good of architecture.[107] I.e., architecture is both an intrinsic good and an instrumental good, or at least an intrinsic good which possesses utility. I turn to a detailed discussion of this distinction in the next section.

5.12 Intrinsic value, extrinsic value, and goodness

This section addresses intrinsic and extrinsic value, while the kinds of goodness were covered earlier in Chapter 5. The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value is relevant to Chapter 7 of this study.

5.12.1 Intrinsic value

Zimmerman (2019) argues something has intrinsic value if it is good in itself, or for its own sake, rather than for the sake of something else. Given the goods covered in this section, it is plausible to hold that many emotional, moral, intellectual, interpersonal, cultural, and existential goods are intrinsically valuable. For example, consider peace, knowledge, and happiness: these are widely

[107] Indeed, the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius (2020) recognised long ago that architecture is good in three senses: durability (*firmitas*), usefulness (*utilitas*), and beauty (*venustas*).

considered intrinsic values, for (as Aristotle noted) we seek them for their own sakes, and not as mere means for something else.[108] Moreover, it is widely (though not universally[109]) held that human beings are intrinsically valuable. For example, the Judeo-Christian tradition holds that human persons are made in the image of God and thus intrinsically valuable. Kant's CI – especially the "Humanity Formula" – holds that persons are ends in themselves and should be treated as such.

5.12.2 Extrinsic value

Something has extrinsic value if it is good for the sake of something else, but not for its own sake. One way of having extrinsic value is to possess it instrumentally. An instrumental value is something which is good for the sake of accomplishing some end. For example, a pencil as instrumental value insofar as it can be used to achieve a sketch, a written essay, or a solution to a math problem. However, a value can be extrinsic without being instrumental, as noted in Chapter 3.

Some goods addressed in this section can be reasonably construed as instrumental even if also intrinsic. For example, knowledge can be both intrinsically valuable and instrumentally significant. A cultural good, such as law, can be both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable. Plausibly, law is good as such, but is also useful in achieving some end such as recompense for economic loss. In addition, I have discussed science and technology as human goods. Scientific knowledge is arguably an intrinsic value, but also instrumental insofar as it can be applied to produce specific technologies (e.g., medical, computer, automotive) which are themselves instrumental goods which enable human beings to control nature in some way. And lastly, an emotional good such as peace is arguably an intrinsic value. However, it is also instrumentally

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[108] Like architecture, knowledge seems to be both an intrinsic and an instrumental good. We seek knowledge for its own sake, for example, when we are curious to know something even if we do not plan to use the knowledge as a tool to achieve some further end. The knowledge *is* the end. However, a professional in accounting, law, or some other field might study for the sake of gaining knowledge which can be useful for the sake of some other end, such as making money or helping a client. This is not to say that knowledge is both intrinsically valuable and instrumentally valuable. However, it is reasonable to hold at least that knowledge is intrinsically valuable and useful.

[109] Some philosophers have denied that human beings are intrinsically valuable, such as Peter Singer.

good insofar as it can enable one to relax, to learn, or to sleep – and sleep itself is instrumental for physical, emotional, and intellectual health, which means that peace can be instrumental for health as well as intrinsically valuable.

As was shown above, the goods addressed in this section can take the form of intrinsic value, instrumental value, or both depending on what the value-bearer is and what the circumstances are. Given the large number of intrinsic and instrumental goods in the world, a complete tally of these goods is inscrutable for human beings. I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 7. In the next section, I consider the topic of "value-bearer".

5.13 The bearers of goodness

In this section, I inquire into the topic of value-bearers. What are the bearers of goodness? Goodness is a value. Thus, whatever bears goodness bears value. It follows that bearers of goodness are value-bearers. As noted in Chapter 2, a value-bearer is something which possesses worth, either intrinsically or extrinsically. Value-bearers are thought by philosophers to be either substances or states of affairs or both. In the philosophical sense, a substance is a concrete object which bears properties, remains the same through change, and stands in relations. If a substance is a unity of parts, that unity is based on its nature rather than on some externally imposed structure. Hence, a substance differs from things such as heaps, artifacts, machines, and other artificially ordered structures. Roughly, a state of affairs is an abstract object which might be characterised as a way that things are, a fact, or an ontological situation. For example, it is a historical fact that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C. and hence *Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 B.C.* is a state of affairs.

I have addressed several categories of goods, such as emotional goods, moral goods, intellectual goods, and cultural goods. The bearers of value in these areas are relevant to the areas themselves. Below, I address a few of these goods to get a sense of how they relate to the bearing of value. I start with metaphysical goodness, or goodness as such. Let us assume that metaphysical goodness can be characterised in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense as "that which all things seek" or "wholeness according to nature". If this sense of metaphysical goodness is a reasonable characterisation, then the value-bearer of metaphysical goodness might be said to be either a substance or a state of affairs. For instance, a good tree is one which is whole according to its nature; i.e., the substance which is the tree is whole and thus good. However, we might also

speak in terms of states of affairs: the fact of the tree's being whole is good; i.e., that which bears the goodness is the fact or the obtaining state of affairs concerning the tree.

Emotional goods such as subjective happiness, peace, and joy are mental states and thus concrete entities. Yet they are not substances. Yet is it plausible that they also bear value.[110] The same can be said about intellectual goods such as true beliefs and items of knowledge. Perhaps the value-bearer in such situations is the substance who possesses these concrete mental objects, or perhaps the value bearer is the state of affairs of, say, Jones being knowing, joyful, or wise. Cultural goods such as leisure or civilization also seem to be states of affairs. For the purpose of this dissertation, I need not determine whether value-bearers are substances, states of affairs, or both. Either one or both will work for my arguments in Chapter 7. In any case, as I noted in Chapter 3, the term "value-bearer" is best construed broadly.

5.14 The extent of goodness

In this section, I briefly inquire into several questions: What is the extent or scope of goodness? How wide is the scope? What is the distribution of goodness? In one sense, the scope of goodness is as wide as its types of bearers. The scope includes substances and states of affairs in the emotional, moral, intellectual, interpersonal, existential, cultural, and other realms. In another sense, the scope is as wide as its number of instances in each of these areas. As I note in Chapter 7, we do not know the scope of goodness in the latter sense. For example, we cannot count the number of items of knowledge in the world, each of which is a good. I will thus focus here on the former sense.

As noted in previous sections of Chapter 5, the scope of goodness includes instances of goodness in the emotional, intellectual, physical, existential, interpersonal, aesthetic, and cultural realms of human life. Regarding the distribution of intrinsic goodness, this depends on whether value monism (VM) or value pluralism (VP) is true. According to VM, there is only one type of intrinsic value, although there may be many instances of that type. Hedonists claims that pleasure is the only type of intrinsic value, and that all instances of intrinsic value are exemplifications of

[110] Although one might also say that the state of affairs of being happy, peaceful, etc. bears value.

pleasure. According to Cowan (2020:480 of 6564), perfectionists hold that "developing those traits (whatever they are) that are distinctive of human beings is the only intrinsically valuable thing". On VM, the distribution of intrinsic goods is a homogenous distribution of instances of only one type of intrinsic good. For hedonists, it is a distribution of pleasure and only pleasure. For perfectionists, the distribution concerns the development of human excellence. VP is the view that there are many types of intrinsic value, such as knowledge, happiness, and human life. For VP, the distribution of intrinsic goods is a heterogeneous matter: a variety of types of goods is involved. According to Cowan, most philosophers who take a position on this issue adhere to VP (Cowan, 2020:17). These points are relevant to my arguments in Chapter 7, and I will address them in more detail there.

5.15 Gradations of goodness

In this section, I address the following questions: Are there gradations of goodness? I.e., are some value-bearers better, equal to, or worse than others? If so, what are the gradations of goodness?

The approach to answering these questions depends on whether VM or VP is true. If, say, a hedonistic version of VM is the case, then it is plausible to hold that some things can be better (i.e., can possess more intrinsic good) than other things. After all, pleasure is the only type of intrinsic good. *Prima facie*, some instances of pleasure are more pleasing than others, and thus better than others. However, if VP is the case, things seem more complicated. Axiologists debate whether, in the case of VP, it is possible to compare values. Suppose the scope of intrinsic values includes persons, knowledge, wisdom, pleasure, joy, peace, moral virtues, physical health, human life, leisure, freedom, and civilization. This is a fairly wide variety of intrinsic values, and there are likely more of such values. Ontologically speaking, are these values comparable? Do they stand in relations of better than, worse than, and equal to with regard to one another? And if they are ontically comparable, are they epistemically comparable for human beings? Are we capable of comparing them accurately and reliably? Philosophers disagree on the answers to these questions, which makes it difficult to determine the ways in which intrinsic values are distributed and whether there are gradations of such values. These points are also relevant to my arguments in Chapter 7, and I will address them in more detail there.

In this section, I have addressed questions concerning the range, distribution, and gradations of goodness. Conclusive answers to such questions are beyond the scope of this

study. The issues are complicated and fraught with disagreement and uncertainty among philosophers. As such, rather than attempt to answer these questions, I am content to provide a rough outline of the nature and difficulty of such questions. This outline prepares the study for the arguments I present in Chapter 7. I will return to this topic in that chapter, where the difficulty of the topic will contribute to my case against the PAE.

5.16 Conclusion

This chapter examined the nature and extent of goodness by addressing the nature of goodness, the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value, the bearers of goodness, the scope of goodness, and the gradations of goodness. I discussed goods of emotion, of intellect, and of art. I also addressed physical goods, existential goods, cultural goods, and interpersonal goods. These topics are pertinent to several of my arguments on Chapter 7. In the next chapter, I address the topic of evil.

Chapter 6: Evil

6.1 Introduction

A detailed treatment of the problem of evil benefits from a thorough discussion of evil, which is what I will attempt to provide in this chapter. Much of the work from Chapter 5 pertains to Chapter 6. Together, Chapters 5 and 6 form an important preface to the axiological arguments in Chapter 7. The content in Chapter 3 concerning the definition of "evil" is also relevant to this chapter. Here, I address the following main questions: What is the nature of evil? What are the kinds of evil? How does the difference between intrinsic value and extrinsic value relate to the various kinds of evil? What are the bearers of evil? What is the extent or scope of evil? Are there gradations of evil and, if so, what are they? With respect to the kinds of evil, this chapter will address various evils which make the problem of evil a serious issue of philosophical investigation.

6.2 The nature and objectivity of evil

I have already established that this study operates on the assumption that morality and axiological value are objective realities, and I have addressed some reasons for accepting this assumption. Hence, I proceed to a treatment of the nature of evil.

Paul Franks (2019:1) maintains that it is not difficult to establish that the world contains evil. However, determining why it exists is more difficult. This is a challenge for both theists and non-theists, since "non-theists are just as prone to seek out explanations for evil as anyone else" (Franks, 2019:2). Moreover, it is difficult to define evil, although philosophers such as Kekes (2005) have provided plausible definitions.[111] For Kekes, evil is a moral and not a natural phenomenon. Franks (2019:5-6) expresses a similar view: "Because harms caused by moral agents are just so different from harms caused by acts of nature, it may be better to dispense with the term 'natural evil' altogether. Evil just is a moral notion and so the suffering caused by natural events isn't evil at all … One advantage of distinguishing the problem of *evil* from the problem of

[111] See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for information on Kekes's (2005) definition. In short, for Kekes, evil is the combination of three factors: the malevolent will of an evildoer, serious and excessive harm caused by the evildoer, and lack of moral justification for causing such harm.

nature-based suffering … is that it helps make evident that there are two different kinds of problems related to suffering."

I indicated in Chapter 3 that, insofar as this dissertation emphasises the problem of evil, we are using "evil" to refer to very bad things which are destructive of well-being for human beings. However, Franks's distinction between (moral) evil and nature-based suffering is important to bear in mind. Like the ancient Stoics, Franks and Kekes suggest that, precisely speaking, the only evil is moral evil. Nature can cause suffering, and such suffering calls for an explanation, but perhaps it is not conceptually adequate to categorise such suffering as "evil". Richard Brian Davis (2019:13) argues that "paradigm cases of evil point to an inexcusable *intent* [my emphasis] to bring about or permit significant harm when it is within one's power to do otherwise". Davis (2019:13) proceeds to write that evil is essentially a matter of morality; it is immoral thought, desire, decision, or action that is freely entertained or undertaken by a conscious, rational agent deliberately to cause or permit significant harm to himself or to others for the sake of an unjustified end.[112]

As is the case with "goodness," we do not use "evil" in a univocal manner. How do these uses relate? Is there a common factor? To answer these questions, let us examine various kinds of evil. It seems that there are at least the following: metaphysical evil (or evil as such), emotional evil, physical/natural badness (or "evil"), moral evil, intellectual evil, interpersonal/relational evil, existential evil (meaninglessness, purposelessness), cultural evil, and aesthetic evil (ugliness, aesthetic badness). How do these relate?

Recall Aquinas's view that goodness is interchangeable with being. In other words, something is good if it is whole according to its nature. This view provides us with a working

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[112] Writing about the German language, Kant (2004:63) also associates matters of good and evil with the will: "*Well* or *ill* always implies only a reference to our condition, as *pleasant* or *unpleasant*, as one of pleasure or pain, and if we desire or avoid an object on this account, it is only so far as it is referred to our sensibility and to the feeling of pleasure or pain that it produces. But *good* or *evil* always implies a reference to the *will*, … Good and evil, therefore, are properly referred to actions, not to the sensations of the person, and if anything is to be good or evil absolutely …, it can only be the manner of acting, the maxim of the will, and consequently the acting person himself …"

definition of metaphysical goodness. We might here say that metaphysical evil is the opposite of metaphysical goodness; i.e., metaphysical evil is *privatio boni*, as Augustine held. Metaphysical evil is the absence of goodness (wholeness, excellence according to nature) where goodness should be.

Moral evil is aptly characterised by Kekes, Franks, and Davis above. However, if all evil is moral evil, as these philosophers suggest, then the evils that I will address in the remainder of this chapter – possibly excluding natural suffering – are kinds of moral evil. I discuss these kinds of evil below.

6.3 Emotional evil

Emotional evil can be thought of as the opposite of emotional good. As such, the specific emotional goods discussed in Chapter 5 might find their opposites categorised as emotional evils. Rather than address each emotional evil, which would take us far afield, I suggest an examination of Soren Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death*, which is a thorough treatment of emotional evil. In this work, Kierkegaard provides an analysis and phenomenological account of an existential or psychological suffering which he calls "despair". This despair is opposed to the emotional goods of subjective happiness, joy, and peace addressed in Chapter 5.

Kierkegaard (2008:9) examines different types of human despair, which he calls "sickness of the spirit". These types of despair share the fundamental aspect of a hopelessness which occurs because the free human self freely chooses to commit the moral evil of not relying on the God upon whom he is dependent. Granted, this is a theistic sense of existential hopelessness. However, non-theists can modify this sense of hopelessness in non-theistic ways that have been aptly articulated by thinkers such as Sartre.[113] In any case, Kierkegaard holds that the person of despair refuses to actualise his full potential as he ought to do. Thus, he faces the psychological turmoil of freely failing to be himself; instead, despite the despair, he settles for an unactualised or semi-actualised version of himself. He ought to be fully himself. Since ought implies can, he can be such. Indeed, he wants to do so. However, in despair, he does not. Kierkegaard reduces

[113] One might think here of Sartre's (1987) conceptions of existential forlornness and bad faith.

all forms of despair to this “wanting in despair to be oneself”. This despair is a profound emotional problem. Kierkegaard explains it as follows:

> “Indeed, so far from its being simply the case that this second form of despair (wanting in despair to be oneself) amounts to a special form on its own, all despair can in the end be resolved into or reduced to it. If a person in despair is, as he thinks, aware of his despair and doesn’t refer to it mindlessly as something that happens to him (rather in the way someone suffering from vertigo talks through an internally caused delusion about a weight on his head, or its being as though something were pressing down on him, etc., neither the weight nor the pressure being anything external but an inverted image of the internal), and wants now on his own, all on his own, and with all his might to remove the despair, then he is still in despair and through all his seeming effort only works himself all the more deeply into a deeper despair … This then is the formula which describes the state of the self when despair is completely eradicated: in relating to itself and in wanting to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the power that established it.” (Kierkegaard, 2008:10-11.)

Kierkegaard’s sense of despair is a transcendent account; it requires a transcendent being with whom humans can and should properly relate. Hence, Kierkegaard’s account of despair is compatible with the transcendent senses of happiness, joy, and peace articulated by Verhoef, Willard, and McPherson. Indeed, Kierkeaardian despair seems to be an existential description of an evil which is the opposite of these transcendent emotional goods. As noted above, the non-theist can modify Kierkeaardian despair by disenchanting it (i.e., by removing all traces of the transcendent), although such a move would have trouble explaining how to eradicate despair by grounding the self in “the power that established it”.

Sartre has attempted this sort of disenchantment by following the logic of atheism as it relates to human subjective well-being. For Sartre (1987:23), “man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does…man, with no support and no aid, is condemned to invent man”. Furthermore, for Sartre, man is forlorn, cast away by no one in a careless and harsh universe with no meaning, purpose, or guidance except that which he invents for himself. There is no transcendent power that establishes man, and thus no such power with which to relate.

To support this claim, Sartre provides the example of the student who sought moral guidance concerning whether he objectively ought to fight in World War II or stay home to care for his aging mother. Sartre's guidance (1987:28-29) is this: "You're free, choose, that is invent. No general ethics can show you what is to be done; … Forlornness implies that we ourselves choose our being. Forlornness and anguish go together. As for despair, the term has a very simple meaning. It means that we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will …"[114]

Sartre's account of human despair is a non-theistic counterpart to Kierkegaard's theistic account. In both cases, there is an emotional evil that opposes the goods of subjective happiness, joy, and peace. Like these subjective goods, the subjective despair of Kierkegaard and Sartre has objective aspects. For Kierkegaard, subjective despair results from the objective condition of being existentially imbalanced (i.e., failing to be oneself and failing to stand in a proper relation to the divine). For Sartre, subjective despair results from the objective fact that man is contingently "condemned" to be free in meaningless universe with no possibility of a proper relation to the divine. This is a completely non-personal sense of "condemn". This universe is purely natural and thus indifferent to human life. A significant difference between these counterparts is that Kierkegaard can explain despair as a matter of intentionally failing to be what one *ought*. Sartre might have difficulty in appealing to such oughtness; rather, the Sartrean explanation of despair might instead be explained by human aloneness, forlornness, or hopelessness in an indifferent naturalistic world. The emotional evils addressed in this section would need to be considered in an axiological weighing of the world. I next turn to a discussion of the natural world as it relates to evil.

6.4 Physical evil

In this section, I address the bad aspects of the physical or natural realm. It should be noted that, although this section is entitled "Physical Evil" it is debatable whether there are physical evils apart from moral evil. The Stoics, Kekes, Franks, and Davis claim that the only genuine evil is

[114] Notice that Sartre identifies *choosing* with *inventing*, which indicates his moral subjectivism.

moral evil. In Chapter 5, I examined physical goods such as human physical development, the goods of the natural environment, and the fine-tuning of the universe. Here, I confine myself to a brief commentary on the suffering produced by the natural world.

As Sartre suggests, the physical universe left to itself is indifferent to human life. As such, human beings often do not receive the physical (and other) goods they need in order to develop physically and mentally. For example, a child might lack parents, or be the victim of bad parenting, or of poverty, or insufficient nutrition, or some other misfortune. Furthermore, human beings of all ages can be harmed by the environment in terms of disease and natural disaster. As noted, it is debatable whether physical evils are also moral evils. Insofar as the given examples are instances of evil, it seems plausible to think of them as in some sense moral evils (i.e., evils that are physical in nature but are somehow also matters of the human will). However, if a purely physical event occurs which brings harm to human life, and if this event is not associated with the human will in any way, then it is debatable whether the event counts as evil in the moral sense. I next turn to the topic of moral evil.

6.5 Moral evil

This section emphasises moral evil and vice. I address the concept of moral vice in general and discuss the specific vices that contrast with the virtues addressed in Chapter 5. I have noted that a moral virtue is an excellent trait of the moral aspect of one's character. Thus, we might roughly define "moral vice" as a defective trait or flaw in moral character.

In Chapter 5, I examined the cardinal virtues, which I referred to as paradigm cases of virtue. I discussed different ways in which philosophers have treated these virtues, and I examined their importance in human life.

6.5.1 Cowardice and recklessness

I characterised courage as the practical knowledge of when it is morally obligatory to act in the face of fear, plus the will to do so, noting that there are both moral and intellectual forms of courage. The vice that contrasts courage is cowardice, although following Aristotle we can also discuss the vice of recklessness at the opposite extreme of cowardice. As moral courage enables the soldier, police office, and firefighter to risk life and limb to save or protect others, the vice of cowardice leads the coward to refuse to risk danger in such situations. The vice of recklessness

leads the rash individual foolishly to put himself in danger for no adequate reason. We can see that both are moral evils; for each one involves a free decision by an agent deliberately to cause or permit significant harm to himself or to others for the sake of an unjustified end. Cowardice can bring harm to oneself and to others, for the cowardly person might succumb to fear in a situation which requires courage for him to obtain a good which he needs and which, if he does not obtain it, will cause harm to himself. Cowardice can also bring harm to persons other than the coward, for a cowardly person might fail to help his neighbours when he ought. Recklessness can also cause harm to oneself and to others. The reckless person might foolishly put himself in danger, say by swimming in shark-infested waters for no good reason or by habitually leading an unhealthy lifestyle of heavy drinking, smoking, and poor diet; such a choice might cause harm to the reckless person, and to those who depend on his able-bodied support.

6.5.2 Injustice

Regarding justice, I referred to distributive and retributive forms. I also discussed the broader cardinal virtue of *dikaiosune* (sometimes translated as “righteousness”). Justice as *dikaiosune* was a primary subject of Plato’s *Republic*. For Plato, this kind of justice is a matter of wholeness or integrity, either at the individual level as integrity of soul, or at the social level as integrity of the body politic. For the person, a just soul is one in which its three parts (reason, spirit, and desire) perform their natural functions in a cooperative but non-interfering manner. For the society, justice requires similar harmony and cooperation between its parts. For Aristotle, as for Aquinas later, justice as an individual character train is the virtue of rendering to each person his due.

We might refer to the contrasting vice as injustice, which can take distributive and retributive forms, can contrast with integrity of soul, and can negate the virtue of rendering to each person his due. Distributive injustice involves distributing burdens and blessings in a community in an unfair manner – say, a society which rewards professional entertainers (actors, comedians, etc.) and athletes with lucrative contracts of several millions of dollars while compensating highly educated engineers, scientists, and teachers (who arguably perform work that is more important to human life) with a small fraction of such contracts. Retributive injustice in terms of punishment might involve punishing a person guilty of murder with a $50 fine or assigning capital punishment to a person guilty of a minor traffic violation. In Book 4 of *Republic*, Plato (2009) memorably characterises the unjust person and the unjust city as disintegrated and chaotic. The unjust

person has a tyrannical soul dominated by unruly desires; the unjust city is ruled by a tyrant, because that is the only way that the city can manage to control its rogue citizenry.

6.5.3 Immoderation

The next cardinal virtue is self-control, temperance, or moderation (Greek: *sophrosune*). This term refers to self-discipline or self-mastery. The opposing vice is immoderation, lack of self-control, profligacy, or wantonness. Plato's (2009) discussion of the tyrannical person is a picture of a profligate individual who adopts a dominating desire. This desire rules the others, and ultimately the person himself. We have seen that for Aristotle, temperance is a virtue pertaining to the irrational parts of the soul. The immoderate person is therefore irrational, since he is controlled by these irrational parts. And since human excellence is a matter of rational activity, the immoderate person – though capable of rationality – fails to achieve an ideally human life.

6.5.4 Dishonesty

I next addressed the virtue of honesty. This is in one sense a moral virtue, since it concerns the will. However, it might also be called an intellectual virtue, since it has to do with truth, belief, and other aspects of the mental life. I indicated that, as a working definition, honesty is the virtue of being or attempting to be truthful, where "truth" is based on the correspondence theory. The vice opposing honesty is dishonesty, which is the moral flaw of intending to deceive or to speak falsely.[115] I.e., a dishonest person is one who habitually intends to speak in ways which do not correspond to reality. According to philosopher Alex Barber (2020:141-164), the vice of dishonesty has been largely overlooked in moral philosophy, despite its importance in law, politics, and daily human life. Barber defines dishonesty as expressing (or claiming) that *p* when one knows *p* to be untrue.

[115] One way of being dishonest is to lie. However, there are other ways. One can misrepresent in speech or in action without technically lying, one can spin information in ways that are deceptive without lying, and one can engage in what the philosopher Harry Frankfurt has called "humbug" or "B.S."

Fairly or not, politicians, lawyers, and journalists are perceived as prone to the vice of dishonesty. According to the annual Gallup poll (2020) on honesty in professional occupations, for each year between 2003 and 2019, nurses rated very high in honesty, while engineers, medical doctors, pharmacists, dentists, and college teachers rated somewhat high. However, journalists, lawyers, governors, senators, and other members of the U.S. Congress rated very low. Barber (2020) considers honesty as crucial in these fields. Moreover, these are significant institutions in contemporary human life, wielding great power and influence. The low honesty ratings in these fields seem to count as significant moral and interpersonal evils. If the ratings accurately represent the honesty of journalists, lawyers, and politicians, then this is a pressing concern for contemporary human life. If the ratings are not accurate representations for these fields, still, the fact that Americans perceive journalists, lawyers, and politicians to be dishonest is a problem in American society.

I now turn my focus to intellectual evil, where I will address the vice which opposes the cardinal virtue of wisdom. I will also address other intellectual vices.

6.6 Intellectual evil

This section emphasises intellectual vice in general and specific intellectual vices, such as unintelligence, folly, confusion, and irrationality.

An intellectual vice is a defect, flaw, or weakness in the intellectual aspect of one's character. According to Paul (2009), the intellectual vices include intellectual arrogance, or the human tendency to believe that one knows more than one actually knows, or that one is nearly infallible, and that one does not need to improve in thinking (this vice is opposed to intellectual humility); intellectual conformity (which is opposed to proper intellectual autonomy); intellectual rudeness (the opposite of intellectual civility); intellectual cowardice (which is opposed to intellectual courage); intellectual apathy (opposed to intellectual curiosity); intellectual closed-mindedness (opposed to intellectual open-mindedness or empathy); intellectual hypocrisy (opposed to intellectual integrity); intellectual indolence or laziness (opposed to intellectual perseverance); and irrationality (opposed to rationality).

6.6.1 Unintelligence and irrationality

If intelligence is a virtue, then its opposite – which we might call wilful unintelligence or wilful dullness – is a vice. I use "wilful" here because it would not be reasonable to refer to a genetically determined low level of intelligence as a vice, although it would seem to be a case of something like natural evil. In any case, Bartlett (2008:341-342) includes versions of wilful unintelligence – such as what he calls "ideological rigidity", "self-defeating stupidity" and wilful "resistance to an awareness of" human inclinations toward evil – in a list of what he takes to be human pathologies. He presents the list as follows:

> "[E]motional and cognitive gratifications provided by vicarious or direct participation in violence, by ideological rigidity and absolutism, obedience to perceived authority, prejudice and persecution, sheer self-defeating stupidity and low levels of moral development, and their many sequelae in genocides; terrorism; wars; publicly approved imprisonment, torture, and executions; school, domestic, social, and political bullying; … The list of human pathologies does not end here. Central to human pathology, in the intended sense here of 'human evil', is human resistance to an awareness of it. 'Denial' would be an understatement, for the forces that stand in the way of our species' reflective consciousness of its malignancy are incredibly strong, tenacious, self-serving, and self-preserving."

Bartlett's list includes intellectual vices that are compatible with some of the entries articulated by Paul, such as intellectual arrogance, intellectual conformity, intellectual closed-mindedness, and irrationality. We will consider irrationality next.

I have noted that rationality is an intellectual good of human life, and that there are two senses: epistemic rationality and practical rationality. In terms of intellectual vice, there is epistemic irrationality and practical irrationality. Paul characterised irrationality in general as being contrary to reason, unreasonable, or illogical. This unreasonableness can be epistemic or practical. Epistemic irrationality concerns the possession of unreasonable or unjustified beliefs, especially as a matter of practice or habit. For example, fallacious reasoning, fallacious beliefs, beliefs guided by emotion or desire rather than by the intellect, and superstitious beliefs are examples of epistemic irrationality.

Practical irrationality is a matter of actions that are irrational. One who pursues an end but refuses to seek and apply the requisite means to achieve that end is practically irrational in such a situation. Consider a few examples. The person who pursues the end of exiting a building is practically irrational if the only means of exit is through one door located in the front of the building, but the person refuses to use the door, preferring instead to apply pressure on a concrete wall or glass window on the side of the building in hope that the wall/window will collapse and he will exit that way. Or, suppose that a person desires to achieve the end of reading Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but refuses to pursue the necessary means of acquiring a copy of the novel. Lastly, suppose a person seeks the end of owning a car, but refuses the proper means to that end, namely, obtaining a paid job with a salary sufficient for purchasing a car, but instead buys the vehicle on credit with no means for repaying the loan.[116]

6.6.2 Ignorance

Knowledge is an intellectual good, as we have noted. In Chapter 5, I addressed three kinds of knowledge: propositional knowledge, knowledge by acquaintance, and know-how. The vice opposing knowledge is ignorance, and it seems that there are three types: propositional ignorance, ignorance of acquaintance/experience, and ignorance concerning know-how. Propositional ignorance is a matter of not knowing a proposition, say, that Paris is the capital of France. Propositional ignorance is not necessarily a vice or an evil. Human beings are not omniscient and thus lack some items of propositional knowledge. Arguably, this lack is permissible in some cases. However, if there are propositions that a human being ought to know, then propositional ignorance might be an intellectual vice in such cases. The same points can be made for ignorance of acquaintance and lack of know-how, *mutatis mutandis*. Suppose that a human being ought to know certain propositions about morality and practical well-being, that he should have visual knowledge-by-acquaintance of his immediate surroundings, and that he should know how to read, write, and speak in his native language. Wilful ignorance in these respects would seem to be intellectual vices.

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[116] Practical rationality is a common human good, and practical irrationality is an uncommon evil. As such, examples of practical irrationality are likely to strike the reader as strange and unrealistic, even if possible.

6.6.3 Folly, confusion and intellectual blindness

In Section 5, I also discussed wisdom, understanding, and insight. Their opposite vices are folly, confusion, and intellectual blindness, respectively. Folly has long been viewed a vice. For example, the Old Testament book of Proverbs is replete with admonitions to seek wisdom and avoid folly. The wise person is praised, but the foolish person is chided. The wise are referred to as thoughtful[117], while the foolish person is deceived[118] and lacking in judgment.[119] In the New Testament, the wise person understands reality, acts morally, and stands strong in difficult times, while the foolish person collapses under the weight of worldly pressure.[120] In terms of confusion and intellectual blindness, the New Testament uses the Greek words *asunetos* and *tuphlos*, respectively. The former refers to lack of understanding, comprehension, or reason; i.e., an inability to reason, put things together, and understand.[121] The latter refers to mental blindness.[122] If these flaws are explained by wilfulness, then they are plausibly categorised as intellectual vices.

6.6.4 Lack of conscience

Lastly, in Chapter 5, I addressed the good of conscience. Psychologists hold that lack of conscience (in the senses remorse and moral awareness) is a sign of psychopathy. According to psychologists Robert D. Hare, Craig S. Neumann and Thomas A. Widiger (2012:478), psychopathy is the disposition to charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly exploit people without conscience or regret. Psychopathy and other personality disorders are intellectual or mental evils in the sense of being very bad. If psychopathy is not freely chosen, it is hard to refer to it as a "vice", strictly speaking, although it may be a case of natural badness if caused by a brain disorder. However, if lack of conscience becomes a habit as a result of being freely cultivated, such a pathological condition might be referred to as a vice. This vice can have horrendous consequences in the interpersonal realm. I turn to that topic in the next section.

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[117] See Proverbs 14:8.
[118] Ibid.
[119] See Proverbs 15:21.
[120] See Matthew 7:24-27.
[121] See Matthew 15:16.
[122] See Matthew 15:14.

6.7 Interpersonal/relational evil

In Section 5.6, I addressed the goods of interpersonal relationship by emphasising friendship. I discussed Aristotle's view of friendship, and I used his position as a representation of good personal relations in general. I focused my discussion on a passage from Book 8 of the Nicomachean Ethics, which emphasises the noble nature of friendship. In the passage, Aristotle associates friendship with virtue, flourishing, beneficence, and justice. I also examined Aristotle's distinction between friendships of utility, of pleasure, and between the virtuous. In short, Aristotle held that friendship is a significant good of human life. Few would disagree.

6.7.1 Enmity

The evil that is morally opposed to friendship is the relation of being enemies, or the state of standing in a relation of hostility. Thus, we can say that the fact that the world contains persons (and groups of persons) who are hostile toward one another is a significant interpersonal evil. Insofar as friendship of virtue, which is the highest form of friendship, is based on benevolent love, the enemy relation is based on hate, malevolence, or animosity between persons. Few would disagree that hatred and its exemplification in relationships between enemies is a great evil in human life. Instead of elaborating on the evil of enmity here, I will address it in Section 6.8 with respect to cultural evil.

6.8 Existential evil: meaninglessness

In Section 5.8, I addressed the tripartite conception of human meaning: significance, value, and purpose. These three things make human life worth living; their absence seems to make human life absurd and worthless. This absurdness is captured in the worldview of nihilism, which is the view that human life is meaningless insofar as it is objectively insignificant, valueless, and purposeless. The following passage from Shakespeare's (1606) *Macbeth* aptly characterises the nihilistic worldview:

> **Seyton**: The queen, my lord, is dead.
> **Macbeth**: She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Here, Macbeth denies the tripartite meaning of human life as significant, purposeful, and valuable. For Macbeth, despite our "strutting and fretting", human life in fact: (i) "signifies nothing"; (ii) is an incoherent, unintelligible, purposeless "tale told by an idiot"; and (iii) is a "petty" and thus valueless series of events, an empty "walking shadow" which ends in permanent death. Is Macbeth's analysis of human life correct? To address this question, the worldview of nihilism needs to be discussed.

According to Moreland (1987:115), nihilism is the view that human existence is totally and irremediably meaningless, and that nothing has objective value. For Alan Pratt (2020), nihilism is the view that all values are objectively baseless; there is only subjective value. James Tartaglia (2016:36) holds that nihilism refers not only to human life, but to reality *in toto* and therefore "the meaninglessness of human life is just a microcosm of the meaninglessness of all reality". Tartaglia goes beyond a mere definition of nihilism: like Sartre, he is a nihilist, believing that nihilism is "just a fact" (Tartaglia, 2016:19) and thus that there is no objective point to human life (2016:21).

One can appeal to several factors to justify nihilism: that there is no God to give human life meaning[123], that the passage of time (according to the A-theory of time) and the permanence of human death ensure meaninglessness[124], that a naturalistic worldview makes life

[123] See purpose theory as addressed by Metz (2013) in "Could God's Purpose be the Source of Life's Meaning" and by Crozat (2018). See also Craig (2013). In addition, see Moreland (1987) and Nietzsche's Parable of the Madman in *The Joyful Science*.
[124] See Schopenhauer's *On the Vanity of Existence* (2004) and Craig's *The Absurdity of Life Without God* (2012).

meaningless[125], and that the absence of intelligibility, value, and purpose makes life meaningless. Each of these points will be addressed in order.

First, one might argue that if there is no God to give human life meaning, then human life is objectively meaningless. It might be noted here that theists such as Craig and Moreland and atheists such as Nietzsche and Sartre can plausibly be classified as purpose theorists who accept this proposition. Each seems to hold that an objective meaning of human life requires a God who gives purpose to human existence. Theistic purpose theorists would argue via *modus ponens* that if human life is objectively meaningful, then there is a God to give human life a purpose. Human life is objectively meaningful. Thus, there is a God to given human life a purpose. Atheistic purpose theorists would adjust the argument via *modus tollens*: if human life is objectively meaningful, then there is a God to give human life a purpose. But there is no God, and therefore human life is objectively meaningless (i.e., nihilism is true).

Sartre's articulation of PT proceeds according to something like the latter argument. For Sartre, there are two kinds of existentialists: Christian theists, such as Gabriel Marcel, and atheists, such as Sartre. Sartre introduces existentialism via an analogy. Consider an object such as a paper-cutter. It was made by an artisan who created according to the concept "paper-cutter". The result of the artisan's creative act is an actual paper-cutter, possessing the features of sharpness and sturdiness, which has an essence and exists according to the purpose of the artisan. The essence of the paper-cutter precedes its existence and gives it objective meaning, purpose, and value. When human beings think of God, we conceive of him as a superior artisan. He creates human beings based on his concept of "human", like the artisan who creates the paper-cutter. Thus, if there is a God, then for human beings, essence precedes existence; all human beings are created with and share the same nature, value, and general purpose. This purpose provides human life with objective meaning. However, for atheists such as Sartre, there is no God to conceive of human nature and the purpose of human life. Thus, human life has no objective purpose or meaning (i.e., nihilism is true). Human beings are nothing else but what they

[125] See Tolstoy's *A Confession* (2020).

make of themselves. Human meaning is subjectively constructed. Existence precedes essence (Sartre, 1987:13-15).

Moreland (1987:115) makes the same basic point: "First, some nihilists argue that, since God is dead (i.e., since the concept of God can no longer be believed and no longer holds sway for modern men), then life is absurd, and values do not exist." Tartaglia seems to be something of a purpose theorist as well. He holds that if human life is meaningful, it must have a purpose or overarching telos. Since it lacks such a telos, it is meaningless (Tartaglia, 2016:Ch.1).

Second, one might assert that the passage of time and the permanence of human death ensure meaninglessness. According to Schopenhauer (2004, 2012:227):

> "The vanity of existence is revealed in the whole form existence assumes: in the infiniteness of time and space contrasted with the finiteness of the individual in both; in the fleeting present as the sole form in which actuality exists; in the contingency and relativity of all things; in continual becoming without being; in continual desire without satisfaction; in the continual frustration of striving of which life consists. *Time* and that *perishability* of all things existing in time that time itself brings about is simply the form under which the will to live, … reveals to itself the vanity of its striving. Time is that by virtue of which everything becomes nothingness in our hands and loses all real value."[126]

William Lane Craig (2012:159) presents a similar view. If atheism is true, he writes, then the consequence is that:

> "[M]an and the universe are doomed. Like prisoners condemned to death, we await our unavoidable execution. There is no God, and there is no immortality. And what is the

[126] See also *On the Vanity of Existence* in Seachris (2012:227). This quotation from Schopenhauer raises a key difference between nihilism and pessimism. Nihilism is the view that there exists no objective meaning, purpose, or value whatsoever. Pessimism is the view that human life (or perhaps the world itself) is objectively bad, i.e., that it would be objectively better were humans (or the world itself) not to exist. Pessimism presupposes the existence of objective value, whereas nihilism denies objective value. Nihilism rules out pessimism. Schopenhauer's system seems to contain an inconsistency insofar as he is a pessimist who, in some areas of his *oeuvre*, seems to use nihilistic language. For Schopenhauer, human life is objectively bad, a business which does not cover its costs. But the world is also meaningless and valueless. These two claims seem incompatible; Schopenhauer seems to say that it is objectively bad that the world contains no objective value. I will return to this point in Chapter 7.

> consequence of this? It means that life itself is absurd. It means that the life we have is without significance, value, or purpose … Mankind is a doomed race in a dying universe. Because the human race will eventually cease to exist, it makes no ultimate difference whether it ever did exist. Mankind is thus no more significant than a swarm of mosquitoes or a barnyard of pigs, for their end is all the same. The same cosmic process which coughed them up in the first place will eventually swallow them again."

Third, one might hold that a naturalistic worldview makes life meaningless, as Tolstoy (2012:383) suggests: "When I turned to the study of science the result was the same. 'What is the meaning of my life?' "There is none."[127]

Moreland (1987:118) makes a similar point:

> "A second reason for nihilism is the view that science has shown that life is meaningless. Science allegedly shows that the cosmos is just a brute given, that final causes or movements toward goals are not a part of the natural world, that man is the product of blind evolutionary forces, that he is a biochemical animal who does not survive the grave and who must struggle for survival during his brief stay on a small planet in a spatially and temporally immense universe which is silent an uncaring."

Biologist Richard Dawkins (1995:133) concurs with the points from Tolstoy and Moreland: "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference. As that unhappy poet A.E. Housman put it: For Nature, heartless, witless Nature, Will neither know nor care."

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[127] Tolstoy (2020) elaborates on this meaninglessness as follows: "I fared no better with the more exact sciences. 'What is the meaning of my life?' The biologist answers: 'You are what you call your 'life'; you are a transitory, causal cohesion of particles. The mutual interactions and changes of these particles produce in you what you call your 'life'. That cohesion will last some time; afterward the interaction of these particles will cease and what you call 'life' will cease, and so will all your questions. You are an accidentally united little lump of energy. That little lump undergoes decomposition, which we call 'life'; the lump disintegrates, decomposition ends, and with it all the questions.' "

Fourth, one might hold that the absence of intelligibility, value, and purpose makes life meaningless. This point is articulated poetically by Shakespeare, as we have noted, and philosophically by Seachris (2019).

It should be underscored here that, if nihilism is true, then there are no objective values and thus no objective good or evil. Hence, if nihilism is true, the absence of meaning, value, and purpose would not be objectively evil. For this reason, if true, it would be incoherent to classify nihilism as an objective existential evil. However, if nihilism is false and hence there are objective values, then it would seem that the *belief* in nihilism is plausibly classified as an existential evil, or perhaps as an intellectual evil, insofar as a nihilist would reject the very things (i.e., meaning, value, and purpose) which make life worth living. This is a significant topic of analytic existentialism that I will revisit in Chapter 7.

6.9 Cultural evil

In Chapter 5, I addressed the goods of higher culture, such as civilization, leisure, the arts, the sciences, philosophy, and the like. In this section, I will address the evils of culture. I will examine cultural evils by focusing on four examples. Each can also be construed as moral and interpersonal evils.

6.9.1 Territorial theft

First, consider the seizure of land by one nation from another nation. In *Mein Kampf* (1925), Adolph Hitler discussed the idea of *lebensraum* (living space). He claimed that the German people required additional living space to thrive as a people. This idea was adopted by the Nazi leadership in Germany and became a driving ideological force behind the September 1939 invasion of Poland – which itself involved the evils of violating the agreement at the 1938 Munich Conference and unjustly starting World War II – and the German invasions of France in May of 1940 and of the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa) in June of 1941.

According to the theory of just war, a morally justified war has several necessary conditions. If a war is morally justified[128], then it must meet certain criteria. If it does not meet them, then it is not just. The theory deals with three important elements of war: (1) the moral right to go to war (Latin: *jus ad bellum*), (2) morally permissible conduct during war (*jus in bello*), and (3) the morally right way to end a war (*jus post bellum*). The first element concerns the morality of going to war, the second is about moral conduct in war, and the third concerns the morality of ending and addressing the consequences of a war.

Just war theorists have suggested several necessary conditions for a just war, such as the principle of distinction, the principle of last resort, and the probability of success principle. However, the following three principles are considered essential to the theory. First, the proper authority principle holds that war can be justly waged only by a legitimate and morally responsible state. Second, according to the just cause (or just reason) principle, the war must occur for a good reason and not for bad reasons such as state-gain, terrorism, or as a mere exercise of state power. Third, according to the right intention principle, peace must always be a central intention, even during battle. All fighting must be for the sake of eventual peace, which involves setting aright any wrongs which have been done. Fighting cannot occur merely for the sake of violence, terror, or extension of power or territory.

The Nazi policy of *lebensraum* and the related invasions in Europe were violations of the just cause and right intention principles, and hence according to the just war tradition were unjust or evil. These invasions can be viewed as examples of moral evil, interpersonal evil, and cultural evil, insofar as they were primary causes of World War II, which had a profoundly negative effect on European culture and on millions of people during the 20th Century.[129]

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[128] Nathan L. Cartagena (2020) provides a helpful definition of "war": the term refers to (1) armed conflict between two or more societies; (2) a practice under human control; (3) a constantly changing mode of human interaction; and (4) a source of varied degrees of brutality and dehumanizing effects. It should be recognised here that, although the tradition of just war theory has been influential since at least the time of Cicero, there is a robust tradition of pacificism which holds that war is never justified, i.e., that there is no such thing as a just war.

[129] One might argue that World War II began earlier, perhaps with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. The massacre in Nanking would be another example of cultural evil.

6.9.2 Terrorism

The second example of cultural evil is terrorism. As noted above, Bartlett includes terrorism on his list of pathological evils. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020), although the international community has not adopted a comprehensive definition of the term "terrorism", the term

> "is commonly understood to refer to acts of violence that target civilians in the pursuit of political or ideological aims … such acts "are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them".

Terrorism, according to the UN, is not merely unjustified, but is *unjustifiable*. It cannot be justified. For this dissertation, we can think of terrorism as both a moral evil and a cultural evil, given its widespread effects in contemporary culture, as demonstrated by the terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent international war against terrorism.

Terrorism also violates the just war theory. Specifically, it violates the principle distinction, according to which acts of war should be directed towards enemy combatants only, and not towards non-combatants or civilians. Insofar as terrorist attacks are perpetrated by non-state actors, terrorism also violates the proper authority principle. As such, like the Nazi policy of *lebensraum* and the invasions in Europe before and during World War II, terrorism is a cultural evil. It is also reasonably viewed as a moral evil and an interpersonal evil.

6.9.3 Genocide

The third example of cultural evil is genocide. According to the UN *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (2020), genocide is

> "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group".

Human history is marred by attempts at genocide. Examples during the last 100 years include the genocide against the Armenian Christians by the Ottoman government in Turkey between 1914 and 1923, and the genocide of the Tutsi people (a subgroup of the Barundi ethnic group) by the Hutu people (a subgroup of the Bantu ethnic group) which occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Each case of genocide is said to have resulted in over one million deaths. The scope of genocide demonstrates that it is a horrendous example of moral, interpersonal, and cultural evil.

6.9.4 Slavery

The fourth example of cultural evil is slavery. According to the UN, the practice of slavery is universally accepted as a crime against humanity. The League of Nations Slavery Convention of 1926 defined slavery as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”. The UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery of 1956 (2020) expanded on the 1926 Convention by abolishing debt bondage, serfdom, forced child labour, and other practices. According to the UN (2020), illicit ownership and restricted freedom are the common themes existing in all the conventions concerning the abolition of slavery and slavery-like practices. The UN document addresses several forms slavery, such as serfdom, debt bondage, apartheid, the trafficking of children and women, prostitution, and forced marriage.

Slavery in one form or another has been practiced throughout human history in places such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, Rome, Greece, and Sub-Saharan Africa. The enslavement of ethnic Africans in Britain, France, Brazil, the U.S., and elsewhere is an egregious example of what the UN has called “a crime against humanity”. For example, the slavery practiced in the antebellum U.S., in Jamaica, and in Brazil were legally institutionalised forms of brutal chattel enslavement.

According to antislavery.org (2020), an estimate 40 million people worldwide are currently enslaved in forced labour, prostitution, and organised crime. 25% of these people are children, and 71% of them are female. Like genocide, slavery is a horrendous example of moral, interpersonal, and cultural evil. It is an unjustified and unjustifiable act that violates personal autonomy and other basic goods of human life.

6.10 Aesthetic evil

In Chapter 5, I addressed aesthetic goods such beauty, art, and aesthetic judgment. In this section, I will cover aesthetic disvalues such as ugliness. It seems improper to refer to ugliness as "evil". However, certain forms of intentional destruction of art are a form of aesthetic disvalue which is plausibly categorised as aesthetic evil.[130] In this section I will also discuss the intentional destruction of art.

6.10.1 Ugliness

According to philosopher Mary Devereaux (2020), aesthetic ugliness is "largely neglected" by aestheticians because human beings are uneasy with the idea of ugliness. Devereaux holds that we avoid speaking of ugliness because humans do not want to think of themselves as ugly, and we do not want others to think of us as ugly. She claims that being considered ugly is thought to be cruel and undemocratic, that ugliness is associated with physical aging and death, and that ugliness is associated with unhappiness. Each of these reasons for avoiding the topic of ugliness are associated with badness, especially with some attribute considered bad for humans. However, Devereaux argues that aesthetic ugliness should be studied by philosophers because it is a legitimate topic of philosophical examination, and because it is a topic relevant to art rather than merely to the appearance of specific human beings.

Despite the supposed "large neglect" noted by Devereaux, a few philosophers have addressed the topic of ugliness. The German philosopher Karl Rosenkranz (2015, 1853) argued that ugliness is the negation of beauty, which is similar but not reducible to moral evil. Stephen Pepper (1960:275), as quoted by Stolnitz, disagrees, claiming that ugliness is a moral concept: "Ugliness is moral disapproval of the absence of aesthetic value in a situation. It is an ethical rather than an aesthetic evaluation." Jerome Stolnitz (1960:278) took a different approach to ugliness by identifying two senses of the ugly, namely nonaesthetic and aesthetic: "Ugliness in one sense was said to be wholly nonaesthetic. In another sense, it was said to be a category of aesthetic value … Let us define 'ugliness' in the latter sense as 'that, the aesthetic contemplation of which arouses displeasure or pain'." Charles Nussbaum (2003) has argued that the principle

[130] This might also be reasonably classified as a cultural evil.

of plenitude (i.e., the metaphysical principle which holds that evil in the world is a necessary ingredient in the world's overall perfection or fullness of reality) is an aesthetically motivated idea, that it can explain the existence of evil, and that only in art and religion can evil be adequately explained.

6.10.2 The Intentional destruction of art

Arguably, the intentional destruction of art which is not intended for destruction is an aesthetic bad or evil.[131] The intentional destruction of art has occurred since at least the time of the ancient Greeks. Many historians believe that ancient sculptures such as *Laocoön and His Sons* and *Venus de Milo* may have been vandalised. According to Tasos Kokkinidis (2020) vandalism of ancient Greek art has occurred more recently as well. The intentional destruction of art occurred during the Protestant Reformation, the Revolutions in France, Russia, and China, the Nazi period in Germany, and in Afghanistan by the Taliban.

This sort of vandalism is morally controversial. Many would view it as morally impermissible, even if occurring during otherwise morally permissible protests. According to Rodney Harrison (2013:187), the world was outraged at the decision to destroy the Bamiyan statues of Buddha, which had been sculpted from the sandstone cliffs in the Bamiyan Valley sometime between the 3rd and 6th Centuries A.D. Moreover, the protection of art objects is advocated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The mission of UNESCO includes the preservation of 1073 World Heritage sites in 167 countries.

Moreover, Article 27 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds that "(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author." And Article 28 states that "Everyone is entitled to a social and international

[131] Perhaps some art is intended for eventual destruction, such as chalk sketches on a wall or street, created during a chalk art festival, and intended to last only for a short time, after which the chalk sketches will be washed away. In such situations, the untimely destruction of art (e.g., to destroy a work of chalk art before it is intended to be removed) is an aesthetic evil.

order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized."[132] Plausibly, these articles entail that the intentional destruction of art is a violation of human rights and thus morally wrong.

One might articulate something like the following argument for the conclusion that the destruction of art is morally wrong: (a) it is always morally wrong intentionally to destroy that which has intrinsic value; (b) all art objects that were not designed to be destroyed have intrinsic value; therefore, (c) it is always morally wrong intentionally to destroy art objects not designed to be destroyed. This argument is deductively valid, which means that if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true. To reject this argument, one would need to reject either (a) or (b). One might object that (a) is false because there are reasons to justify the intentional destruction of art objects. Alternatively, one might argue that (b) is false because some art objects lack intrinsic value, that all art objects lack intrinsic value, or that there is no such thing as intrinsic value.

Below, I address the topic of intrinsic value as it relates to evil.

6.11 Intrinsic value, extrinsic value, and evil

In Chapter 5, I provided a working definition of "intrinsic value". Something has intrinsic value if it is good in itself, or for its own sake. I also noted that several of the goods addressed in Chapter 5 are intrinsically valuable, such as persons, knowledge, and happiness. In addition, I noted that some goods are reasonably construed as both instrumental and intrinsic. In this section, I will investigate how the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic (instrumental) value relates to evil. I will limit my discussion here to the topic of moral evil. The discussion will be brief, given what I have already said in Chapter 5 with respect to intrinsic and extrinsic goods.

Moral evil of the sort that Kekes defined seems to be intrinsically evil, even if also of an instrumental nature. For example, if a murderer commits murder, that act is intrinsically evil. However, if he commits murder for the sake of eliminating a political rival, then the act is also instrumentally evil.

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[132] See the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In contrast, some things are instrumentally good or evil, but not intrinsically so. For example, Paul Acorn (2008:73) characterises technology as "that whole collection of methodology and artificial constructs created by human beings to increase their probability of survival by increasing their control over the environment in which they operate". In short, technology is applied science aimed at controlling nature in order to make human life longer, easier, or less likely to succumb to death or disease. Technology *per se* is a tool which can be used to good or bad ends. According to Neil Postman (1993), the adoption of a new technology has advantages and disadvantages. These benefits and drawbacks ought to be considered as part of a careful deliberation regarding whether to adopt the technology, lest we find that we have allowed ourselves to become dominated by technology in an undesirable society which Postman called a technopoly. Tim Healy (2008) notes that some of the consequences of adopting a technology are desired, others undesired, and some anticipated, others unanticipated. However, technology is not intrinsically evil, even if a society becomes dependent upon technology and surrenders itself to rule by technology and technocrats. Arguably, this would be to succumb to a kind of cultural evil, as Postman argued.

Nuclear energy can be harnessed as a technology which can be used for peaceful purposes (say, to provide power for a community) or for violent purposes (e.g., nuclear weapons). A laptop computer can be used for education or for illegal computer hacking. A medicine can be used to alleviate pain or to take a life. A camera can be used for the art of photography, or for the evil of invasion of privacy. In any case, as Johnson and Powers (2012:152) suggest, technology has not been a prominent focus in moral philosophy. Nevertheless, it "shapes the human moral universe in significant ways". A philosophical focus on technology, they say, "opens up a range of interesting, complex, and important philosophical issues".

The philosophy of technology is a relatively young and undeveloped branch of philosophy which I will not investigate further here. I address technology in brief here as an example of something which can be used instrumentally as a value-bearer for good or for evil. I next turn to the topic of value-bearers for evil.

6.12 The bearers of evil

What are the bearers of evil? Like goodness, evil is a value (or, we might call it a negative value or disvalue). Thus, whatever bears evil bears negative value with respect to its evil. It follows that

bearers of evil are value are value-bearers (or bearers of negative value). As noted in Chapter 2, a value-bearer is something which possesses worth, either intrinsically or extrinsically. Value-bearers are thought by philosophers to be either substances or states of affairs or both. The bearers of evil would thus be the substances and/or states of affairs associated with the emotional, moral, interpersonal, cultural and other kinds of evils addressed in this chapter. This point will be important to consider in arguments I provide in Chapter 7.

6.13 The extent of evil

As with the extent and distribution of goodness, the extent and distribution of evil depends on whether value monism (VM) or value pluralism (VP) is true. If VM is true, such as a hedonistic version of VM, then the extent and distribution of evil is limited to instances of pain or the absence of pleasure. However, as we have noted, most philosophers are value pluralists. According to VP, the extent and distribution of evil involves instances of various types of evil, such as the kinds we have addressed in this chapter. Given what I have already said about the extent and distribution of goodness, I will abstain from further investigation into these matters here. I will return to questions about the extent and distribution of evil in Chapter 7.

6.14 Gradations of evil

Are there gradations of evil? I.e., can some value-bearers be better, equal to, or worse than others? If so, what are these gradations? This question also depends on whether VM or VP is true, and if VP is the case, whether values are comparable. I have addressed these questions in Chapter 5, in case the reader would like to review them there. In sum, if a hedonistic version of VM is the case, then it is plausible to hold that some things can be worse (i.e., can possess more pain) than other things. After all, if pleasure is the only type of intrinsic good and pain the only type of intrinsic evil, and if some things are less pleasing (or more painful) than others, then some things are worse than others. But if VP is the case, the matter seems more complex. As noted in Chapter 5, axiologists debate whether, on VP, it is possible to compare values. If values and disvalues are not comparable, then it becomes less plausible to say that some things are worse than others from an objective axiological perspective. I will return to this issue in Chapter 7, where it will become important with respect to one of my arguments against the PAE.

6.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed various kinds of evil, including moral, intellectual, cultural, and interpersonal. I also addressed the extent of evil and the question of whether evil comes in degrees. These topics will be relevant to arguments I give in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: The problem of goodness for the problem of evil

7.1 Introduction

In this section, I provide a cumulative axiological case against the PAE, thereby weakening the epistemic probability of its conclusion.[133] First, I present a set of abductive arguments which appeal to goods addressed in Chapter 5 and which are intended to show that the conclusion of the PAE does not explain specific goods in human life as well as theism explains them. Second, I argue that the PAE ignores several important moral and axiological issues, and that this factor undercuts the PAE. Third, I contend that the PAE includes a claim about the nexus of goods and evils in the world (including the goods and evils addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively), and that the complexity of this nexus undercuts the PAE. Along the way through Chapter 7, I will raise and reply to several objections to my arguments. One objection might occur to the reader straight away: why present so many axiological arguments against the PAE if one good argument is sufficient? I answer that it is rare for philosophers to agree on the degree of merit of a single argument. As such, I will provide several arguments which, taken together, stand as a cumulative case against the PAE. William F. Vallicella (2002:38) contends that "in philosophy it is never wholly clear whether a given argument is successful. Thus it is appropriate to consider a variety of arguments for the same conclusion. It is hoped that the various arguments illuminate one another … and that their cumulative persuasive force will be greater than that of any single argument."

James Sterba (2017:1) writes that the philosophical treatment of the PoE has been advanced to good effect via the application of modal logic and various resources from

[133] Recall from Chapter 4 that we are working with the following conception of epistemic probability: *p* is epistemically probable for S = Df S is more justified in believing *p* than in believing the negation of *p,* given *S*'s access to background information K which is evidentially supportive of *p*, and given the degree of support K provides for *p*. The PAE issues the conclusion that it is epistemically probable that there is no God. My arguments in Chapter 7 reduce the strength of this probabilistic conclusion, indicating that with respect to the axiological arguments in this chapter, it is not epistemically probable that there is no God.

metaphysics and epistemology. However, philosophers have yet to apply thoroughly the resources of ethical theory. He continues by posing the following question:

> "Could it be, then, that by bringing to bear the untapped resources of ethics on the problem of evil, there would be a similar advance in our understanding of the problem? I think that we can expect a similar advance … But I also think that this advance will be even more important than the other advances that have come from modal logic and probabilistic epistemology. This is because these other advances have really helped us more to restate the problem of evil rather than to solve it. Bringing untapped resources of ethics to bear on the problem, however, should actually help us advance toward a solution to the problem of evil. This is because the problem of evil is fundamentally an ethical, not a logical or epistemological problem." (Sterba, 2017:3.)

If the problem of evil is fundamentally an ethical problem, then it is fundamentally an axiological problem. Thus, in this chapter, I will apply certain resources from moral philosophy and axiology to argue that the PAE fails. I believe that the resources of axiology can help to advance the problem of evil in significant ways. I explore some of those ways in this chapter.

Chapter 7 builds on the previous chapters to explore whether objective goodness and objective evilness cancel each other out and render the epistemic probability of God's existence 0.5 from the perspective of axiology, or whether God's existence is more probable given both objective goodness and objective evilness, or whether God's existence is less probable given both, or whether objective goodness and evilness render the PAE indeterminate. I will select the following methods to weigh goodness against evil and to apply these methods to the PAE. First, I will select several goods and explore whether these goods are explained better by theism, thereby counting against the PAE. For example, it is plausible that objective moral rights are good. Arguably, theism provides a better explanation for objective moral rights than atheism does. Second, I will argue that advocates of the PAE operate on tacit, unexamined, and unwarranted axiological assumptions which undercut the PAE. Third, I will argue that the actual world contains a complicated nexus of goods and evils (including the possibility of goods and evils not yet actualised), that the existence of this nexus presents a difficult problem of combinatorial optimisation, and that this problem poses a significant challenge to the PAE. Arguably, this challenge renders it intractable.

By “intractable”, I mean a feature of a problem such that the complexity of the problem makes it inscrutable for human beings and thus beyond our ability to solve. As a genuine problem it is in principle soluble, but its complexity makes it insoluble by the human intellect. This is a crucial point for my argument, since it indicates that the PAE faces a difficulty of axiological intractability. To elaborate, in mathematical combinatorics[134], theorists use the term “combinatorial explosion”. This term refers to a characteristic of a problem according to which the complexity of the problem sharply increases commensurate with the exponential growth of its numerical aspects.[135] For example, if a system contains a vast number of factors such that the exponential increase of the possible combinations of factors in that system render infeasible an exhaustive search of those factors, then the system is a combinatorial explosion. Computer scientist Richard M. Karp (1986:98) describes the sharp increase by noting that a combinatorial explosion contains a vast, furiously growing number of possibilities to be searched. Such an explosion justifies the conclusion that a brute-force or exhaustive search solution regarding the combinations is intractable for human beings and for computers.[136] I claim that the world possesses something like a combinatorial explosion of axiological factors and, thus, that an accurate and reliable axiological evaluation of the world is intractable for human beings. Kant (2004:149) maintains that “We can only know a small part of the world, and still less compare it with all possible worlds.” This combinatorial difficulty weakens the PAE.

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[134] Combinatorics is a branch of mathematics which addresses various problems of counting with respect to topics such as combinations, permutations, sets, and members of a set.

[135] Gass and Harris (2001) define “combinatorial explosion” as “the phenomenon associated with optimization problems whose computational difficulty increases exponentially with the size of the problem”.

[136] According to Valerie Illingworth (1997:86), the game of chess is an example of a combinatorial explosion: “in the game of chess the number of choices at each level increases by the branching factor, which may typically multiply the options by 20 or more at each move. Although in theory it should be possible to analyse the game of chess from start to finish, the number of states to be examined is so enormous that it is completely impractical, *not only at present but for any conceivable computer in the future* [my emphasis]. (To appreciate this, consider an example: if one million game states can be examined each second and the branching factor is 10, then to analyse 6 moves ahead takes 1 second, to analyse 12 moves ahead takes 11 days, and to cover 18 moves takes nearly 32 000 years.)” Illingworth (1997:52) defines the “branching factor” of graph theory as “the average number of *branches* (successors) from a (typical) node in a [rooted] tree. It indicates the bushiness and hence the complexity of a tree”.

7.2 The best explanation for some important goods

In this section, I will present several abductive arguments (with deductive counterparts) to show that certain goods pose an axiological problem to the PAE. I will argue that the goods of consciousness, happiness (as eudaimonia and as hedonistic), free will, equality and value, and existential meaning are better explained by theism. Each of these goods is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Here, I test their abductive conduciveness.

By way of introduction, consider two brief examples. First, note the Aristotelian conception of happiness (*eudaimonia*). Arguably, theism explains *eudaimonia* better than atheism does. Moreover, if happiness has a transcendent condition – as Verhoef (2014) and McPherson (2020) argue – then theism provides the better explanation for this transcendence. As such, the good of happiness presents an axiological problem for the PAE, insofar as the PAE argues for atheism. Second, regarding the subject of human meaning, Thaddeus Metz (2013) refers to the purpose theory (PT). According to PT, objective human meaning requires a transcendent divine purpose for human life, as well as human libertarian freedom to accept or reject this purpose. PT is a plausible theory of human meaning; assuming PT, theism explains life's meaning better than atheism does (indeed, PT requires theism for life to have objective meaning). These are brief examples to offer the reader a sense of the arguments I will present Section 7.2. Below, I will begin my abductive case by examining the fact of consciousness.

7.2.1 Consciousness

In this section, I argue that the existence of consciousness is a good, and that consciousness poses an axiological problem to the PAE. In short, theism explains consciousness better than atheism does.

Arguably, consciousness is a good thing. For humans, it is good to have, bad to lose, and important to protect, maintain and develop. One of the evils of substance abuse is that it can lead to loss or harm to one's conscious life. One of the goods of education is that it refines our conscious life by expanding, deepening, and sharpening it. Moreover, philosophers have argued that consciousness is a good for human beings. Frankena (1973) includes consciousness on his list of intrinsic goods. Willard (2020) underscores the value of consciousness and its various states, such as knowledge, belief, and volition:

> "Thus the morally good will or person will necessarily incorporate the following elements at least: (a) Consciousness, the various intentional states that make up the mental life; (b) Knowledge of the various goods of human life and of their conditions and interconnections. This will include much knowledge of fact, but also logical relations, as well as the capacity to comprehend them to form hypothetical judgments and to reach conclusions on the basis of premises; (c) The capacity to form and sustain long-range, even life-long intentions. One is not a morally good person by accident or drift, but by a choice settled into character: a choice to live as a person who is intent upon advancing the various goods of human life with which they are effectively in contact, etc."

Since we ordinarily take consciousness to be a good, Chisholm's principle indicates that we are justified in believing consciousness to be good unless there is a sufficient argument otherwise.[137]

Why does the good of consciousness pose a problem to the PAE? To start, note that the PAE defender argues that suffering is more probable on atheism than on theism. To put the point abductively: atheism explains the suffering we find in the world better than theism does. Notice that the existence of suffering presupposes the existence of consciousness, since states of pain and suffering are themselves states of consciousness (i.e., mental states), as is widely recognised by philosophers of mind. However, as Moreland has argued, atheism does not adequately explain the existence of consciousness. Theism, however, explains the existence of consciousness, since God is a conscious being with the power to create beings of finite consciousness. Moreland (2014:74) writes: "I believe that the existence of God is the best explanation for finite examples of consciousness in creatures such as humans and various animals. Finite consciousness provides strong evidence that God exists. In my view, scientific naturalism is utterly incapable in principle of providing any explanation whatever for finite consciousness." Even atheists such as Colin McGinn (1999:13-14) and Thomas Nagel (2012) agree that the naturalistic form of atheism seems unable to explain the existence of consciousness.

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[137] Recall that, according to Chisholm's principle, one is rationally justified to believe what we commonly presuppose in ordinary human life unless a sufficient argument demonstrates that the presupposition is false. The burden of proof is on the one who would deny such ordinary presuppositions.

However, God is a conscious agent who is a necessary being. If God exists, consciousness is fundamental to ultimate reality and necessarily so. Hence, theism explains the existence of consciousness, so long as there are plausible arguments for theism.[138] Moreland (2009:17) remarks:

> "If you begin with matter and simply rearrange it according to physical laws by means of strictly physical causes and processes, then you will end up with increasingly different arrangements of – you guessed it – matter. Start with matter and tweak it physically and all you will get is tweaked matter … There is no need or room for mind and consciousness to enter the picture. However, if you begin with the Logos, the Mind is the fundamental reality and its appearance in cosmic history is not an ontological problem as it for the scientific naturalist."

Applying this point to the PAE, we can conclude that since theism is a better explanation of consciousness than atheism is, and suffering is a form of consciousness, then it seems theism explains suffering (insofar as it is a state of consciousness) better than atheism does. Thus, suffering does not count against theism. Rather, suffering, as a state of consciousness, counts for theism.[139]

Furthermore, Moreland (2009:22-23) articulates and defends what he calls the Argument from Consciousness (AC). The AC can be presented abductively or deductively. As noted above,

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[138] And there are. See Walls and Dougherty (2018) and Craig and Moreland (2012) for dozens of rigorous arguments for theism by leading contemporary philosophers.

[139] It should be noted here that this argument addresses suffering. However, some forms of evil do not involve suffering. For example, suppose Jones considers murdering Smith and even chooses to do so, yet does not carry out the murder and does not experience any qualms about his intention. In this case, arguably, no one suffers. Yet there is evil. Thus, not all evil involves suffering. As such, this argument counts against versions of the PAE which hold that atheism explains suffering better that theism does. In other words, the argument shows that the existence of consciousness increases the epistemic probability that God exists and, as such, decreases the probability of the conclusion of the PAE. Versions of the PAE which address forms of evil that do not involve suffering are not vulnerable to this argument.

the abductive argument holds that theism is the best explanation for the existence of consciousness. As a deductive argument, Moreland provides the following:

1. Genuinely non-physical mental states exist.
2. There is an explanation for the existence of mental states.
3. Personal explanation is different from natural scientific explanation.
4. The explanation for the existence of mental states is either a personal or natural scientific explanation.
5. The explanation is not a natural scientific one.
6. Therefore, the explanation is a personal one.
7. If the explanation is personal, then it is theistic.
8. Therefore, the explanation is theistic.

Since this is a deductive argument, the conclusion is true (or more plausible than its negation) if the premises are true (or more plausible than their negations). Virtually everyone accepts (1). Few would deny that there are genuine mental states such as thought, belief, desire, and so on. Daniel Dennett (1991) and Alex Rosenburg (2012) have ventured to deny the existence of consciousness and mental states, but their denials appear to be self-refuting. Indeed, according to Galen Strawson (2018), the denial of consciousness is “the silliest claim ever made”. In any case, Moreland (2009:23) does not defend (1), taking it to be obvious and requiring no direct defence. He is of the opinion that “Premises (2), (4), and (5) are the ones most likely to come under attack” (2009:23) and that a defence of (4) and (5) will serve as an adequate if indirect defence of (1) (Moreland, 2009:24).

For (3), Moreland (2009:23) notes that personal explanations are matters of agent causation in which the intentions and powers of a rational agent explain the cause of a state of affairs. For example, the decreased temperature in Jones’s living room is explained by the fact that Jones was hot during a mid-summer’s day in Florida, that he desired a cooler living space, and therefore that he decided to adjust his thermostat to bring about a decrease in temperature in the space. In contrast, causal explanations are matters of event causation such that a physical event is explained in terms of a relevant law of nature and a set of initial causal conditions. For instance, the event of a forest fire is caused by a lightning strike and other initial causal conditions combined with one or more relevant natural laws sufficient to bring about a blaze.

Moreland defends (5) by articulating the following reasons. First, given the uniformity of nature, if the world had originated as nothing but a system of physical particles standing in fields of force relative to one another, then there would be no explanation for the origin of consciousness in an otherwise materialistic universe; for, as Moreland (2009:24) notes, the emergence of consciousness would be a case of getting something from nothing. Rescher (2013:174) also emphasises that *ex nihilo nihil fit* is a fundamental principle of philosophical method, the violation of which indicates poor philosophical form. Second, the existence of mental states and their regular and consistent correlation with brain states are inexplicable from the perspective of atheistic naturalism. Thus, it is question-begging merely to assert that mental states and their regular correlations with certain brain states is a natural fact. The contingent fact that the existence of consciousness and its precise correlation with matter fits nicely with a theistic explanation that takes God's creative action to have been a contingent divine choice (Moreland, 2009:25). Third, atheistic naturalism is committed to the claim that, in principle, evolutionary explanations can be proffered for the appearance of all organisms and their parts. However Moreland (2009:27) expresses the opinion that "the sheer existence of conscious states and the precise mental content that constitutes them is outside the pale of evolutionary explanation" – atheist Thomas Nagel (2012) made the same claim. Rescher (2013:173) notes that philosophers ought to maintain nothing substantive without good reason, and should be prepared to support their contentions; but it seems that atheistic naturalism is simply unable to support its contention in this respect.

According to Moreland, the reasons to support (5) have motivated atheistic naturalists to assert that a commitment to naturalism requires the rejection of the existence of consciousness as a something other than a wholly materialistic phenomenon. Moreland (2009:27) quotes Paul Churchland:

> "The important point about the standard evolutionary story is that the human species and all of its features are the wholly physical outcome of a purely physical process … If this is the correct account of our origins, then there seems neither the need, nor room, to fit any

> nonphysical substances or properties into our theoretical account of ourselves. We are creatures of matter. And we should learn to live with this fact."[140]

For (2), Moreland (2009:24) notes that the existence of mental entities and their consistent correlation with physical entities are puzzling phenomena that require an explanation. As Rescher (2013:173) indicates, the principle of sufficient reason (PSR) is a fundamental rule for philosophising. We should explain and defend our (non-obvious) philosophical claims. Since human beings use personal explanations on an ordinary basis, this form of explanation is available to account for consciousness. Given the failure of atheistic naturalism to explain consciousness, the personal form of explanation removes our puzzlement regarding the existence of consciousness (Moreland, 2009:24).

Moreland (2009:37) defends (4) via his responses to objections to the AC and he also addresses Colin McGinn and pansychism respectively. McGinn, an atheistic naturalist, agrees that his naturalism cannot explain the existence of consciousness. However, rather than give up belief in consciousness or reject naturalism, McGinn makes a mysterian move. He claims (seemingly by faith) that naturalism is true. He also admits what appears to be obvious: that consciousness exists. And he asserts that there must be materialistic properties that explain consciousness despite the fact that human beings cannot discover them. According to McGinn, evolution did not equip human beings with the ability to know these properties; hence, they are beyond our ken. Consciousness therefore is and will forever remain a mystery to human beings.

Moreland (2009:37-38) claims that McGinn's argument fails for three reasons: first, McGinn's agnosticism about these apparently mysterious properties is inconsistent with his claims to describe them. For example, he claims that they are naturalistic, non-sensory, pre-spatial or mysteriously spatial, and that they underlie all matter. How can he know these propositions if the subject matter of the propositions is beyond the human ability to know? Second, according to Moreland, McGinn's version of naturalism is naturalism in name only. The mysterious entities that McGinn cites do not fit into the naturalistic ontology. Hence, plausibly, his view is *ad hoc* and fundamentally non-naturalistic. Third, Moreland argues that McGinn does not solve the problem

[140] Moreland (2009:27) from Churchland (1984:21).

of consciousness, but merely relocates it (in an *ad hoc* manner) to an unknowable realm, thereby creating a new and unsolvable problem instead of providing a solution to the original problem. This move is similar to the political debater who cannot answer a challenge to his position, so he changes the subject. Moreover, McGinn fails to meet two of Rescher's principles of philosophising: never explain what is obscure by appealing to something even more obscure, and never multiply entities beyond necessity (Rescher, 2006:176-177). McGinn tries to explain consciousness by appealing to an obscure, unknowable, and unverifiable realm of mysterious entities. Arguably, these entities are unnecessary, given the availability of the sort of personal explanation Moreland provides.

Panpsychism is the view that all matter possesses some degree of consciousness. A panpsychist might object to the AC by denying (4). There is a third option, says the panpsychist, and that option is a panpsychist explanation. Moreland (2009:38-40) responds by noting that panpsychism is implausible for several reasons, of which I will note only two. First, there is no evidence that regular matter possesses awareness. Second, if conscious beings are merely combinations of little bits of consciousness, there is no explanation for the unity of consciousness in persons. In addition, there is no explanation for the fact that human persons lack memory or other forms of awareness concerning the conscious careers of the bits of matter that make up the human bodies of those persons.

Moreland deals with another objection to AC. This one comes from John Searle's biological naturalism. According to Searle, mental states are non-physical, as dualists hold. So Searle accept the first premise of the AC. However, for Searle, mental states are merely emergent properties that supervene upon the biological states and processes of a properly functioning brain. Biologically situated brain processes cause mental processes, like human biology causes the human digestive process. If Searle is correct, then one can reject (5) of the AC.

Moreland (2009:34-35), however, does not believe that Searle is correct. First, he questions Searle's analogy between biological emergence (such as digestion) and consciousness as emergence. The former is easy to explain given the epistemology and ontology of atheistic naturalism. The latter is not. The phenomenon of consciousness raises legitimate questions about its suspected immaterial nature. The phenomenon of digestion does not raise this bevy of questions. Second, just as the emergence of genuinely new properties in macro-objects that were not present in micro-objects (e.g., secondary properties such as felt warmth and colour construed

as a quality) presents problems for atheistic naturalism, so also consciousness presents such problems. How do we get the genesis of secondary qualities (e.g., warmth, consciousness) by merely re-arranging purely physical entities bereft of these secondary qualities? Is this not a matter of getting something from nothing, a form of ontological magic ruled out by Rescher's principle of philosophising, namely, that *ex nihilo nihil fit*? Indeed, as Moreland notes (2009:35), the emergence of mental properties is more like the emergence of normative moral properties than like biological properties such as digestion. Here, Moreland (2009:35) cites the atheist Mackie, who claims that moral properties are so odd that they are very unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary world without a God to create them.[141]

Third, Searle's account works as a description of the physical mechanics of consciousness, not an explanation of its existence. (Moreland, 2009:35) Searle provides a naturalistic description of the mechanics of how consciousness supposedly works. However, he does not explain its existence. Here, one is reminded of Socrates's evaluation of Anaxagoras's ideas about mind. Socrates was initially interested in Anaxagoras's claim to understand the role of mind in the world. However, after reading Anaxagoras, Socrates was disappointed that Anaxagoras did not explain mind, but only discussed "air and ether and water and other absurdities".[142] For Socrates, this naturalistic account of mind was like trying to explain Socrates's rational decision (to undergo the penalty selected by the Athenian jury) by appealing to the mechanics of Socrates's bones, sinews, joints, and skin, which cooperated as a physical system to enable him to "sit here with my legs bent".[143]

Fourth, given theistic explanations for consciousness, Moreland asserts that Searle begs the question by claiming in an *ad hoc* manner that mental entities and mental/physical correlations are ontologically basic (Moreland, 2009:35-36). For Moreland, Searle misconstrues the problem to be solved, and fails to address the real issue. Like McGinn, Searle changes the subject. Moreland concludes with naturalist Jaegwon Kim that atheistic naturalism fails to explain the existence of consciousness. (Moreland, 2009:36)

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[141] Ibid., 35, citing Mackie (1983:115).
[142] Plato, Phaedo, 98c.
[143] Plato, Phaedo, 98c-98d.

If Moreland is right, then theism is the best explanation for the existence of consciousness. I will adopt Moreland's argument and conclude that theism explains the good of consciousness better than atheism does (at least in its naturalistic and panpsychist forms). Moreover, theism explains the existence of pain states and states of suffering better than atheism does, and arguably, atheism does not explain the existence of pain and suffering at all, since it lacks an adequate explanation for the existence of the very consciousness which makes pain and suffering possible. Hence, one ought to accept theism over atheism as an explanatory resource for consciousness, including mental states of pain and suffering. The PAE advocate should take this dialectical point into account when pressing the PAE. Why think that suffering is evidence against God? Suffering is a state of consciousness, and there are plausible arguments by Moreland and others that consciousness is evidence for theism, not for atheism.

In sum, the PAE advocate is concerned to show that pain and suffering count as probabilistic evidence against God. The advocate has failed to recognise that the PAE presupposes the existence of consciousness insofar as it appeals to the data of felt pain and suffering. So far, that is fair enough. I am glad to grant that consciousness exists. How could I do such a thing as (consciously) grant the truth of a claim if there were no such thing as consciousness? However, the PAE advocate proceeds too quickly from the admission of consciousness to an argument against theism. How does he explain the existence of consciousness? The atheism that he concludes via the PAE is arguably inconsistent with his assumption that pain and suffering – and thus consciousness – exist in the first place.

Consider the following comparison of arguments. It is sometimes argued by theists that the existence of evil is not evidence against God; rather, it is evidence for God. The argument can be framed as follows: If objective evil exists, then objective morality exists. But objective evil exists. Therefore, objective morality exists. If there is no God, then there is no objective morality. Therefore, God exists. One can modify this argument into an abductive one: Since there is objective evil, there is objective morality. God is the best explanation for the existence of objective morality. Thus, the data of evil is probabilistic evidence for the existence of God.

We can use a similar structure to argue that the existence of consciousness (including pain and suffering) is not evidence against God; instead, the data of consciousness (including pain and suffering) is evidence for God. If pain and suffering exist, then consciousness exists. But pain and suffering exist; everyone who has felt pain knows by acquaintance that pain exists;

moreover, the PAE advocate admits the existence of pain and suffering as integral data in the PAE. Therefore, consciousness exists. If there is no God, then there is no consciousness. Therefore, God exists. We can also express the argument abductively: Since there is pain and suffering, there is consciousness. God is the best explanation for the existence of consciousness. So, the data of conscious pain and suffering – which are themselves data of consciousness – serve as probabilistic evidence for the existence of God. Conscious pain and suffering count against the PAE, not for it.

Objection: Why should consciousness be thought of as a good? Its existence might be evidence for God, but why think of it as a *good* that poses a problem to the PAE? For example, in *Notes from Underground*, Dostoyevsky's Underground Man claims that consciousness is a disease (Dostoyevsky, 2005:5).[144] If consciousness is a disease, then it is bad, not good. Why would Underground Man make such a claim?

First, we need some background. As I have noted elsewhere[145], Dostoyevsky wrote *Notes from Underground* as a critique of philosophical naturalism. This worldview was popular among Western intellectuals in the late 19th century. Dostoyevsky's main character, an unreliable narrator called "the Underground Man", is a disillusioned intellectual who sees the nihilistic implications of naturalism and rejects the value of human life in such a world. Underground Man holds that nihilism follows from the naturalism of his culture and he abhors the idea of human existence in a meaningless world. Underground Man's discontent frames the context for his claim that consciousness is a disease.

In a world of naturalistic nihilism, consciousness might be unpleasant. In such a world, a human being is an animal singularly capable of awareness that it is an objectively meaningless conglomeration of atoms moving unfreely in a universe bereft of purpose and value and destined to annihilation by heat death. That is, human beings are contingent, meaning-seeking animals living without freedom in a world void of meaning. It is understandable why this would be an unpleasant state of affairs, since on naturalism human beings are constantly driven by physics

[144] See Dostoyevsky (2005:5). On pg. 4, Underground Man claims that excessive consciousness is a disease. But on pg. 5, he claims that consciousness as such is a disease.
[145] See Crozat (2019) at https://freethinkingministries.com/philosophical-notes-on-the-underground-one/

and chemistry to find the unfindable, namely, objective meaning. In Schopenhauer's language, we are striving to find what cannot be found. Moreover, we are capable of becoming aware of this meaningless striving. Arguably, it is in this sense that Underground Man considers consciousness a disease. His view seems similar to that of the Teacher in Ecclesiastes 1:18: in a world "under the sun" (i.e., a naturalistic world), it is a matter of "the more knowledge, the more grief".

However, the claim that consciousness is bad rather than good does not seem to be a problem for theism. From a theistic conception, consciousness is fundamentally good because, in its paradigm case, it is divine. God is the paradigm case of consciousness. Consciousness is thus a necessary feature in the world. Human cases of consciousness are instances of finite copies or images of God, at least on the Judeo-Christian version of theism.

However, we need not appeal to theism to support the view that consciousness is a good. Philosopher William Frankena (1973:87-88) compiled a theistically neutral list of intrinsic goods, which we addressed in Chapter 5. Consciousness is second on the list. Other states of consciousness are on the list as well, such as knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, consciousness can be construed as an instrumental good, since it is necessary for happiness, which as Aristotle noted, is a great good. Consciousness is also necessary for other intrinsic goods on Frankena's list, such as knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and true belief. In the next section, I will address the topic of happiness. Here, one might think of Socrates's dictum that the unexamined life is not worth living for human beings. To examine life, one must be conscious, which makes consciousness a fundamental human value.

In addition, as Don Marquis (2007) has contended in his "Future Like Ours" argument against abortion, consciousness is a good of human life which is necessary for making human life worth living. Part of what makes life worth living for human beings is that, by nature, we can value or take pro-attitudes toward aspects of the human experience. This ability to value and to experience value requires the good of consciousness. According to Marquis, abortion is morally wrong because it removes consciousness from human beings which by nature can possess it.

7.2.2 Happiness

In this section, I will argue that happiness is an objective good which poses an axiological problem to the PAE.[146] I will modify Moreland's deductive AC argument to address the good of happiness. I will also present the argument abductively. The deductive argument can be posed as follows:

1. Happiness exists.
2. There is an explanation for the existence of happiness.
3. The explanation for the existence of happiness is either a theistic or an atheistic explanation.
4. The explanation is not an atheistic one.
5. Therefore, the explanation is a theistic one.
6. If the explanation for the existence of happiness is theistic, then the good of happiness is an axiological problem for the PAE.
7. Therefore, the good of happiness is an axiological problem for the PAE.

This enthymematic argument is such that it can be made deductively valid by articulating its tacit premises. This means that if the premises are true, then the conclusion is true. (1) is clear based on the data of human experience. Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, 2020:Book 1, Ch. 4) held that all human beings naturally seek happiness and that happiness in the sense of eudaimonia is among the highest goods. The U.S. Declaration of Independence holds that the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable human right. Psychologists widely hold that happiness exists.[147] It is hard to find someone who denies (1) and can support the denial with adequate reasons. Chisholm's principle indicates that we are reasonable to accept (1) and that the burden of proof is on the one who denies (1).

[146] Recall that, in Chapter 5, I described both objective and subjective conceptions of happiness.
[147] For example, James S. Nairne (1997:410-411) assumes happiness as a given aspect of human experience, and tries to explain it from the perspective of human psychology.

This brings us to (2). For the PSR, there is a sufficient reason or explanation for everything that exists. Rescher (2006:173) claims that nothing is without a reason – since happiness exists, there is therefore an explanation for it.

But what exactly is happiness? According to the tradition of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, happiness is eudaimonia, or the human flourishing that it based on a developed character and a life of moral and intellectual excellence. Verhoef and McPherson have argued that there is a transcendent aspect of happiness.[148] For the traditions of Hedonism and Epicureanism, happiness is identical to the experience of pleasure.

I incline toward Aristotle and away from the Hedonists and Epicureans. The famous "pleasure machine" thought experiment of Nozick (2013) makes it reasonable to reject hedonism and epicureanism in favour of objective *eudaimonism*. However, as indicated in Chapter 5, there seem to be both objective and subjective aspects of happiness. In any case, for the purposes of this argument, I need not select between these views of happiness. Arguably, theism is a better explanation for both conceptions of happiness. This brings me to a defence of (4).

Regarding (4), on *eudaimonism*, intellectual and moral virtue are necessary for happiness. Intellectual virtues such as rationality, wisdom, knowledge, and the like require the existence of consciousness, while moral virtues require the existence of value. Consciousness and value are better explained by theism, as I have argued in this study. Moreover, virtues such as rationality, justice, and courage are evidence for theism. Moreland (2009:67-68), citing philosophers such as Flew, Verghese, Reppert, and Nagel, write that atheistic naturalism cannot explain the existence of reason and rationality. However, theism provides a sufficient explanation for these facts of intellectual life. Moreover, as the atheist Mackie has admitted, the existence of moral properties, and by extension moral virtues such as justice and courage, seems to require the existence of God.

Moreland (2009:67-103) argues that certain aspects of human rationality are explained better by theism than by atheism: rational deliberation, the conscious unity of the rational agent,

[148] See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion on happiness.

the free will requisite for rationality, the internalistic epistemic powers of human agents, the process of rational deliberation, the contents of rational deliberation (e.g., truth, propositions, concepts, logical relations, and intentionality), and the process of belief-formation. Since rationality is essential to human flourishing on the Aristotelian view, theism is a better explanation of happiness than is atheism, thereby posing a problem to the PAE. Moreover, Victor Reppert (Craig and Moreland, 2012:Ch.6, 344) argues for theism from the fact of reason. He holds that the necessary conditions of logical and mathematical reasoning require the rejection of all broadly materialist worldviews. However, the theist can explain the existence of rationality by appealing to the inherent rationality of God (Reppert, 2012:387).

Moreover, as McPherson notes, Aristotelian ethics and its emphasis on eudaimonia require a transcendent ground, such as that provided by theism. Without theism or some comparable form of transcendent ontology, eudaimonism loses much of its force. According to McPherson (2020:9), commenting on Anscombe, in a non-theistic framework, we can have no objective categorical imperatives, but only hypothetical imperatives such as "If you want to flourish *qua* human being, then you *ought* to cultivate the virtues." For McPherson (2020:10), this non-theistic, secularised approach to ethics does not adequately account for the qualitative distinctions of value that shape human life and place normative demands on us, such as the distinctions between the axiologically higher and lower, noble and base, admirable and contemptible, dignified and undignified, and sacred and profane. Secularised Aristotelian ethics disenchants the world, and this disenchantment undercuts the force of Aristotle's approach to morality and value. Moreover, this disenchanting itself is foreign to Aristotle's own theistic view, as well as to the theistic view of Plato under which Aristotle developed as a student.

In addition, McPherson (2020:10) notes that all secularised Neo-Aristotelian ethical systems accept some form of ethical naturalism which holds that morality is founded on claims about human nature. As I see it, there are at least four problems with this approach. First, as Sartre (1957, 1987:15) plausibly argues, without a God to conceive it, there just is no objective human nature. There are only the subjective human "natures" that we invent for ourselves. Thus, human existence precedes human essence, and human nature is whatever we subjectively conceive and will it to be after we are randomly thrust into existence. Without a God, human nature is relative to whatever each human individual decides it to be. For Sartre, human beings

are nothing else but what they make of themselves. If Sartre is correct, then a stable sense of human flourishing cannot be based on naturalistic language about human nature.

Second, even if we could find an objective and stable human nature on atheistic ethical naturalism, it is not clear why a human flourishing based on human nature would be objectively valuable or obligatory to pursue. As I have argued in this paper, non-theistic worldviews face an explanatory difficulty in accounting for objective moral values and duties. As such, if naturalism is true, why should one pursue human flourishing? The naturalistic can claim that there are hypothetical imperatives such as "If you want to thrive, then you should pursue the virtues that make for human flourishing." However, naturalism does not support a categorical imperative such as "You ought to pursue an excellent human life." What is the objective value of "thriving" on a naturalistic worldview?

Third, eudemonistic flourishing requires the concept of living well. A flourishing human being is one who lives excellently. But on atheistic ethical naturalism, it is not clear what a "well-lived" or "excellent" human life is. What does it mean to live well? Who decides the standard for excellence? Is it completely subjective, as Sartre argued concerning human nature? If this is the case, then the number of standards for human excellence and flourishing are potentially as multitudinous as the number of human beings who exist (past, present, and future.) Human well-being thus becomes a farraginous construct based on the myriad and collectively inconsistent desires and opinions of fallible human beings. Such a collection of contingencies would be a mere description of human psychology and, in many cases, a catalogue of what Kant (2004:169) called the "boisterous importunity of inclination". Arguably, theism provides a better explanation for the goods of human nature, human flourishing, and a well-lived human life. Theism provides objective stability and universality, and avoids the various problems of fallible human subjectivity to which non-theistic systems are vulnerable.

Fourth, the Neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalist claims that human nature is such that a human being will flourish if that human being cultivates the moral and intellectual virtues and consequently becomes an excellent specimen of the human nature, similar to the way that an excellent horse or tree will thrive because it is an excellent specimen of its kind. However, for atheism, there seems to be no adequate explanation for why human nature (or horse, tree, or other natures) is such that human thriving requires possession of human virtues. What explains this tight alignment between flourishing and virtue? It seems to be a cosmic accident. Bernard

Williams (1995:109-110) indicates that according to Aristotle's philosophy "there is inherent in each natural kind of thing an appropriate way for things of that kind to behave… [this way] is in the objective sense appropriate to them … The first and hardest lesson of [atheistic] Darwinism, that there is no such teleology at all, and that there is no orchestral score provided from anywhere according to which human beings have a special part to play, still has to find its way into ethical thought."

However, theism provides an explanation: God designed human beings (or horses, trees, etc.) to flourish in excellence. In other words, theism provides what McPherson (2020:131), following Charles Taylor, calls "a moral ontology that can make sense of and inform our moral phenomenology". This moral phenomenology includes the aspects of our senses of freedom, moral knowledge, objective value, objective normativity, objective duties and moral rights, and objective meaning and purpose for human life. McPherson (2020:132) continues: "Indeed, Aristotle seems to offer just such an account with his view of human beings as cosmically situated between the beasts and the divine (and as containing elements of both), which informs the sense that human beings as rational social animals are capable of a higher mode of life than is possible for other animals. It is difficult to see how in a world devoid of any underlying moral teleology it could make sense to think that there are [objective] ethical demands …"

Furthermore, on the view that happiness requires transcendence, we need an explanation with the wherewithal to account for transcendence. Atheism lacks such resources, but theism possesses them. Here, it is important to underscore that, in McPherson's view, there is no difference between eudemonistic and transcendent senses of happiness. The terms "eudaimonia" and "transcendent" are different, and they might be discussed differently in various contexts. However, this difference might be merely a distinction of reason, rather than a real distinction.[149] According to McPherson (2020:2), the Aristotelian/eudemonistic tradition of ethics is fundamentally transcendent. It holds that human beings are essentially and distinctively meaning-seekers, and that the meaning we seek is transcendent in the sense that it is an objectively cosmic

[149] According to Moreland and Craig (2017:180), two things are distinct (in the sense of a real distinction) just in case they can be separated and still exist. However, if two things differ by a distinction of reason, then they are identical although that same thing is described or conceived differently.

or ultimate source of meaning and value to which we ought to align our lives, and that this transcendent meaning carries objectively normative weight and sacredness.[150]

Furthermore, as Robert Adams (1999) has argued, there are finite and infinite goods. The paradigm case of the Good is a transcendent God. In addition, the fundamental aspect of a well-lived human life is a matter of loving what is objectively excellent. The archetypes of both the objective good of excellence and the objective good of love is God, according to Adams's view. Thus, Adams's view of human happiness and flourishing is fundamentally transcendent. A view that identifies God as the archetype of the Good provides a moral ontology that best explains the existence of objective goods, both finite and infinite, as well as the existence of virtue, excellence, and human flourishing.

It is well known that Kant (2004:130-135) argued that we ought to pursue the *summum bonum*, which requires (i) the perfect accordance of the human mind with the moral law and (ii) the proportion of human happiness (in the sense of subjective contentment) with objective virtue. Since "ought to" can imply probability, it must be possible to attain the *summum bonum*, and thus possible to accord the mind with the moral law and to proportion subjective happiness with an objectively virtuous character. Regarding (i), Kant held that it must be postulated that human beings have immortal souls which enable them the opportunity for never-ending progress toward the goal of ever higher and higher degrees of moral perfection, a goal which cannot be achieved in this mortal life. Regarding (ii), the existence of God must be postulated, since only God could guarantee the proportioning of human happiness with virtue. In other words, concerning (ii), it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God. For Kant (2004:135), the existence of God is the best explanation for the human moral experience, including a complete experience of happiness. To accept this abductive argument is to have a "rational faith".

According to Kant, the doctrine of Christianity provides a conception of the *summum bonum* (the kingdom of God) which alone satisfies the strictest demand of practical reason (2004:136). Furthermore, the moral life leads to:

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[150] See McPherson (2017).

> "the recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions, that is to say, arbitrary ordinances of a foreign will and contingent in themselves, but as essential laws of every free will in itself, which, nevertheless, must be regarded as commands of the Supreme Being, because it is only from a morally perfect (holy and good) and at the same time all-powerful will, and consequently only through harmony with this will, that we can hope to attain the *summum bonum* which the moral law makes it our duty to take as the object of our endeavors." (2004:138.)

Kant's argument for God and human immortality are relevant to my argument against the PAE. The goods that Kant addresses are significant human goods. These are: (i) the perfect accordance of the human mind with the moral law and (ii) the proportion of human happiness with virtue. These goods are best explained by theism, as Kant held. Thus, these goods pose an axiological problem to the PAE, insofar as the PAE argues for atheism, a worldview which does not explain the goods Kant cites.

Regarding the hedonist conception of happiness, happiness is a matter of maximising the experience of pleasure. It is important to note here that the experience of pleasure is a state of consciousness. Hence, hedonism presupposes the existence of consciousness. I have argued that atheism faces a difficulty in explaining consciousness, but that theism explains it effectively. It follows that the experience of pleasure, which is itself a state of consciousness, counts for theism and against atheism. Therefore, the hedonist conception of happiness is evidence for theism, which poses an axiological problem for the PAE.

(3) is evident, since there seem to be no other options; the world is either theistic[151] or atheistic; hence, the ontological explanation is either theistic or atheistic. (6) is clear.

The deductive argument from happiness can be presented abductively as follows: since there is happiness (either in the eudemonistic sense, or the hedonistic sense), there is consciousness, human flourishing, and value. God is the best explanation for the existence of

[151] I use "theistic" broadly here to include all of its forms, such as monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, panentheism, deism, etc.

consciousness, human flourishing, and value. So, the data of happiness is evidence for the existence of God. The good of happiness thus counts against the PAE, not for it.

Objection: One might object to my argument by appealing to Hursthouse (1999:206): "[If] there is any truth in ethical naturalism, our ethical evaluations of ourselves ought to exhibit at least a recognizably similar structure to what we find in the botanists' and ethologists' evaluations of other living things." Following this view, our moral evaluations of human beings are like a botanist's evaluation about apple trees. Good humans and good apple trees are good in their respective ways insofar as they are "good, healthy specimens of their kind" (1999:197). Hursthouse thus holds that theism is not necessary to explain human flourishing. *Mutatis mutandis*, we can explain human flourishing in the same way we explain the flourishing of trees and birds.

On the surface, this view is plausible. However, it is important to notice the axiological assumptions built into this view. If "goodness" is nothing but functioning in a particular manner (say, fruitfully and in a way that enables survival for the apple tree, or virtuously and in a sociable manner for the human), it is hard to see why such functioning is objectively good in an axiological sense. As for naturalism, what is axiologically better, more noble, more admirable, or more dignified about fruitfulness over non-fruitfulness, or about virtuousness over viciousness? Are not these just two different ways of being, neither of which is objectively better than the other? If the ethical naturalist wants to say that the fruitful tree is objectively better than the fruitless tree, or that being a wise person is objectively better than being unwise, then the naturalist needs to explain what sort of ontological resources are available on a naturalist worldview which would support such objective axiological and moral judgments. A theistic worldview with a divinely grounded axiology and morality, and with objectively real essences or natures, explains why good things are, in Hursthouse's words, "good, healthy specimens of their kind". However, it is difficult for atheistic naturalism to explain such goods.

McPherson (2020:13) describes this move by the ethical naturalist as "a disenchanting move … suggesting that we abandon a special sense of obligation that is supposed to contain a 'peculiar' or 'mesmeric' force". McPherson (2020:14) proceeds to note that ethical naturalists in the Neo-Aristotelian tradition such as Hursthouse and Philippa Foot "have been opposed to moral subjectivism" and have refused to believe that moral horrors such as the Holocaust were merely cases of subjective expression of dislike. The problem with their opposition to moral subjectivism

is that it does not fit well with the ontological commitments of ethical naturalism, which is a non-theistic, non-transcendent system of thought. Arguably, Sartre's acceptance of moral subjectivism is more consistent. As McPherson (2020:14) notes, "There is a question here of whether we can make sense of the kind of evil involved in the Holocaust without appealing to a special sense of obligation – rooted in a belief in the sanctity (or special dignity) of human life – that involves a 'peculiar' or 'mesmeric' force; that is, can we make sense of it without a fuller kind of re-enchantment? I don't think we can, …" Hursthouse and Foot want it both ways: they affirm naturalism and objective morality. Sartre, on the other hand, is more consistent; he accepts the absence of objective morality and value which follows from his atheism.

McPherson (2020:14) points out another problem with ethical naturalism. Citing Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, McPherson writes that the Enlightenment project of providing a rational account for morality apart from teleology and divine authority has failed "because of its inability to secure rational agreement". This failure has generated a culture of contentious emotivism in which arbitrary preferences displace rational argument in the moral life, and people attempt to manipulate one another in service of their subjective and arbitrary desires. This point is similar to the one I raised earlier in reference to what Kant (2004:169) called the "boisterous importunity of inclination". Without an objective and universally applicable moral foundation, the human moral experience becomes a conflict of desires.

I conclude in this section that the existence of human happiness poses an axiological problem to the PAE. Theism explains several aspects of happiness (e.g., consciousness, value, and transcendence) better than atheism does. In the next section, I will address the topic of free will.

7.2.3 Free will

In this section, I argue that human beings have libertarian free will (LFW), that this freedom is a good, and that its existence poses an axiological problem for the PAE. I will start by discussing the concept of LFW.

7.2.3.1 What is free will?

In the epilogue of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, the author considers the concepts of free will, determinism, and fatalism. Consider the following from Chapter 10 of the Second Epilogue: "All

that we know of the life of man is merely a certain relation of freewill to necessity … The great natural forces lie outside us … we call these forces gravitation, inertia, electricity, vital force, and so on; but the force of life in man is an object of our consciousness and we call it freewill." (Tolstoy, 1982:1439.) Tolstoy's statement raises the question: what is meant by "freewill" and "necessity"?

Free will (or at least something which seems to be free will) is a basic datum of the human experience. It is thought essential to rationality, moral responsibility, praise, blame, reward, and punishment. Free will is, roughly, the mental power of choice or volition; i.e., it is the faculty that enables a person to try to bring about something. Do human beings have such power? And what exactly does this power involve? Libertarians and compatibilists affirm that we have free will, but they interpret this power differently. Hard determinists and fatalists deny free will for human beings.

Libertarians hold that human beings have the power of choice and that our choices are causally undetermined. They are not (completely or ultimately) determined by factors external to the person, such as physical or chemical constitution, socio-cultural phenomena, or divine actions. Moreover, the choices are not (completely or ultimately) determined by internal factors. Psychological states such as habits of desire or belief are not sufficient to cause a person's choices. In sum, while there may be external and internal factors that influence one's choices, there are no factors sufficient to determine those choices. If there were, we would not be free and thus would not be morally responsible. Hence reward, punishment, praise, and blame would be unwarranted.

On this account, human beings are unmoved movers and undetermined choosers, at least in some situations. We have the mental ability to choose without being causally determined. As such, we are moral agents responsible for our decisions. For us, the buck stops here. Libertarians are incompatibilists, in that they say free will is incompatible with determinism. Furthermore, libertarians say free will is real, and hence that determinism and fatalism are false. In short, libertarianism can be characterised as the conjunction of two propositions: that human beings have free will, and that free will is incompatible with determinism.

Tolstoy's use of "necessity" can be construed as a reference to determinism or to fatalism. What is the difference? Determinism is the view that everything (or at least every physical event) which happens is completely determined by prior (or external) causal factors. For any event E,

given the laws of nature and the prior events that caused E, E cannot fail to occur. Hard determinists agree with libertarians that free will is incompatible with determinism. But they hold that determinism is true and thus that we lack freedom. Hence, we are not moral agents and not responsible for our decisions or behaviours. One objection to hard determinism is that it denies human responsibility. Some claim that since we are morally responsible, determinism is false.

Compatibilists hold that free will is compatible with causal determinism, that both are true (or at least that free will is possible even if not actual), and thus that humans could be responsible despite being determined.[152] Based on this view, every human choice is determined by prior causal factors. Nevertheless, free will is actual (or at least possible).

However, compatibilists mean something different by "free will" than libertarians mean. The libertarian says: (a) we make choices without being caused to make them; (b) for any decision we make we could have chosen otherwise and could have refrained from choosing what we did choose; (c) human beings have sufficient control over themselves such that they make undetermined choices; and (d) human persons are rational agents who choose and act on the basis of reasons. Compatibilists deny (a) and modify (b) and (c). Regarding (a), they argue that human beings are free to choose only what they already desire and/or believe, but that these desires/beliefs are themselves caused by external conditions. Such conditions might be biological, chemical, or socio-cultural. For a theological compatibilist, divine actions can cause the desires or beliefs of a human person, and those desires/beliefs thereby determine the choices of that person. For (c), the compatibilist says that a person has control over his actions in the sense that the prior factors determining his action flow through his desires/beliefs such that he's free to do what he desires.

For (b), compatibilists hold that, given the desires/beliefs a person has, he cannot choose other than what he actually chooses and cannot control his choices in a libertarian sense because they are determined by prior factors. Given any choice C, the person who chooses C could not have chosen otherwise given his pre-existing desires and beliefs, which are themselves caused.

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[152] This view is sometimes called *soft determinism* because the compatibilist believes that determinism is true, but that we are nevertheless free. The determinism is soft rather than hard.

However, if the person were to have different desires/beliefs, which is possible, he would have chosen otherwise because he would have decided in a manner determined by those desires/beliefs.

Libertarians claim this is a false view of freedom and that compatibilists gloss over the real issue. For example, Kant (2004:101-103) called compatibilism “the freedom of a turnspit”, an attempt at “wretched subterfuge” and “word-jugglery” which does not solve the problem of free will. For Kant, the freedom of compatibilism is that of a machine; i.e., it is not freedom at all. The libertarian tends to agree with Kant here. In contrast, the compatibilist holds that the libertarian position on free will is mysterious, inexplicable, or simply false if determinism is true.

How does determinism differ from fatalism? There are different versions of fatalism. One is the view that everything that happens *necessarily* happens. This version of fatalism is distinguished from determinism. For determinism, whatever happens is determined by prior or external conditions. Nevertheless, it is logically possible for those prior conditions to be different. If the prior conditions had been different, they would have caused something else. For fatalism, whatever happens is necessary. I.e., for any event X that has occurred, is occurring, or will occur, if X happens, then it is not broadly logically (i.e., metaphysically) possible that X does not happen. In the language of philosophical modality, there is no possible world in which X does not occur. Thus, humans lack free will. As such, we are not morally responsible. The libertarian objects to fatalism because it denies moral responsibility. The assumption that moral responsibility requires free will implies that if we are morally responsible beings, fatalism is false.

In Chapter 2, I noted that theists such as Plantinga have contended that if it is at least possible that humans have libertarian freedom, then the logical argument from evil (LAE) fails. In keeping with this position, I assume that humans have LFW.

7.2.3.2 LFW is a problem for the PAE

I will use the abductive argument regarding consciousness in Section 7.2.2 as a model to articulate an argument for theism from LFW. The argument can be phrased as follows: Human beings have LFW, which is a good. This freedom requires an explanation. The explanation is either theistic or atheistic. Theism provides a better explanation than atheism does. Thus, LFW is evidence for theism. Therefore, LFW poses an axiological problem to the PAE.

What arguments can be given to support the claim that human beings have LFW? First, one might argue that, as Moreland (2009:41) notes, “it is widely acknowledged that worldwide, the common-sense, spontaneously formed understanding of human free will is that philosophers call libertarian freedom: one acts freely only if one’s action was not determined – directly or indirectly – by forces outside one’s control, and one must be free to act or refrain from acting; one’s choice is ‘spontaneous’, it originates with and only with the actor.” Furthermore, one can appeal to Chisholm’s principle which, combined with Moreland’s point, provides the conclusion that we are rationally justified in accepting LFW unless and until someone provides a conclusive argument otherwise. The burden of proof is on the denier of LFW.

Second, one might argue that LFW is a necessary condition for moral responsibility: since we are morally responsible agents, we have LFW. Third, one can point to the phenomenological experience of LFW: we are directly aware of our libertarianly free choices, as the quotation from Tolstoy suggests. This direct awareness justifies the belief that we have LFW against the claim that our acts are determined by causally prior factors. Moreover, this experience of LFW is so compelling that we cannot ignore it (Moreland, 2009:41). Thus, one is justified to believe in LFW. For example, suppose you go to the store to buy milk: your options are whole milk and non-fat milk, and you deliberate before selecting the former. In this situation, you are directly aware of your ability to choose without being determined by external factors (such as physical laws or divine will) or internal factors (such as your own desires or beliefs). Moreover, you are aware that it is in your power to refrain from choosing whole milk and to choose non-fat instead, or to opt for neither. And you are aware that the choice is up to you such that you make it and are responsible for making it - you have rational control over your decision. This awareness does not conclusively prove that we have LFW, but it justifies the belief that we have LFW.

Fourth, one might employ the Consequence Argument. The argument has been developed and advocated by van Inwagen (2008), among others. It can be articulated in different ways; van Inwagen (2008:450) has expressed it as follows: “If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore, the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.” Here is another way to express the argument. I begin with a working definition of causal determinism (CD).

CD = Df for any event E, the conjunction of *l* (the laws of nature) and *h* (the complete history of the universe prior to E) are jointly sufficient for E to occur.

It seems that if the conjunction of *l* and *h* are sufficient to bring about E, then we humans have no control over E, since we have no control over *l*, *h*, their conjunction, or their causation of E. If this is the case, we are wholly passive concerning E. (Let us call this proposition “P” for “passivity”.)

To elaborate, note that no human being is free to change the existence or the causal efficacy of *l*. (Let us call this proposition “L” for “laws”.) And no human being can control *h*. (Call this proposition “H” for “history”.) Moreover, no human being can do anything to prevent the conjunction of *l* and *h*. (Call this proposition “C” for “conjunction”.) Furthermore, if CD is the case, the fact that this conjunction is sufficient to bring about E is not up to us human beings. (Call this proposition “B” for “bring about”.) If L, H, C, and B are true, then no human being is free to control the occurrence or the non-occurrence of any event whatsoever, including those occurrences which are his own actions. We are wholly passive (call this “P”); we do only what we are causally determined to do; i.e., P is the case. And if P, then we are not free in any meaningful sense.

Assume *arguendo* that CD is the case. As such, *l* and *h* are sufficient to bring about E. Thus, P is true, and P entails that we are not free. (Call this proposition “~HF” for “humans are not free”.) Notice that the assumption of CD logically entails ~HF. Hence, CD is incompatible with human freedom. (Call this proposition “CDIF” for “causal determinism is incompatible with freedom”.) Moreover, if CDIF is true and we are nevertheless free, then we have LFW and CD is false; and, arguably, we are free. Thus, plausibly, we have LFW and CD is false.

The conjunction of the untouchable propositions L, H, C, and B seem to show that P. In other words, the conjunction indicates that we are wholly passive regarding the occurrence or non-occurrence of any event whatsoever – including all of our behaviours, actions, and choices. In accordance with CD, these events are caused by *l* and *h*; the events happen as a result of things completely beyond our control. As such, we are not active agents; rather, we are passive instruments moved by nature and the events of the past. If it is the case that we are passive, causally determined instruments of nature, there seems to be no room whatsoever for us to exert any freedom or influence at all.

The argument above makes it reasonable to believe that causal determinism is false and, moreover, that we have LFW. Now that I have presented several arguments for LFW, I will next argue that God is the best explanation for LFW, which is a significant good of human life. Hence, the good of LFW poses a problem to the PAE.

According to Moreland (2013:44-51), there are six features of a libertarianly free act that make it virtually impossible to fit LFW into the worldview of atheistic naturalism. Theism, however, can explain these features quite well. First, a libertarianly free agent is a substance (in the Aristotelian metaphysical sense), not an event or a bundle of events. However, on naturalism, ordinary objects are more plausibly characterised as bundles of events or bundles of parts. In short, substances are not compatible with naturalist ontology, but libertarianly free agents are substances. Second, a libertarianly free agent has the active power to bring about effects, initiate change, and perform actions. The ontology of naturalism, though, "knows nothing of active powers". In naturalism, events are passively brought about – there is no room for agency.

Third, a substance is a first mover, an unmoved mover, and an absolute originator of its actions. It has the power to bring about an action without having to change before it can so act. However, since all events in a naturalist ontology are passive occurrences, such events are moved (or changed) movers. Fourth, substances with LFW have the categorical dual ability to will A and to refrain from willing A. As such, internal factors (e.g., desires) and external factors (e.g., environmental conditions) might influence the will of a substance, but they are not sufficient to determine causally the will or the willed action of the substance. Hence, the substance can either exercise or refrain from exercising volition. The ontology of naturalism does not allow for such ability.

Fifth, a substance endowed with LFW acts for the sake of reasons which serve as a final cause or telos for the act. However, naturalism does not recognise final causes; as Moreland (2013:49) observes: "If there is anything that naturalists agree upon, it is that there is no such thing as teleology … attempts to slap teleology onto a naturalist framework really amount to abandonment of naturalism." Sixth, a substance with LFW acts in such a way that the act involves top-down causation, according to which a macro-object (a particular person) exercises causal influence in the micro-physical world. However, such top-down causation is inexplicable for a naturalist; it is tantamount to a miracle. According to Moreland (2013:51), "it should be obvious why [libertarian] free will is a feature of the world that a naturalist should deny. There is not nor

will there ever be a plausible explanation as to how one can start with dead, brute, non-teleological, law-governed matter with passive liabilities and generate the sort of ontological agent required for libertarian freedom by simply rearranging parts into new external relations." However, Moreland notes, "the theist is in no such pickle. He/she takes the fundamental being not to be particles, but a Person who is Himself a libertarian agent … it is not difficult to see how such features could be exhibited again at an appropriate time in the development of God's created order. But the naturalist has to pull a rabbit out of a hat with no rabbit in it and without a Magician. That's a pretty tall order." (2013:52.)

Stewart Goetz (2000:157) shows that a common thread running through all conceptions of atheistic naturalism is that the fundamental explanation of any event is non-psychological in nature. Hence, naturalism implies the falsity of teleological explanation and the non-existence of LFW. Therefore, Goetz argues (2000:187), if one is a libertarian, one cannot consistently be a naturalist. However, as Moreland (2013) has argued, theism adequately explains LFW. Thus, the good of LFW supports theism but cuts against naturalism. Since naturalism is the form of atheism that most contemporary atheists take, as well as the form taken by most who support the PAE, LFW poses a problem to the PAE. There are non-naturalistic forms of atheism, such as (perhaps) Buddhism, Schopenhauer's system, and atheistic forms of Platonism – yet, Buddhism does not have a clear explanation for LFW, since it generally denies the existence of the self. Schopenhauer was a determinist, and his system does not seem to have room for LFW. The question of whether atheistic Platonism can explain LFW, however, falls beyond the scope of this thesis.

Objection 1: One might deny that LFW is a good, thus blocking the conclusion that LFW poses a problem of good for the PAE. Why is LFW a good?

First, free will is thought necessary for the good of moral responsibility. In this sense, free will is thought to be an instrumental value. Barbara MacKinnon and Andrew Fiala (2018:30) remark that "if we are not free, then we are not responsible for our actions – in which the whole enterprise of moral philosophy begins to seem shaky". Moreover, free will seems necessary for the goods of autonomy, law, just punishment, just reward, and personal relationships. Sam Harris (2012:1) underscores this point:

> "Morality, law, politics, religion, public policy, intimate relationships, feelings of guilt and personal accomplishment – most of what is distinctly human about our lives seems to depend on our viewing one another as autonomous persons capable of free choice … Without free will, sinners and criminals would be nothing more than poorly calibrated clockwork, and any conception of justice that emphasized punishment (rather than deterring, rehabilitating, or merely containing them) would appear utterly incongruous."

Dostoyevsky (2005) seems to recognise this point, expressing it through the Underground Man, who refers to the worldview of naturalistic determinism as a "Crystal Palace" perspective of the world. For Dostoyevsky, the Crystal Palace is a metaphor for a utopian world of naturalistic determinism in which, although human life is made docile, collectivised, and industrialised, human beings have no freedom or individuation. For the Underground Man, without LFW there is no autonomy, meaningful action, or adventure in human life. Life in the Crystal Palace is not a life for real persons:

> "More than that: you say that then science itself will teach man (though this, to my mind, is already a luxury) that he really does not possess, and never did possess, either a will or a whim of his own; that he is, in fact, no more than a kind of piano key or organ stop; and that, besides, there is such a thing in the world as the laws of nature; so that everything that is done by man isn't in the least a matter of his own will, but happens itself, according to these laws. Consequently, all that is needed is to discover the laws of nature; then man will no longer be answerable for his actions, … And then the Crystal Palace will arise."

Moreover, LFW is thought necessary for the good of rationality. As Craig and others have argued, without libertarian freedom, one cannot rationally affirm a proposition. Craig (2011:60) holds that "universal causal determinism cannot be rationally affirmed … For if one comes to believe that determinism is true, one as to believe that the reason he has come to believe it is simply that he was determined to do so. One has not in fact been able to weigh the arguments pro and con and freely make up one's mind on that basis … it is very hard to see how [determinism] could ever be rationally affirmed, since its affirmation undermines the rationality of its affirmation." Even Searle (2008:10) admits that human rationality presupposes free will.

In addition, Goetz (2008:143) has argued (reminiscent of Kant) that LFW enables us freely to choose to accept or to reject the great intrinsic good of perfect happiness. Only those who justly choose perfect happiness deserve to experience it.

These reasons for holding that LFW is good seem to be reasons for its instrumental goodness. LFW is good for the sake of moral responsibility, autonomy, rationality, personal relationship, etc. However, one can argue that LFW is also an intrinsic good. Freedom is good for its own sake, and not merely for the sake of what it can help to accomplish. The fact that human beings often seek to act freely just for the sake of acting freely, rather than to accomplish some other end, is good evidence from human experience that LFW is an intrinsic good. For example, one might choose to forego ice cream after dinner, despite the desire for ice cream, simply for the sake of exercising or otherwise expressing free choice in a circumstance which challenges one's volitional and desiderative faculties. William James (1988:82-83) underscored this point memorably, highlighting both the intrinsic value (e.g., "for no other reason than that you would rather not") and the utility (e.g., for the sake of self-development) of free action:

> *"Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day*. That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points, do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, … Asceticism of this sort is like the insurance which a man pays on his house and goods. The tax does him no good at the time, and possibly may never bring him a return. But if the fire *does* come, his having paid it will be his salvation from ruin."

Frankena (1973) puts freedom and related concepts such as self-expression and power to act on his list of intrinsic goods.[153] As related concepts, free will, self-expression, and power to act are linked to autonomy, forming a cluster of intrinsic goods. In addition, Goetz (2008:143) writes, at least some free choices are intrinsic goods; e.g., the good of a free and just choice of perfect happiness is itself an intrinsic good. Moreover, Prasanta Pattanaik and Yongsheng Xu argue (2015:366) that freedom is both an instrumental and an intrinsic value.[154] Citing Kant and J. S.

[153] See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Frankena's list.
[154] The freedom they claim as having intrinsic value seems to be a combination of what Craig and Moreland (2017:301) call "freedom of permission", "freedom of personal integrity", and "freedom of moral

Mill, they argue that freedom of the will is good for the sake of developing one's individual identity, well-being, and autonomy. However, freedom of the will is identical to (or at least a necessary condition for) personal autonomy and hence is an intrinsic value.

Objection 2: One might argue that mental states are identical to brain states. Hence, since brain states (or events) have causal power, so do mental states (events). As such, causal power can be explained by atheistic naturalism, and there is no need to postulate an immaterial LFW that serves as evidence for theism. However, Moreland (2009:52) notes that "this is a desperate move … this is simply to deny the reality of a distinctively mental sort of causation in the universe".

To elaborate on Moreland's reply, it is important to underscore the point that on naturalism, only physical brain states have causal power – if at all, since brain states are themselves events which are passively brought about by other events. If there are non-physical mental states at all, which itself is a controversial position to hold for a naturalist, these mental states supervene upon brain states. It is the brain that causes or brings about events in the world. Mental states are causally effete epiphenomena. Moreover, Moreland (2009:52) observes, "at best this [objection] merely gives us event-event causation and compatibilism, and this amounts to a denial of libertarian free will". Since I have already argued for LFW and against determinism, my arguments serve as a reply to Objection 2.

Objection 3: One might appeal to some form of naturalistic emergentism and, as Moreland (2009:52) suggests, argue that when matter reaches a suitable degree of complexity, active power simply emerges from this complex arrangement of physical parts. This is a purely naturalistic account of causal power. Hence, there is no need to appeal to LFW.

However, Moreland argues that this view requires a self that is a substance which unifies its parts and properties, and substances do not fit the naturalism of this emergentist view. Moreover, this kind of emergentism is a move toward panpsychism and away from naturalism,

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and rational responsibility". The first is a matter of social and political freedom which involves having legal rights to perform certain actions or to access certain benefits. The second is about the ability to act as a fully developed and ideally functioning person. This is a concept employed in psychology and spiritual development, though it has philosophical relevance. It is closely linked to autonomy. The third is a matter of free will.

thereby undercutting the naturalist worldview to which the emergentist is committed. I conclude in this section that LFW exists, that it is a good, and that its existence poses an axiological problem to the PAE. In the next section, I will address the topics of human value and equality.

7.2.4 Human value and equality

In this section, I will argue that human value and equality are best explained by theism. Since these are goods of human life, they pose an explanatory problem to the PAE insofar as the PAE supports atheism, a worldview which is hard-pressed to explain these goods.

It is commonly assumed in ordinary human experience that human beings have intrinsic value, and that human beings are morally and axiologically equal, even if we are not equal in other empirically detectable ways, such as appearance, ability, size, and weight. Protests over moral issues such as unjust discrimination are good examples of this common-sense assumption. The widespread acceptance of something like Kant's Humanity Formula of the Categorical Imperative highlights this assumption as well. According to Kant (1964:96), as persons or rational and moral agents, human beings possess intrinsic rather than merely instrumental value. Therefore, we ought to act "in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end". According to John Kleinig (2014:115), "There is no doubt that the varied appeals to life's value are heard most frequently and insistently where the object is human life. It is here, too, that such appeals have usually seemed most at home … At certain periods of human history, the broad appeal to human life's value has appeared so transparently self-evident that its rationale has barely needed articulation."

In addition, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins as follows: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world … Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance …Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, …" Given Chisholm's principle, this widely-held belief in human value, equality, and rights is rational and warranted unless and until there is an adequate argument otherwise. The burden of proof is on the denier of these goods.

If human beings ought to be treated equally, then, there must be some explanation for why this moral proposition is true. There must be some ontological account to ground this equality. The ground must be highly significant and applicable to all humanity. In short, human beings must have intrinsic and universally recognisable value, and there must be something to ground this value. Human lives are valuable in an objective sense. What explains this axiological fact?

Moreland (2009) cites naturalists Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse (1985:118-139), who have recognised that the belief in intrinsic human value and equality needs a sufficient metaphysical grounding, and that the best (or perhaps the only) ground is the Judeo-Christian claim that human beings are image-bearers of God. Without a doctrine like the *Imago Dei*, it is hard to see why human beings have intrinsic value and equality. Moreover, in a separate article by Singer and Khuse (1985:506-509), the authors write that:

> "When confronted with complex ethical questions, it is tempting to look for a simple answer; and in this case, a simple answer seems to be available: that all human life is of equal worth. On this view, the life of a Down's syndrome baby is not less valuable than the life of a normal baby. The life of the most revered statesman, the most generous philanthropist, or the most brilliant scientist is not worth more than that of a handicapped infant. Since all human life is of equal worth, it is as wrong to let a Down's syndrome baby die, when it could be kept alive, as it would be to let any of these other human beings die when they could be kept alive. The simple answer gains support from two quite distinct sources. One is the traditional doctrine of the sanctity of human life …the second source of support for the view that all human life is of equal worth is relatively recent. It is the acceptance of the belief that there are human rights, and that all humans share these rights equally … It is not difficult to see how belief in equal human rights can lead to the view that every human life is of equal worth."

Singer and Khuse associate the first source of the belief in universal and equal human worth with Judaism and Christianity. They associate the second source with the American and French Revolutions, the former of which had a philosophical and moral framework which was arguably shaped by the Christian tradition. In contrast, Singer and Khuse (1985:527) argue that the proposition that all humans possess equal and intrinsic value "cannot be defended". It is indefensible in practice, they say, because even those who believe it do not take it seriously in practice. Further, they contend, it is indefensible in theory if one assumes that non-persons lack

moral rights and that Locke's definition of "person" is correct: "a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places".

With Tooley, Singer and Kuhse (1985:529-532) argue that human fetuses, human infants, and humans with severe mental retardation or brain damage are not persons and thus have no moral rights or intrinsic value. No infants are born with self-awareness or a sense of future. Hence, no infants have a right to life, they argue. However, for Singer and Kuhse, chimpanzees and other nonhuman animals might have moral rights insofar as they fit Locke's definition of personhood. This view entails that moral rights and value are not based on being human; rather, they are based on being a person in the Lockean sense. Hence, for Singer and Kuhse, the proposition that all humans possess equal and intrinsic value is false. As such, they claim, killing a human baby is wrong if some person or persons (e.g., the infant's parents) want the infant to live. But, they say, this would be a moral wrong done to the *parents*, not to the *human infant*: for Singer and Kuhse, the killing of an infant never amounts to a wrong done to the infant.

My purpose here is not to enter the debate about abortion. Rather, I intend to show that Moreland, Singer, and Kuhse agree that, without a transcendent doctrine such as the *Imago Dei*, it seems hard to justify the claim that human beings are equal and possess intrinsic value. In a variety of respects, human beings are not all equal: in terms of size, shape, hair colour, hair texture, age, talent, ability, intelligence, physical strength, personality (e.g., introversion vs. extroversion), interest, beauty, and the like. As Joel Feinberg (1973:84-97) notes, human worth and equality must be grounded in some feature that we all have in common and that is of supreme worth. As we have already indicated with reference to the work of McPherson (2017, 2020), the ontology of naturalism does not have conceptual space for such a feature.[155] Moreland (2012:145) suggests that "a common-sense view of moral action and equal value/rights are hard to sustain in a naturalist worldview". Thus, for those who believe that human beings possess intrinsic value,

[155] Indeed, *pace* Singer and Kuhse, it is hard to see why Lockean persons have any objective value on the naturalist worldview.

equality, and moral rights, the position of Singer and Kuhse serves as a *reductio ad absurdum* against atheistic naturalism.

Objections: One might argue that objective morality needs no external explanation, that moral values and rights are brute facts, and thus that they do not need to be explained by an appeal to theism. As such, an atheistic worldview can account for the intrinsic value, rights, and equality of human beings. Eric Wielenberg (2005, 2014, 2019) takes this position when he argues: "I propose that objective morality has no foundation external to itself but instead ultimately rests on a foundation of basic ethical facts – necessary ethical truths with no external explanation." (Wielenberg, 2019:138.)

Response: Craig (2008:178-179) has criticised this view in the following ways. First, the view seems unintelligible. The claim that moral values such as justice or courage exist as necessary and brute facts is hard to fathom. Moral values are properties of persons. But Wielenberg's view "lacks an adequate foundation for moral values and leaves them floating in an unintelligible way" (Craig, 2008:178).

Second, Wielenberg's view does not explain objective moral obligations. Suppose *arguendo* that values exist independently of God in an atheistic universe. Obligations are imposed by authoritative moral commands. Where do categorical and objective obligations come from in an atheistic universe?[156] How does the moral realm impose any objective moral obligations on us human beings? Since it is plausible to believe in objective moral duties, the inability of Wielenberg's view to explain objective duties counts against his view and in favour of theism.

Third, as Craig notes, Wielenberg's view faces problems concerning moral ontology, philosophical anthropology, and moral epistemology: "It is fantastically improbable that just that sort of creature would emerge from the blind evolutionary process that corresponds to the abstractly existing realm of moral values. This seems to be an utterly incredible coincidence … it is far more plausible to regard both the natural realm and the moral realm as under the hegemony of a divine Creator and Lawgiver than to think that these two entirely independent orders of reality

[156] Flanagan and Taylor make a similar point (see Chapter 1).

just happened to mesh." (Craig, 2008:179.) Craig points out a problem of ontology here: the moral realm and the natural ream fit together with respect to human life; i.e., there is a correspondence between moral ontology, the natural world, and anthropology. Wielenberg's view seems to lack an explanation for this correspondence. We can elaborate on Craig's point as well: not only is it fantastically improbable that human beings emerged from the blind evolutionary process to match up with the abstract realm of moral values like a random event of Goldilocks finding her "just right" porridge, it is also fantastically improbable that human beings emerged equipped with faculties to know about this abstract moral realm.

Moreover, Richard Brian Davis (2019:142-144) has argued that, even if we grant that there is an abstract moral realm as Wielenberg suggests, we still need an explanation of how moral values are instantiated in the world of human experience. For Davis, Wielenberg's view lacks an adequate explanation for the instantiation of moral values. Wielenberg's position on morality is therefore inadequate to explain the realities of our moral experience.

I conclude in this section that the facts of human value and equality pose an axiological problem to the PAE. In the next section, I turn to the topic of human meaning.

7.2.5 Existential meaning

In this section, I argue that human life is objectively meaningful, that such meaning is an objective good, and that this good is best explained by theism. I provide an argument from the objective meaning of human life to the existence of God. The result of this argument is that the fact of life's meaning is an axiological problem for the PAE.

First, I will underscore some important terms for this argument. I assume a difference between "objectivity" and "subjectivity".[157]

Purpose Theory (PT) is a philosophical theory about the objective meaning of human life. For PT, God's existence, God's telic creation of human beings, and human libertarian free will

[157] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this difference.

(LFW) are necessary conditions for human life to be objectively meaningful.[158] It is important to note that one need not be a theist to accept PT. Theists and atheists can adopt PT in a manner consistent with their theism or atheism. A theist might accept PT and reason as follows: "If human life is objectively meaningful, then God exists, God created us for a purpose, and we have LFW. But I believe that human life is objectively meaningful. I conclude that God exists, etc."

However, one person's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. An atheist might reason as follows: "I also accept PT. So, if human life is objectively meaningful, then God exists, etc. But I believe that there is no God. I conclude that human life is not objectively meaningful."[159] This conclusion expresses a philosophical position called *nihilism*, which is the view that life lacks objective meaning. According to this view, the non-existence of God is a sufficient condition for the non-existence of objective meaning.

It is also important to underscore that PT does not presuppose theism and that, since PT is consistent with atheism, one would be mistaken to reject PT on the ground that there is no God, Atheists and agnostics can be purpose theorists.

One can argue abductively or deductively that human life's objective meaning supports theism and cuts against atheism. The abductive argument can be articulated as follows. Human life is objectively meaningful. This is an axiological good. This good requires an explanation. The explanation is either theistic or atheistic. Theism explains the meaning of human life better than atheism does. Therefore, the datum of life's meaning provides evidence for theism and against atheism. Thus, the datum of life's meaning poses an axiological problem to the PAE. Below, I present the argument deductively in order to evaluate its premises.

1. If human life is objectively meaningful, then God exists.
2. Human life is objectively meaningful.
3. Therefore, God exists.

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[158] For more on PT, see Chapters 5 and 6 in *Meaning in Life: An Analytic Study* by Thaddeus Metz (2013). See also "Could God's Purpose Be the Source of Life's Meaning?" by Metz (2013). My characterization of PT is consistent with but slightly different from that of Metz.
[159] One can plausibly ascribe such a view to Sartre.

The argument is deductively valid by *modus ponens*. Are the premises plausible? Premise (1) is an abridged version of PT and is reasonable given its explanatory power. First, (1) accounts for the dignity and stability that one would expect to be an inherent aspect an objectively meaningful life. (1) locates the source of axiological significance in a transcendent and perfect reality which is necessary, eternal, and *a se;* its meaning and value are self-contained and thus ontologically independent. The stable and noble purpose of this source gives us something reliable and worthy of pursuit. Tolstoy (1882) holds that human meaning is not just a matter of the mysteriously existent mental activity of "a transitory cohesion of particles". Rather, meaning is found in a reliable and life-fulfilling shore toward which we can "row hard up the stream". [160]

Second, (1) is a tenable analysis of objectivity. An objectively meaningful life is not the invention of a human subject. Human meaning is not whatever Jones, Smith, and a billion others happen to fancy. Sartre (1987:13-17) indicated that an objectively significant human life requires an authoritative (presumably divine) conferring of essence and meaning. Without this bestowal, human beings are confined by subjectivity. Any human meaning is a merely human and subjective creation.

Premise (2) is also plausible. First, one can appeal to an axiological intuition that human lives possess objective worth. Common human experience seems to involve a direct awareness of human value. Second, one can cite Kant's Categorical Imperative (CI). Regardless of whether or not one agrees with Kant in other areas, his CI enjoys broad support, especially the "The

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[160] But one might object: couldn't human meaning be a brute fact? *Response:* Arguably, the existence of God best explains human meaning. In a Godless world, whether a purely naturalistic state of affairs or a world in which transcendent values exist without explanation, there is no sufficient reason to believe that human life matters in an objective sense. In a naturalistic world, how could there be non-physical properties such as meaningfulness and value? And it seems implausible to hold that there are transcendent values such as meaningfulness and purposefulness that just exist without divine grounding, and that these brute values apply to human beings. Why think they should apply to us, of all creatures? What makes us so special? Moreover, how could transcendent objective purposefulness exist if there is no transcendent purposive agent?

Formula of the End in Itself". As persons or rational agents, human beings possess intrinsic rather than merely instrumental value. Thus, we ought to "act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end." (Kant, 1964:96.) Third, one can point to the widespread belief in equal human (moral) rights.[161] If human beings ought to be treated equally, there must be something to ground this equality; this something must be highly significant and common to all humanity, such as an intrinsic and universal value. In sum, most people live as if human life matters in an objective sense. The burden of proof is on the denier of this practical assumption (Chisholm, 1979:15-16, 18).

Consider four objections to my argument. First, one might hold that PT fails because it does not provide the ultimate meaning that PT theorists seek. One might ask: "What is the explanation of God? What is the external purpose or value of God? Is there anything independent of God which confers significance on God?"[162] To such questions, the theist can reply that God exists *a se* and hence contains the source of all meaning and value in the necessity of his own nature.

Second, one can argue that God's telic creation of humanity demeans us. It makes us mere tools of the divine will. It is coercive, exploitative, or otherwise degrading.[163] Here, the theist can respond by noting that, plausibly, God created us as libertarianly free persons and bestowed to us a purpose which we can freely accept or reject. Since this end is for our own flourishing and we are free regarding its appropriation, the end is not degrading, we are not exploited, and we are not coerced.

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[161] To support this claim, one might point to the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which begins: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world …"

[162] Thomas Nagel (1987:99-100) raises such questions.

[163] Metz (2013:206) discusses these objections in "Could God's Purpose Be the Source of Life's Meaning?" In response, Metz imagines God saying to each human being: "There is something I would like you to do with your life, and this is the reason that you exist. Specifically, I would like you to be a moral person. Your free will is such that I cannot cajole you into exercising it morally, and your moral choice would be valuable only if it were made freely. Therefore, I must ask you to pursue the fundamental end of pursuing moral ends."

Third, one might argue that PT makes God irrational. According to PT, God creates human beings for a purpose and endows them with libertarian freedom to accept or reject that purpose. However, logically prior to creation, God does not know how his human creatures will freely choose regarding his purpose. Thus, he cannot adequately plan to accomplish it, which makes him practically irrational. This objection entails that God creates a world which he knows might collapse because of a flaw he intentionally built into the system. Since God is perfect and therefore cannot be irrational, PT is false. I have addressed this objection elsewhere. In short, arguably, if God has middle knowledge, this objection fails.[164]

Fourth, one can try to explain objective human meaning on an atheistic worldview.[165] The problem with this attempt is that it seems ultimately to be unintelligible. McPherson (2020:133-134) aptly underscores this point – he notes that the problem is such that it:

> "affects those who attempt to defend an objectivist account of meaningfulness (i.e., meaning *in* life) while leaving aside the issue of *the* meaning *of* life (see Metz 2013), that is, the issue of how our lives fit into the grand scheme of things and whether there is a cosmic source of [objective] meaning to which we must align our lives, or while denying that there is any such ultimate meaning (see Wolf 1997a, 2013 [2007]). But, again, does it make sense to speak of objective (i.e., strong evaluative) meaning or value in a 'meaningless world' (i.e., a world without any underlying purposiveness) as, for example, Susan Wolf does? I don't see how it does. Here I think we need to acknowledge that a concern for meaning *in* life and a meaningful *life* ultimately requires a concern for *the* meaning *of* life, as a matter of sense-making for claims of strong evaluative meaning or value, which involve [objective] normative demands that are thought to be 'there in any case, whether or not we are responsive to them'."

McPherson proceeds to highlight Thomas Nagel's (1979) view about human meaning in an atheistic world. Nagel holds that human life is absurd precisely because, on atheistic naturalism,

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[164] See Crozat (2018).
[165] Metz (2013) attempts to do this.

our lives are cosmically insignificant even though we (subjectively) take them seriously. As Shakespeare put it, we "strut and fret" even though our lives "signify nothing".

The atheist might push back here and claim that it is just a brute fact that the universe and human life are objectively meaningful, valuable, and purposive. Teleology and value are inherent in the universe, and this is just a fact. To this point, the theist can reply as Craig does to Wielenberg's atheistic moral realism.[166] Moreover, as McPherson (2020:142) notes, it is not clear that this view makes sense, "since it can be argued that believing that the universe as a whole is expressive of a purpose requires a purposive being (namely, God) that created it. Or at least, one might argue that it is best explained in theistic terms."

However, suppose that the objective meaning, value, and purpose of the world and of human life is just a brute fact. Still, on atheistic naturalism, it is not clear why human beings categorically *ought* to align themselves with this meaning and purpose. A human being could recognise the brute objective meaning/purpose and say: "How nice that the world and human life have some cosmic purpose. I'm sure this brute fact makes some people feel special. But I see no reason for living in accordance with it. No authority is commanding me to do so. There's no punishment for failing to do so. And moreover, I'd rather not do so. I want to do things my own way." However, McPherson (2020:143-144) points out that in theism "the universe is seen as a moral order and as expressive of moral purposes, which are the intentions of a perfectly good being … Because theism is personalistic – it holds that the ultimate nature of reality is personal rather than impersonal …" This personalism provides us with a normative morality according to which we ought to live in alignment with the objective meaning and purpose of human life, although as free beings we can choose not to adopt the meaning/purpose.

In this section I have argued that human life is plausibly construed as objectively meaningful. This factor is evidence for theism and against atheism, which indicates that life's meaning poses an axiological problem to the PAE. In the next section, I turn from the abductive arguments in 7.2 to present a separate axiological argument against the PAE.

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[166] See Section 7.2.4.

7.3 Axiological assumptions that undercut the PAE

7.3.1 Introduction

Below, I will argue that there are significant axiological and moral issues which stand under the PAE, and that these conceptually prior underpinnings have not been adequately addressed by advocates of the argument. Thus, the advocates either make unwarranted assumptions or operate without sufficiently developing these assumptions. When evaluating a position such as the conclusion of the PAE, one ought to investigate each of the roots beneath its surface. However, the axiological roots that I address in this chapter have been largely ignored in the relevant literature. The failure to attend to the conceptually prior axiological and moral aspects of the PAE weakens the argument, which thereby constitutes a problem of axiology for the PAE.

7.3.2 The moral and axiological underpinnings of the PAE

To begin, consider an analogy. Currently, many in the U.S. (and no doubt in other countries as well) are deliberating between whether Americans ought to: (a) practice social distancing (e.g., staying at home as much as possible) even if at the expense of economic vitality and personal freedom, or (b) pursue the freedoms and economic goals that many deem crucial to a civilized way of life, even if risking an increase in COVID-19 cases. The former option presupposes that physical health is the greater value in this situation; the latter option emphasises values such as liberty, autonomy, education, and economic capacity. The public debate has mostly operated at this surface level of the issue.[167]

[167] COVID-19 is an infectious respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. The first case was discovered in Wuhan, China in December 2019. By November 2020, the virus had spread throughout the world. Many nations, including the U. S., issued temporary lockdowns or stay-at-home orders to slow the spread. Such orders caused economic hardships, interrupted schooling, and raised public debates about the moral permissibility of government-enforced lockdowns. For example, see Barry and Lazar (2020). Axiological disagreements were also raised concerning whether values such as physical health are more important than other values such as personal freedom. I do not intend to enter this controversy and I do not refer to it in order to take a side. Rather, I refer to it only to provide an example of a public debate which involves important axiological issues which those in the debate neither recognise nor discuss.

If one looks at the deeper philosophical aspects of the issue, however, one realises that there are difficult axiological problems below the surface. For example, assuming there are objective values, philosophers disagree about how many exist. Some claim that there is only one value; as I have indicated, this position is called value monism (VM). Often, value monists claim that pleasure, or the experience of pleasure, is the only value. These proponents of VM are called hedonists. Yet, one can be a value monist by appealing to some other value, say knowledge or physical health. Those who believe that physical health is the only (or at least the most important) value have come to be known as "safetyists". Others hold that there is a plurality of values; this view is referred to as value pluralism (VP). According to VP, there are many values, such as knowledge, wisdom, freedom, friendship, physical health, mental health, and wholesome pleasure. But value pluralists disagree about whether values are comparable. Some say that values stand in relations of better than, worse than, or equal to. Given two values *x* and *y*, *x* is either better than, worse than, or equal to *y*. Others deny this, holding that values cannot be weighed against each other because they do not stand in such relations. For example, the value of wisdom and the value of freedom are each good. However, they do not stand in relations of axiological comparison to each other; thus, wisdom is neither better than, worse than, or equal to freedom.

The mainstream media and various political leaders (at least in the U.S.) sometimes suggest that there is only one value: physical health.[168] However, VM is clearly a controversial position. At other times, the media and politicians suggest that there are many values, but that one (say economic security, physical health, or freedom) is more important that the rest.[169] VP is

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[168] For example, psychologist Pamela Paresky and sociologist Bradley Campbell (2020) write about this point, referring to the idea that physical health is the only value as a version of what Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff have called "safetyism". According to Paresky and Bradley: "Safetyism, a term first used in the book *The Coddling of the American Mind*, by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, denotes a moral culture in which people are unwilling to make trade-offs demanded by other practical and moral concerns. Rather than seeing [physical] safety as one concern among many, it becomes a sacred value." It should be noted here that I am not taking a position on so-called safetyism. Rather, I cite this example to show that there is a public debate about values and that some seem to hold that physical safety is the only value, while others argue that there are many values which must be weighed against one another.

[169] For example, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has argued that although there are many values which are important to recognise during the COVID-10 pandemic, such as economic vitality, freedom of movement, and physical health, he considers physical health to be the most important value (see Arter,

also contested; moreover, to claim that one value is better (or worse) than the rest assumes that values are comparable. However, it is not clear that values are in fact comparable.

Philosophically speaking, the whole matter is fraught with difficulty and disagreement. The answers are not obvious. The resolution of this public debate requires careful attention to and plausible answers regarding the deeper philosophical questions.

Similarly, the resolution of the PAE requires careful attention to and reasonable conclusions about a variety of axiological matters, such as the debate between VM and VP, the debate between value comparabilism and value incomparabilism, the discussion about what entities are value-bearers (substances, states of affairs, etc.), the discussion about whether possible worlds are value-bearers, the discussion of whether possible worlds stand in relations of axiological comparison, and much more. However, philosophers who work on the PAE rarely if ever work through these deeper axiological problems. The PAE cannot be resolved without honest toil on these underlying axiological issues. Thus, the PAE is unjustified until these underlying issues are plausibly addressed in favour of the argument.

There is more to be said about these moral and axiological underpinnings. First, as noted in the introduction of this study, advocates of the PAE seem to operate in terms of objective morality. Given the various arguments against the idea that there can be objective moral values and duties on an atheistic worldview, the advocate of the PAE should provide some reason to support an objective moral framework given the ontology of a world without God. In the literature on the PAE, this is typically not done. This point has been pursued elsewhere, as I have noted in Chapter 1.

Second, recall Chisholm's principle: we should be guided in philosophy by those propositions that we all presuppose in our ordinary activity. We have a right to believe them unless and until there is a sufficient argument to reject them. The burden of proof is on the one who denies them (Chisholm, 1979:15-16,18). The advocate of the PAE holds that the world is

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2020). Elsewhere, Cuomo has used consequentialist reasoning to argue that any government activity is justified for the sake of saving life, saying "I want to be able to say to the people of New York – I did everything we could do, … And if everything we do saves just one life, I'll be happy." (See Hogan, Marsh, and Hicks, 2020.)

negatively valued (NV): it is unworthy of being created by God, either because of its (supposedly) gratuitous evil, or its horrendous evil, or its extensive number of evils, or its unacceptable duration of evil, etc. However, it seems that the vast majority of people believe that the world is, on balance, positively valued. It is worth creating, and life in it is worth living. This collective belief might be a matter of insufficient reflection or unsupported optimism, but that is beside the point. The germane point is that we operate *as if* human life in this world – and the world itself, taken as a whole – is positively valued (PV). This common belief counts against the PAE.

Consider some practical evidence that human beings generally take the world to be PV. First, there is a relatively low global suicide rate; but if the world were NV and most people believed so, one would expect a higher suicide rate. Second, an appeal to common experience suggests that people tend to value their lives and to live as if human life is worth living.[170] Third, the history of public protests against perceived unjust discrimination suggests that people believe their lives, and the world in general, are sufficiently valuable as to justify the time and effort to engage in protest. Fourth, the facts that most adults are open to procreation for themselves and/or others and thus are not antinatalists, and that most adults find antinatalism shocking[171], indicate that human beings generally take life to be worth living. Fifth, our most common and important laws are based on the assumption that human life is worth preserving and that the world is, on balance, PV. For example, the philosophically-educated U.S. Supreme Court justice Neil Gorsuch (2006:158-159) argues the following:

> "We seek to protect and preserve life for life's own sake in everything from our most fundamental laws of homicide to our road traffic regulations to our largest governmental programs for health and social security. We have all witnessed, as well, family, friends, or medical workers who have chosen to provide years of loving care to persons who may suffer from Alzheimer's or other debilitating illnesses precisely because they are human

[170] The use of "life is good" apparel underscores this point. There is actually an apparel company called "Life is Good" (see their website at www.lifeisgood.com).

[171] I am not saying that antinatalism *is* shocking. Given certain presuppositions, it is a reasonable position. However, most adults have never even heard of antinatalism; it has occurred to relatively few adults, and to those who have considered it, it is often taken to be scandalous in virtue of the common assumption that life is worth living.

> persons, not because doing so instrumentally advances some other hidden objective. This is not to say that all persons would always make a similar choice, but the fact that some people have made such a choice is some evidence that life itself is a basic good."

These points indicate a widely-held practical presupposition that the world is PV. This axiological assumption does not conclusively *prove* that the world is PV. However, the assumption indicates that the belief that the world is PV is rational to hold in a practical sense, and that the burden of proof is on the PAE advocate to show otherwise.

7.3.2.1 Normative ethics

Third, the normative ethics of the PAE have not been clearly discussed. The PAE advocate claims that God would not permit evil of a specific kind (e.g., gratuitous, horrendous, inscrutable) and thus that, since the world probably contains evil of this kind, there probably is no God. This argument often seems to be framed in consequentialist terms by advocates of the PAE – i.e., the argument suggests that if God is justified to create any world at all, his world must be free of these sorts of evils; that is, his creative decisions and actions are made morally right/permissible (or wrong/impermissible) by their actualised world-results. Another way to put the argument is to say that God must make the best world he can (i.e., he must axiologically maximise or optimise the world), or at least that he must make a world with results that are acceptable to us, and that his creative activity is justified by its maximised (or at least satisficed) consequences. If the consequences are optimised (or satisficed), then God is justified in creating, but if the consequences fall short, then his creative actions are unjustified. Since the consequences of the world fall short, according to the defender of the PAE, there probably is no divine creator.

Why think that there must be some moral or axiological factor external to God which justifies God? Arguably, a God who is necessarily morally perfect does not need external moral justification for his choices and actions; and arguably, the actions of a perfect being are morally good and morally permissible/justified because they proceed from a perfect character regardless of the consequences of those actions. Furthermore, suppose *arguendo* that God's actions require some external moral justification. Why think that such a factor is consequentialist? Given the many plausible arguments against consequentialism, it is reasonable to hold that God need not live up to consequentialist standards, even if his actions are justified by some standard external to himself.

In any case, my point here is not to argue for or against the claims that God requires justification and that consequentialist is the correct normative theory. I am inclined to believe that God needs no external justification to make his actions morally permissible, and I am inclined to hold that consequentialism is false. But these are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Rather, I raise these points to show that there are axiological issues in the background of the PAE, that PAE advocates usually do not address them, and that the PAE seems to presuppose debatable axiological claims (e.g., that values are objective, that values are comparable, that possible worlds are value-bearers, that possible worlds are comparable in value, that God must be judged consequentialistically, etc.). PAE advocates rarely (if ever) defend – let alone recognise – these presuppositions. The extent to which these presuppositions are unclear and underdeveloped poses a problem for the PAE, since its advocates typically gloss over fundamental issues in axiology and normative ethics.

In response, perhaps the PAE advocate can apply the resources of virtue ethics to the PAE and argue that a God of perfect character (if existent) would not actualise a negatively-valued world (NVW). As such, consequentialist justification does not apply. Rather, one can claim that a being of perfect character would not act in ways that are inconsistent with his character, and hence would not create an NVW. The PAE advocate can then argue that the actual world is probably NV and thus that God (if he were to exist) would not actualise this world of ours. The conclusion would follow that atheism is probably true.

Such a framing of the PAE would raise new and interesting problems. For example, the problem of defining a "perfectly virtuous person" arises. Is such a person made virtuous by the results of his actions? Is such a person virtuous in terms of character such that whatever actions flow from his character are good regardless of result?[172] In any case, one could respond sceptically to the argument in the preceding paragraph. Such scepticism would differ from traditional sceptical theism, which some philosophers view as having consequentialist implication. This scepticism would be axiological rather than a version of sceptical theism. The sceptical reply could be framed as follows: being limited and imperfect, we do not know with certainty what an

[172] I will return to this question in a moment.

unlimited and perfect being would do in an effort to manage the creation and providence of a world like ours, a world with libertarianly free creatures.[173]

One could also respond by appealing to the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE). Alison McIntyre (2018) presents the four conditions of the DDE as follows:

1. The act itself must be morally good or at least indifferent.
2. The agent may not positively will the bad effect but may permit it. If he could attain the good effect without the bad effect he should do so. The bad effect is sometimes said to be indirectly voluntary.
3. The good effect must flow from the action at least as immediately (in the order of causality, though not necessarily in the order of time) as the bad effect. In other words the good effect must be produced directly by the action, not by the bad effect. Otherwise the agent would be using a bad means to a good end, which is never allowed.
4. The good effect must be sufficiently desirable to compensate for the allowing of the bad effect.

She also presents this articulation:

1. that the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent;
2. that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended;
3. that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect;
4. that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect.

David Oderberg (2010:325-326) summarises the DDE in this way:

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[173] This principle would explain why some films about the life of Jesus seem inapt. In such films, Jesus is placed in counterfactual situations that give the screenwriter artistic freedom to write scenes which include thoughts, speech, and behaviour that Jesus *would* or *might* do in such a situation. One problem with such scenes is that an intellectually fallible and morally imperfect human being (the screenwriter) decides what a divine person (operating in his human nature) would do or say. This is a bit like a toddler deciding what a brilliant theoretical physicist or statesman or philosopher would do or say in complex circumstances of physics, statecraft, or philosophy. I am not presupposing the truth of Christianity or even of theism here. I am merely noting that, from the Christian perspective, Jesus is a divine person. In the Christian view of Jesus, one ought to be sceptical of one's ability to know what Jesus would do in such counterfactual situations.

1. The act intended by the agent must be at least permissible.
2. The good effect of this act must follow from it at least as immediately as its evil effect.
3. The evil effect must itself not be intended.
4. There must be a proportionate, or sufficiently serious, reason for causing [i.e., permitting] the evil effect.

According to the DDE, if God's actualisation of the world meets the four conditions, then God has an adequate reason for permitting the evil in the world. Arguably, (1) is met. The act of actualising the world is good.[174] (2) seems clearly to be met: any good in the world which follows from its creation is as immediate as any evil which follows. Arguably, (3) is met as well. If human beings have morally significant LFW, then one can argue that moral evils are caused by created persons, and not by God. God does not intend but merely permits those evils. (4) is likely to be the most controversial condition. However, the atheist and agnostic are hard-pressed to show plausibly, let alone prove, that the goods in the world do not justify the evils permitted.

However, one might be concerned that the DDE is a deontic theory. It is a theory about morally obligatory, permissible, and prohibited acts. God, one might argue, does not have any moral obligations or prohibitions, and does not need permission for his actions. As a perfect being, his actions are always morally good. Additionally, there is no moral authority higher than God, and thus no authority to issue commands, prohibitions, or permissions to God. Therefore, the DDE cannot apply to divine actions.

One way to respond to this objection is to note that although God's actions are not under any moral law, his virtue is such that he acts in harmony with the moral law as if he were under it. One could then modify the DDE to be consistent with such divine counterfactuals. This response seems sufficient to repel the objection.

At this point in the dialectic, a concern is lingering. Recall that the PAE presupposes the world contains evil that God would not allow. Why would God not permit a world that contains an amount or type of evil thought to be unacceptable, as the PAE advocates assume? The answer

[174] Philosophers such as Benatar might object here. I take up Benatar's position in section 7.4.

seems to be that God is good. This reiterates the question raised earlier in this section: what does it mean to be a good person?

The PAE advocate seems to assume something like the following answer to this question: a good person is a rational and moral agent who acts in such a way as to bring about good consequences and to prevent evil consequences. *Prima facie*, this appears to be a consequentialist definition of "good person"; but a non-consequentialist (such as a virtue ethicist or a deontologist) is under no commitment to accept this kind of definition. Moreover, if the non-consequentialist can provide a plausible definition of "good person" which does not appeal to consequences of behaviour, then it seems the non-consequentialist has a reasonable objection to the PAE.

Linda Zagzebski (2017:43) has recognised the relevance of this question to the problem of evil. She notes that versions of the problem articulated by Mackie, Tooley, and Rowe presuppose the same (apparently consequentialist) definition of "good person". She concludes that "they all affirm a connection between being a good person and acting with the aim of eliminating evil. Since the aim of preventing evil is almost always connected with the aim of producing good, an initial formulation of the implied assumption is the following:

2. A good person aims at producing good and preventing evil."

However, setting aside its circularity (i.e., a "good" person is defined in terms of "good" actions) there are problems with this definition. First, it seems too narrow. A good person might justly have other aims in mind. Additionally, the property of producing good and preventing evil might be neither necessary nor sufficient for being a good person. Zagzebski (2017:44), for example, notes:

> "(2) raises a number of questions because good persons do much more than aim at producing good and preventing evil. Among other things, good persons attempt to *be* good persons …, and the connection between being a good person and aiming to produce good and eliminate evil is not obvious. It is even possible that there can be a conflict between being a good person – having a good will and good motives – and aiming to do acts that have good consequences. A good person might aim to perform acts that have a certain character rather than to produce certain consequences, or a good person might act in a way that expresses a quality or state such as love, without aiming at producing good in

the outcome. This means that we should not accept (2) until the connections among a good person, good acts, and good aims have been clarified."

Second, the definition in (2) seems ambiguous. The relation between the properties of being a good person and of producing good consequences/preventing evil consequences is unclear. Zagzebski (2017:44-45) describes the ambiguity as follows:

> "But even if (2) is true, that does not tell us anything about why or how the property of being a good person is connected to the property of producing good and eliminating evil. If one property is more basic than the other, (2) does not tell us that. Here are two opposing possibilities, both of which are compatible with (2): 2a. A condition for being a good person is aiming at producing good states of affairs and preventing evil states of affairs. 2b. A condition for something being a good state of affairs and something else an evil state of affairs is that a good person aims at producing the former and preventing the latter. The difference between (2a) and (2b) is striking, even though both are compatible with the thesis [2] that a good person aims at bringing about good and preventing evil. According to (2a), aiming to eliminate evil is a more basic property than being a good person…. But according to (2b), … The property of being a good person is more basic than the property of aiming to eliminate evil."

Here, Zagzebski raises the old question concerning which condition has priority: the right or the good? She continues (2017:45-46):

> "Similarly, we could affirm (2) because we think (2a) is true … Alternatively, we could affirm (2) because we think (2b) is true …"

(2a) and (2b) are by no means the only ways good personhood and the aim of eliminating evil can be connected in a way that is compatible with (2). The goodness of persons and the goodness or evil of the states of affairs at which persons aim could each be connected with some third thing, the goodness of which is more basic than either persons or states of affairs, such as good acts. Another possibility is that there is a general correlation between being a good person and having certain aims, with no deep connection between them at all (like the connection Jane Austen thought obtained between being virtuous and living in the country) …

Typical proponents of the argument from evil, as well as most of its attackers, assume (2) in the sense of (2a) … Notice that the argument from evil does not get off the ground if (2b) is

used instead. With (2b), the apparent fact that a perfectly good God permits the states of affairs of this world would not be grounds for retracting the hypothesis that God is good. Rather, it would be grounds for retracting the judgment that those states of affairs are evil …"

Zagzebski (2017:48) astutely notes that (2a) implies consequentialism. As such, at least some of the well-known and powerful objections to consequentialism are also objections to (2a), and thus to any PAE which assumes (2a). Zagzebski (2017:51-52) also points out that the consequentialist view of what it means to be a good person fails to understand the structure of a life and what makes it good. The moral life is not merely a matter of maximising consequences, "[b]ut when it comes to morality, our aim … is to be a good person, to act in the right way as a human being" (Oderberg, 2000:1). Willard concurs, writing that being a good person is a matter of character, good will, and virtue, not merely a matter of bringing about good consequences and preventing evil ones.[175] And as McPherson (2020:32) puts it, the moral life is about being responsive to the demands of virtue. Such demands may have nothing to do with the consequences of one's actions.

How does this point about virtuous persons apply to God? Consider two points. First, the consequentialist definition (2a) holds that aiming at producing good states of affairs and preventing evil states of affairs is a condition for being a good person. Arguably, this definition entails that a person's goodness is an extrinsic value[176]; i.e., it is a value that the person derives from something external to the person insofar as the person stands in the appropriate relation to that external factor. To be a good person is to produce good consequences and to prevent evil ones. Hence, a good person is good insofar as he stands in the appropriate relation to good consequences and evil consequences. For the theist, this definition of "good person" cannot apply to God (assuming that God is in some sense a personal being), for God possesses the property of aseity. As such, God does not derive his value or his goodness from external factors. God is inherently, intrinsically, and self-sufficiently good. If the PAE presupposes (2a) as a definition of "good person", then the theist has a reasonable objection to the PAE. Second, we might think that God's good character gives him a reason to actualise a positively valued world (PVW) with created

[175] See Chapter 3. See also Willard's (2020) *The Good Person: A Matter of the Heart*.
[176] See Chapters 3 and 5 for detailed commentaries on the topics of intrinsic and extrinsic value.

persons endowed with libertarian free will (LFW), and that God permits moral evil in the PVW because he gives us LFW. This freedom is both an intrinsic good and an instrument enabling other intrinsic goods. As a perfectly good person, God will not violate our freedom or manipulate, coerce, or exploit us in order to ensure that we do not introduce moral evil into the world. As such, the objector to the PAE can turn the structure of the PAE as follows: if God is a perfect personal being, then he would create a world which is PV and hence worthy of creation. God is a perfect personal being. Thus, the world is PV and worthy of creation.

7.3.2.2 Value monism, value pluralism, and value comparabilism

Let us set this problem aside for now. I will take it up again in section 7.4, where I will address the problem of combinatorial optimisation. For now, another problem arises in that the PAE defender usually takes no clear position on an important aspect of axiology: the debate between value monism (VM) and value pluralism (VP).

We have already distinguished between intrinsic and extrinsic values. The PAE holds that the actual world is negatively valued due, for example, to its bad-making properties of gratuitous evil, horrendous evil, excessive number of evils, or whatever. Suppose that this overall negative value is a matter of intrinsic value (or disvalue), although advocates of the PAE typically do not address axiology in a manner sufficient to apply concepts such as intrinsic and extrinsic value. Typically, advocates of the PAE take no position on whether the intrinsic evil in the world should be construed as monistic or as pluralistic. However, this is a significant topic that needs to be addressed in order to construct an adequately strong PAE.[177]

Suppose VP is the case. To reiterate, VP is the view that there is a multiplicity of values in the world, rather than just one value. Sir Isaiah Berlin, George Crowder, Martha Nussbaum, Thomas Nagel, John Finnis, and others have argued for VP (Hansson, 2018:503).[178] In fact,

[177] For instance, suppose *arguendo* that VM is the case. There is only one value: personal excellence. In this case, Hick's vale of soul-making seems to answer the PAE nicely. This world of trial and trouble is a means to cultivating personal excellence for human persons, and ultimately personal excellence is the only value. Hence, the world is positively-valued.

[178] There are different versions of VP. There is VP concerning value-bearers, i.e., that different things bear values, such as both substances and states of affairs. Call this Value-bearer Pluralism (VBP). There

Cowan (2020:17) claims that most philosophers are value pluralists. PAE advocates usually do not take a position on VM and VP; this lack of attention to axiology weakens the PAE. Furthermore, arguably, the PAE presupposes that values are comparable, since it presupposes that worlds are comparable with respect to their axiological properties. For example, the PAE advocate suggests that the actual world is unworthy of creation, which implies that there is a standard for creation-worthiness against which the actual world can be compared, thus suggesting that there is a possible world (or at least a possible world-type) worthy of actualisation, and that we can compare the actual world to this possible world (or world-type). As Hansson (2018:503) notes, value statements have a comparison class, at least implicitly if not explicitly. Since PAE advocates make value statements about the world, they are (at least implicitly) addressing a comparison class. Rescher (2011:492) asserts that the claims that the world is optimal and that the world is improvable, presuppose an objective standard for axiological world assessment.

However, the assertion that values themselves are comparable is a controversial position in axiology. One way for values to be comparable is for them to be commensurable, which requires that the values are measurable according to a universally applicable unit-scale. In this regard, Ruth Chang (2015:205) notes: "Two items are incommensurable just in case they cannot be put on the same scale of units of value, that is, there is no cardinal unit of measure that can represent the value of both items. Two items are incomparable just in case they fail to stand in an evaluative comparative relation, such as being better than or worse than or equally as good as the other." In short, comparability is wider in scope than commensurability. Two items *x* and *y* might fail to stand in a relation of commensurability with respect to one another, yet still stand in some non-commensurable relation of comparability such that *x* is either axiologically better than, worse than, or equal to *y*.[179] As Chang (2015:207) notes, incommensurability does not entail incomparability, but incomparability entails incommensurability.

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is VP about values themselves, such as love, wisdom, flourishing, justice, and religious values concerning God. And there is VP about value-makers. What makes something a value? Can there be more than one value-maker? The view that there can be more than one value-maker is called value-maker pluralism (VMP).

[179] Ruth Chang calls this the *trichotomous comparison*.

Chang (2015:208) claims that no two items are comparable *simpliciter*. Rather, they are comparable with respect to a covering consideration V, which represents a single consideration or multiple considerations in which the two items are comparable. For instance, a car and a bicycle are comparable with respect to a V of speed; the former is faster (and hence better with respect to speed) than the latter. However, if V is a matter of physical exercise, then the bicycle is better than the car.

According to Chang (2015:205-206), many philosophers also hold that one is justified in choosing one alternative over another only if the first alternative is in some relevant respect better or as good as the second. If it is false that the two alternatives stand in a relation of comparability with respect to each other and to a covering relation V, then the alternatives are incomparable. For example, suppose that Jones is considering a vacation, and his alternatives are Tahiti and Iceland. It might be argued that the trichotomous comparisons of better than, worse than, and equally good do not apply. Tahiti has beautiful island scenery and reefs. It is warmer and affords scuba-diving opportunities. Jones is interested in learning more about the voyages of Captain James Cook. With respect to these covering values (supposing the values hold between the two), the Tahitian vacation is better. Iceland has beautiful fjords and waterfalls. It also has a history which Jones finds interesting. For example, Jones wants to learn more about the Scandinavian settlement of Iceland. With respect to these covering values (again, supposing they hold), the Icelandic vacation is better. However, suppose these covering values do not hold between the two vacations. Each vacation has intrinsic value. But neither seems better than the other, nor do they seem equally good. They are incomparable.[180]

Value theorists have provided plausible arguments to support the position that values are incomparable and/or incommensurable, either in a universal sense (no values stand in relations

[180] Another example of intrinsic values which might be incomparable is persons. Persons are ends in themselves and thus intrinsically valuable. Arguably, persons do not stand in the axiological relations of *better tha*n or *worse than*. Moreover, arguably, they do not stand in the axiological relation of *equal to*. Consider Person A, Person B, and Person C. If A loves B and B dies, A will not be satisfied to replace B with C. Both B and C are ends in themselves and thus intrinsically valuable, but they are not equal replacements for one another. They do not stand in axiological relations of *better than* or *worse than*, and plausibly, they do not stand in the *equal to* relation. They are incomparable in terms of their axiological value.

of comparability) or in a particular sense (some but not all values are incomparable), and either in an ontic sense or in an epistemic sense. It is widely accepted among axiologists that, assuming there are intrinsic values, either VM or VP is the case. To reiterate, VM is the view that, fundamentally, there is only one value. For example, as the hedonists claim, all bearers of value are valuable insofar as they are pleasant. If values appear to be valuable in respects other than being pleasurable (e.g., virtues, persons, and knowledge might be thought valuable), they are either not intrinsic values or they are intrinsic values which reduce to pleasure.

Some philosophers have argued that, if VP is the case, then values are incomparable, either in a universal or in a particular sense, and either in an ontic or an epistemic sense. It should be noted that VP alone does not entail that values are incomparable. In principle, if there is more than one intrinsic value, it does not follow straight away that these values cannot be compared to one another. But VP in conjunction with other premises might entail that values are incomparable.[181] In any case, the majority of those who affirm value incomparabilism are value pluralists. Others have argued that, even on VM, values might be incomparable in some sense. Chang (1997:16-17) has argued, with reference to John Stuart Mill, that on VM values can have both qualitative and quantitative features which combine to make them incomparable to one another. Lastly, Ralf Bader (2015:179-180) has argued that, in the case of VP, there is no clearly best way to weigh and compare values, and that one risks acting in an arbitrary manner if one selects one of the many ways to do so.

How does the PAE presuppose the comparability of values? The argument holds that the world is one that God would not create if God were to exist. The world is not worth creating; it is NV (i.e., it is an overall bad world, not a good one, and not worthy of being valued). But “negative value” and “bad” are relative terms which makes sense only in relation a comparison class which contains some standard. Broome (1999:171) argues that when we say that something is bad, we mean that it is worse than some standard of comparison that would (or at least could) obtain. For example, to say that Smith is a bad driver makes sense in the context of a class of drivers who are competent and can be compared to one another in terms of competence insofar as they meet

[181] For example, one can appeal to the so-called “small improvement” argument. See Hsieh (2016).

some standard for competence. But perhaps “Smith is a good driver” makes sense in a different comparison class, say, the context of the class of the 100 worst drivers in the world, compared to which Smith is relatively good.

What, then, is the standard for calling the world “bad” or “negatively valued” or “not worth creating”? That standard is a PVW (either a world-type or a world-token of that type which is worthy of being valued) in a comparison class of value-bearing worlds (or world-types). For present purposes, let us say that a PVW is a world worthy of actualisation by a perfect being. According to the PAE advocate, the actual world fails to meet this standard. Therefore, the standard is some possible but non-actual world, i.e., a world that is worthy of God’s creation and which God could have created but did not.[182] Note that a possible world is a complete and logically consistent state of affairs, and that a state of affairs is a value-bearer. Hence, the PAE advocate assumes that possible worlds are value-comparable value-bearers which possess good-making or bad-making properties and belong to a comparison class. Why assume this? Shouldn’t the PAE advocate support this assumption? Given the plausible arguments against value comparability, the PAE advocate has some explaining to do. In Chang’s (2015:212) opinion, many – and perhaps all – value comparisons across all possible worlds are not proper subjects of philosophical investigation.[183] Rather, value comparisons are more profitable for philosophical examination if they are made with respect to the actual world. When thinking about the incomparability of values, she writes, “[W]e should focus our attention on bearers of value that are alternatives for choice in a choice situation in the actual world.” (Chang, 2015:212.)

Chang’s point might be that possible worlds cannot be compared ontically (i.e., they do not stand in axiological relations of comparability), or that they cannot be compared epistemically by us (i.e., they stand in such relations, but we cannot grasp these relations). Either way, however, if her point is plausible, then the PAE advocate needs to address it. Furthermore, Chang (2015:218) notes that if values are incomparable, then it seems the existentialists are correct: we are radically free to choose, and in choosing we invent our own values. I do not claim that human

[182] Would this be an admission that God’s existence is possible? This is an interesting question that I cannot pursue here.
[183] Here, Chang seems to agree with Kant (2004:149) that we cannot compare possible worlds.

beings are in this position of radical freedom. However, if possible worlds are incomparable in terms of value, then perhaps God's choice of which world to actualise is a radically free choice by a morally perfect, omniscient, and omnipotent being. In other words, although God himself is perfect, his choice to create is radically free in the existentialist sense. Nothing external to God dictates what choice he ought to make in creating the world. His choice is, by his choosing, a good choice.[184] The proponent of the PAE ought to address this point.

Moreover, philosophers such as William Mann, Stephen Grover, and Klaas Kray have interacted with arguments to the effect that at least some possible worlds are value-incomparable. For example, Kray (2011) has argued that possible worlds cannot be compared axiologically.[185] As such, the PAE advocate has some explaining to do. He needs to recognise and work through these important axiological issues.

If the PAE defender is a value pluralist, then he may have a reason to deny that values are comparable; perhaps he finds that they are incomparable either in the sense of onticism or epistemicism. Such a denial would seem to undercut the PAE. At the very least, the strength of the PAE is quite unclear until these axiological wrinkles are ironed out. Moreover, the PAE objector might be a value pluralist and/or incomparabilist, which might give him a reason to doubt the PAE.

Nevertheless, suppose the PAE defender is a value monist. As such, he might be able to justify his value comparisons by an appeal to value monism. Values can be compared because there is only one value, and they all belong to one and the same category. Thus, within the comparison class, each value-bearer is comparable to every other bearer because they all bear the same value (say, pleasure). However, the PAE defender who is a value monist thereby inherits an obligation to defend VM, especially considering that most philosophers ascribe to VP. Why accept VM, given the arguments against VM and arguments for VP? Furthermore, what is the

[184] I do not personally hold to this voluntarist view. However, it is one that an objector to the PAE could make. Hence, the PAE advocate needs to address it.
[185] My point here is not to affirm Kraay's position, but rather to note that his argument indicates that value incomparabilism is defensible concerning the comparability of possible worlds. This poses an axiological problem for the PAE.

sole existing value? Is it pleasure? Why should pleasure (or whatever value the PAE defender selects) be the one and only value? The onus is on the champion of the PAE to answer these and other related questions.

Furthermore, suppose the PAE defender accepts and adequately defends VM. Still, even in terms of VM, values might be incomparable, either universally or locally, and either ontically or epistemically. Moreover, the value of worlds might be incomparable. Consider recent work done in population ethics, which is a relatively young field. One important area of population ethics is population axiology. In this branch of axiology, it is natural to ask comparative questions about the values of possible worlds; but, it is widely recognised by philosophers working in population axiology that the task of comparing worlds in terms of value is fraught with difficulty. For example, M.A. Roberts (2015:419) writes that doing population axiology requires doing modal ethics, and that "Few conclusions can be clearly drawn in this area." Moreover, Hilary Greaves and Toby Ord (2017:136) observe that "the reaction of any honest inquirer has to be one of uncertainty about population axiology". This uncertainty can plausibly be extended to the axiological issues pertaining to the PAE, and thus to the PAE itself.

I suggest that there is an epistemic principle of axiological uncertainty (PAU) which holds that the complexity of axiological comparisons among possible worlds is such that we ought to be uncertain about our ability to engage in such comparisons. This complexity might be explained ontically or epistemically. In any case, the PAU is based on axiological considerations rather than on philosophy of religion or philosophical theology. However, plausibly, the principle is relevant for application in evaluating the PAE.

My point here is not to argue for VP or VM. I suspect VP is true with regard to values themselves and to value-bearers. In Robert Audi's (2005:129) view, VP is "more plausible and provides a richer base" than VM. I do not have space to develop these points further here, and neither is my goal to take a position on whether values are comparable or incomparable, although I suspect that at least some values are comparable and therefore that VP does not entail universal

value incomparability.[186] Furthermore, I am not attempting to engage in population axiology. Rather, my point is to note that the axiology of the PAE is rich and complicated. Few, if any, philosophers who defend the PAE have also published in a manner which engages substantively with its axiology. The PAE advocate ought not to leave this axiology underdeveloped. The rigorous PAE defender owes a thorough treatment of PAE axiology. To the extent that the PAE defender ignores the axiological factors that pertain to the PAE, this lack of attention weakens the PAE as it currently stands.

Furthermore, consider another axiological view, namely, that of Rescher (2004:103). He has argued that optimal value (i.e. a value which can have equals, but no better can exist) is bound to prevail among possible options for world actualisation. This is called the axiogenetic optimality principle (AOP). He writes: "The result is that things exist, and exist as they do, because this is for the (metaphysically) best." He continues: "In sum, a Law of Optimality prevails; value enjoys an existential impetus so that it lies in the nature of things that (one of) the best of available alternatives is realized." In other words, the *modus operandi* of reality works toward a *telos* of optimisation.[187] Rescher also refers to this principle as "axiogenesis". It is a version of what John Leslie has coined "Axiarchism", which is the view (dating to Plato) that the world exists because it is *good* that it exists.[188] I am not at this point supporting Rescher, but if he is right, then no actual world can be an NV world. The PAE advocate needs to provide an answer to Rescher on this point. I will address this topic further in the next section.

At this point in the dialectic, the PAE advocate might respond that one is justified in pursuing the PAE without first solving the difficult conceptually prior issues of axiology. "Fair enough," the theist might respond. However, such a presentation of the PAE will be as weak as it is axiologically shallow, since the axiological depths of the argument have yet to be examined. The PAE supporter need not *solve* these axiological problems, but he ought to provide plausible

[186] See, for example, Chapter 3 of Rescher (2004) in which he argues that there is a plurality of values, that they are hierarchical and thus comparable, and that moral relativism is false.
[187] This is not a matter of normative consequentialism, as if reality were morally justified by the consequences of its actions. Rather, this is suggested as a descriptive fact about how reality operates.
[188] See Roberts (2014).

replies to them. The theist can reasonably conclude that he is under no obligation to accept an axiologically-shallow PAE.

7.3.3 Conclusion

In this section, I have argued that failure to examine the conceptually prior axiological and moral aspects of the PAE weaken the argument, and that this factor undercuts the PAE. In the next section, I will discuss the intractability of the PAE.

7.4 The intractability and inscrutability of the PAE

7.4.1 Introduction

In this section, I argue that the actual world contains a complicated nexus of goods and evils – including past goods and evils, and the possibility of goods and evils not yet actualised, that the existence of this nexus presents a difficult problem of combinatorial optimisation (CO), and that this problem poses a challenge for the PAE, plausibly rendering it intractable.[189] In other words, the axiological status of the world is for us something like a combinatorial explosion.[190] The solution to a combinatorial explosion is intractable for human beings. McPherson (2020:69) writes that, given the limits of time, energy, resources, and circumstances of human life, human beings cannot properly appropriate into our lives every good that there is. I take this point further. Human beings cannot *know* every good and evil that there is, nor can we know how valuable they are, how they relate to one another, and how they influence the value of the world as a whole. As Kant might put it, we can only know a small part of the axiological status of the world. The system is too vast and complicated for us to understand it in its entirety: hence, we are not in the epistemic position to judge reliably that the world is negatively valued (NV). Insofar as the PAE holds that the world is NV, my argument in this section highlights a weakness of the PAE.

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[189] I will not discuss in detail each of the specific goods and evils that are included in this nexus. Instead, I will focus on the complexity of the nexus itself. The goods and evils addressed in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively, and the ones addressed in 7.2, serve as an outline of the kinds of goods and evils in the nexus.

[190] See Section 7.1 for a definition of “combinatorial explosion”.

7.4.2 Combinatorial optimisation and knapsack problems

The effort to weigh goods against evils in order to measure the nexus of value in the world *in toto* is like a highly complicated 0/1 knapsack problem. This is a problem in CO, which is an area of study in applied mathematics relevant to computer science, decision theory, and other disciplines. CO is the process of finding an optimal solution given a finite set of values and a finite set of alternative solutions within a limited domain. The larger the domain and the more options and values available, the more difficult the process of optimisation becomes. If the complexity becomes intractable for human beings, then the problem is a combinatorial explosion.

According to the 0/1 knapsack problem, given a set of *n* items – each of which has a precise value *v* and weight *w* – and a knapsack with a precise weight limit (i.e., carrying capacity) W, one has the goal of placing items in the knapsack in a manner which maximises the cumulative value V of items while not exceeding W. For each item, one either chooses it in whole or declines it in whole – hence, the "0/1" characteristic of the problem, which refers to its binary logic. Items cannot be split or selected in percentages.

For example, suppose Jones is shopping for school supplies for his daughter to prepare for the start of the elementary school year. Jones purchases a school backpack with W of 10 pounds. Jones then attempts to fill the backpack with supplies such as packages of pencils, erasers, and paper, and binders and notebooks. Each item has a precise *w* and *v*. No item can be divided; each must be selected or rejected in its entirety. Jones seeks to maximise V without exceeding W, thereby equipping his daughter in optimal fashion for the first day of school. To complete this task, Jones needs to know *w* and *v* for each item. He needs to know W, and he also needs to know the number of items he can fit in the backpack. With this information, he can calculate V.

In principle, 0/1 knapsack problems are solvable. For example, one can construct a matrix to account for the items, weights, and values; mathematical calculation handles the rest. However, a precise solution requires that, for any subject S, S knows the exact weight limit of the knapsack, the precise value and weight of each item, the exact number of items in the set, and the combinatorial alternatives.

7.4.3 Knapsack problems and the PAE

How is the knapsack problem relevant to the PAE? To start, it seems we will benefit from an axiological classification system. Consider the following axiological classification system. For any possible world, the world as a whole is either a positively-valued world (PVW), a negatively-valued world (NVW), or an axiologically-neutral world (ANW). A PVW is one in which its objective goods outweigh its objective evils in a manner that is both quantitatively and qualitatively appropriate. Alternatively, a PVW is one which is worthy or fitting of being valued.[191] An NVW is one in which its objective evils outweigh its objective goods in the appropriate way; or, an NVW is one which is worthy or fitting of being disvalued. An ANW is one in which its objective goods and evils are equally opposed in the appropriate way, making the world axiologically counterbalanced; i.e., it is neither worthy of being valued nor worthy of being disvalued. According to the classification system, at the ontic level every possible world is either a PVW, an NVW, or an ANW.[192]

The PAE presupposes that God would not create a world with a certain bad-making property (i.e., a specific kind or degree of evil), such as too many cases of evil, or gratuitous evil, or horrendous evil, or the like.[193] I will use the term "NVW" to denote a world which includes the unacceptable bad-making property with which the PAE is concerned. In short, the PAE advocate argues as follows: given that an NVW possesses an unacceptable bad-making property, an NVW is not worth creating.[194] Accordingly, the PAE holds that God would not actualise an NVW.[195] With

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[191] See the discussion of the fitting-attitude (FA) analysis of value in Chapter 3.

[192] This ontic classification would hold even if, epistemically, we cannot know which worlds fit into which category.

[193] It should be noted that "gratuitous" and "horrendous" evils are not the same. An evil is gratuitous if permitting it is not necessary to bring about a greater good which would justify its permission, and allowing it is not required to prevent the occurrence of an equally bad or worse evil. An evil can be gratuitous but not horrendous; for example, a hangnail which serves no purpose, although a minor inconvenience which is slightly painful, is not a horrendous evil. A horrendous evil is, as Marilyn McCord Adams (2017:12) defines it, one in which "participation in it constitutes *prima facie* reason to believe that the participant's life cannot be good to him/her on the whole".

[194] As Schopenhauer (1818:373) might say, such a world is "a business which doesn't cover its costs". And as David Benatar (2017:1-2) claims, in the actual world, human life is awful; even the best human lives contain more badness than goodness. Schopenhauer and Benatar would seem to agree that the actual world is an NVW. I will return to this point shortly.

[195] One benefit for articulating the PAE in this way is that it is a flexible construction into which a specific bad-making property such as gratuitous evil or horrendous evil can be inserted. The PAE defender might

this point in mind, consider the following value assumption: *God would not actualise an NVW* (i.e., the existence of God is incompatible with the existence of an actualised NVW). With this assumption in place, consider the following CO version of the PAE, which I will call the COPAE:

1. God would not actualise an NVW. (*Value Assumption*)
2. Therefore, if God exists, the actual world is not an NVW. (*from 1*)
3. Probably, the actual world is an NVW. (*Pessimistic Premise*)
4. Therefore, probably, God does not exist. (*from 2, 3*)

A PVW is neither an NVW nor an ANW. However, a PVW is more than just a matter of its objective goods quantitatively outweighing its objective evils, even if the outweighing appropriately accounts for quantitative, qualitative, and distributional factors in that world. Plausibly, a PVW achieves CO: its objective goods numerically outweigh its objective evils, its objective goods are maximised, its objective evils are minimised so as not to exceed a specific limit, and the value of the world is optimised (or at least satisficed).

In other words, in a PVW, there is a limit E, which is the maximum amount of evil (quantitative, qualitative, and distributional, however the appropriate calculation between these three factors is to be handled) which the world can bear while still counting as PVW. There is also a set of *n* goods, each of which has a precise value *v*+, and a set of *n* evils, each of which has a precise value *v*-. A PVW would have a roughly maximised cumulative value of goods V without exceeding E. There might be a range of CO between a V that is minimally optimised but still PV and a V which is, precisely speaking, maximally optimised. Let us say that a minimally optimised world is *good enough*; i.e., such a world is satisficed and thus qualifies as a PVW. Such a range introduces the possibility that God creates a world which is PV and thus worth creating, yet which is not the best of all possible worlds.[196]

Accordingly, an NVW would be any world which fails to achieve minimal PVW status, and which falls short of being an ANW, where an ANW is any world which is neither PV nor NV. For

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want to use this flexibility by saying that, even if God is justified in permitting gratuitous evil, there is some other kind evil in the world such that its presence makes the world NV.

[196] This move might appeal to those philosophers who believe that there is no best possible world.

example, on the assumptions that (i) God would not actualise a world with the bad-making property of gratuitous evil, and (ii) no ANW can contain gratuitous evil, a world with gratuitous evil would be an NVW.

Consider the pessimistic premise (3) of COPAE: *probably, the actual world is an NVW*. Recall that, assuming possible worlds are value-bearers, at the ontic level every possible world is either a PVW, an NVW, or an ANW. Assume also that possible worlds are axiologically comparable, and thus it is logically and conceptually possible to determine that the world is an NVW. To determine this from the bottom up, it seems that one would need to know the exact number of goods *g* in the world's set of goods (these goods would be past, present and future), the precise value *v*+ of each good in the set, the exact number of evils *e* in the world's set of evils (past, present, and future), the precise value *v*- of each evil in the set, and the specific limit E for the world. As with 0/1 knapsack problems, this task is knowable in principle. However, I suggest that no human being is cognitively equipped to complete this task because we cannot complete an exhaustive (or brute-force) search for the problem. The axiology of the world is like a knapsack problem. The problem is a form of combinatorial explosion, and such problems are intractable for humans to solve and inscrutable for us to grasp. Thus, *the task of evaluating the world is intractable and inscrutable for us*. The PAE holds that the evaluation of the world is negative; however, given the intractability of such as evaluation, the PAE is undercut.

Our knowledge of past, present, and future goods and evils is insufficient for this task of evaluation: we are not aware of all the goods in the complete set of goods, and we are not aware of all the evils in the complete set of evils. For example, we are not aware of basic physical goods that occurred 20 000 years ago, and we are not aware of psychological goods that will occur 5 000 years in the future (supposing there will be such goods), nor are we aware of the complex axiological and other sorts of relations that might hold between these goods (assuming they stand in such relations).

Moreover, we are not cognisant of all the goods and evils which are contemporary with us, nor do we grasp all the relations in which they stand.[197] For example, one does not know all the goods and evils that one's closest friend has done. Indeed, it is plausible to claim that one does not know all of the goods and evils that he himself has done. *A fortiori*, one does not know all the goods and evils in this world. On this point, George Eliot's (1871-72:Finale) line is quite plausible: "[F]or the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a *hidden life* [my emphasis], and rest in unvisited tombs." The moral life is to a great extent a hidden life; many of our morally significant thoughts, choices, and acts are unknown by other human beings, and even unknown to ourselves. Kant (1793:8) argues that a man's maxims are not observable, even by himself in many cases.

Nevertheless, even if we could know every morally significant thought, choice, and act by every human being, we still cannot know every possible result of each human action in the world, nor can we calculate the probabilities of each possible result. Concerning human rationality and the feasibility of optimisation, Klaas Kray (2013:5) indicates, "Given our physiological and psychological limitations, no human being has enough information or computational capacity to do what traditional optimizing or maximizing accounts of rationality require: namely, to (1) identify every possible outcome of an action, to (2) determine the value of each one, and (3) to assess the probability of each one's occurring." Moreover, I would note, even if some human being could have sufficient information in a dispositional sense, it is unlikely that he could have the relevant occurrent information and could manipulate it appropriately in order to optimise accurately.

Furthermore, our ability to grasp the precise value of each good and evil in the world is inadequate. Even if we were conscious of every good and every evil, and of all the relations in which they stand, it is reasonable to argue that we cannot discover the exact value of each. For example, Socrates (2009:829) noted in Plato's *Republic*: "The law [of reason], I suppose, declares that it is best to keep quiet as far as possible in calamity and not to chafe and repine, because we

[197] We are assuming here that these goods stand in relations of comparison. But this is a debatable assumption, as noted in Section 7.3. Perhaps some of these goods are incomparable – either ontically or epistemically.

cannot know what is really good and evil in such things …" Rescher (2011:489) makes a similar point: "The claim that this is the best possible world may seem to be absurd because so much appears to be amiss with the world. The idea that the world is improvable, however, is not without problems." He continues: "One key obstacle that stands in the way of the Improvability Argument is the pervasive interconnectedness of things … There just is no real prospect of local tinkering with the world without wider ramifications. In this world – and indeed in any possible world – states of affairs are inter-connected and local changes always have pervasive consequences. Any local fix always has involvements throughout, and in consequences no tweaking or tinkering may be able to effect an improvement." (Rescher, 2011:493-494.)

Rescher further argues that any change in any part of reality has effects in all other parts of reality. The world is a highly complex and tightly woven web in which the cutting of any thread might lead to the unravelling of the whole. For example, removing Hitler or Stalin (or some other evil) from the world with the goal of improving it might cause a butterfly effect which could destabilise the world with terrible consequences which may be even worse than those brought about by Hitler and Stalin. Even an omnipotent and omniscient creator would need to take this butterfly effect into account when actualising the world. Such attempts to modify the world or to replace it with what we believe is a better one "lie beyond our feeble powers" (especially if the world is a combinatorial explosion) and thus "we have to face up to the consideration that – for all we can tell – this is indeed the best of possible worlds, and that changing the existing condition of the universe in any way whatsoever – would diminish the sum-total of its positivities." (Rescher, 2011:501.) The upshot of this consideration is that "the argument that the world's imperfection precludes any prospect of divine creation cannot be sustained." (Rescher, 2011:514.)

In addition, our capacity to determine the exactness of E is unsatisfactory. What is the specific limit of evil that the entire world can bear? How would we even begin to answer this question? Moreover, given our intellectual weakness to address such matters, our ability to know what specific goods and evils can and should fit into the world with respect to E is inadequate. Given E, what specific kinds of goods and evil must be included in the world so as to maximise V and avoid violating E? Such matters are beyond human ken. Although at the ontic level every possible world is either a PVW, an NVW, or and ANW, at the epistemic level, arguably, we do not know whether the actual world matches the first, second, or third of these types. Plantinga (1977:715) has noted that "there is no evidence against the proposition that the actual world

contains the best (or tied for the best) balance of moral good over moral evil". The same point can be made, *mutatis mutandis*, about the balance of all axiological goods over axiological evils. For all we know, given the alternatives, this world is a very good world indeed.

Here, the ancient intellectual humility of Socrates, Confucius, and Job is apropos. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates claimed no knowledge of "all sorts of high matters" but committed himself to practicing philosophy as a gadfly and a seeker of wisdom. *The Analects of Confucius* (2:17) records the Master as placing a high value on the recognition that one lacks knowledge in cases for which one is ignorant. And in Job 42:3, Job recognises the imprudence of claiming knowledge about things one does not understand.

Socrates might say regarding the COPAE that (3) is highly suspect. No human being is in the cognitive position to claim reasonably that (3) is plausible, let alone claim to know (3) with certainty. The value of at least some possible worlds (such as the actual world and other sufficiently complex worlds) is beyond the measuring ability for human beings. Moreover, perhaps at least some of the possible worlds are axiologically incomparable, either ontically or epistemically. Contemporary philosopher Stephen Wykstra (2017:137-138) would seem to agree: he notes that the axiological space in which we humans engage in moral reasoning and decision-making is a tiny fraction of God's axiological space (if God exists), and that our role is to grow in wisdom regarding the goods to which we have access in our space. We are not equipped to be "godlike masters at maximising the total net good in the universe".

7.4.4 The failure of the COPAE

Given the implausibility of (3), it seems that the COPAE fails. It is inconclusive at best, and thus it neither rebuts nor undercuts theism. If something like this evaluation of the COPAE is correct, and if the COPAE is a plausible representation of the PAE in general, then weighing the world's goods and evils against the PAE indicates that the PAE fails. This conclusion is consistent with Kant's (1791:30) treatment of the problem of evil. Although he was suspicious of attempts at theodicy, and wary of attempts to claim that God has no sufficient reason to permit evil, Kant held that human reason is able to gain insight into the limits of its own ability to understand matters of great metaphysical and axiological complexity. This insight ought to be respected, and thus we should abstain from extending our powers too far by claiming that the world is an NVW.

I suggest that my argument in 7.4 indicates that one ought to doubt the effectiveness of the PAE. As such, my position is akin to sceptical theism. This is the theistic view that humans should be sceptical of our ability to understand God's reasons for acting and, specifically, for permitting evil. Sceptical theism is often used to defend theism against the PAE: since we should not believe that we are in the epistemic position to understand the reasons God might have for permitting evil, we should not conclude that the existence of evil makes God's existence unlikely. Kant (1791:33) captured the sceptical theist view in his discussion of Job's story: "And yet God thereby demonstrates an order and a maintenance of the whole which proclaim a wise creator, even though his ways, inscrutable to us, must at the same time remain hidden – indeed already in the physical order of things, and how much more in the connection of the latter with the moral order (which is all the more impenetrable to our reason)."[198]

It should be noted that my position differs from sceptical theism for several reasons. First, for the present purposes, I do not assume theism. I am not defending theism against the PAE by appealing to shortcomings in the human ability to understand God's reasons for creating the world. Rather, I am evaluating whether goodness poses an axiological problem to the PAE as an argument. Second, I contend that the world includes an axiological realm with goods and evils vast in number. These goods and evils are too many for us to count, and they stand in relations so great in complexity that the overall value of the world is largely incomprehensible to us. They constitute something like a combinatorial explosion. Although the sceptical theist might agree with this point, he need not. In addition, I use this point to underscore a problem with the PAE rather than strictly to defend theism, whereas the sceptical theist would use it to defend theism against arguments from evil. Third, unlike sceptical theism, my argument does not involve any commitments about the human ability to understand God, nor does it take a position about God's reasons for choosing to act or to refrain from acting in any given situation. My position is consistent with but does not require the assertion that God's ways are inscrutable to us. However, my

[198] It should be noted here that although Kant held that some topics (e.g., theodicy) are beyond human ken, he did not hold that the problem of evil can be deemed unsuccessful at the outset via an appeal to human cognitive limits. Rather, Kant (1791:24-25) held that the existence of evil is a legitimate concern to raise against theism, and that only after rigorous and sincere thinking (i.e., something like Bertrand Russell's "honest toil") about this concern is one justified in adopting a position of sceptical theism.

position does hold that the moral or axiological order of the world *in toto* is, as Kant claimed above, impenetrable to our reason. In other words, to Kant's (2005:17) famous question "What can I know?" (i.e., What can human beings know?), human beings are not justified in answering that we can know with certainty and precision the intricate axiological combinations and balances that constitute the overall value of the world.

Given these differences between sceptical theism and my position, my thesis is not vulnerable to common objections to sceptical theism, such as that it undermines our reasons to trust God, to know God, or to accept theism as a rational worldview. However, other objections to sceptical theism seem pertinent to my position, such as that sceptical theism undermines moral epistemology, normative ethics, and moral decision-making. These objections will be addressed below.

Moreover, consider (3) from the axiological perspective of Rescher (2004:103). To reiterate briefly, he has argued that optimal value (i.e., a value which can have equals, but no better can exist) is bound to prevail among possible options for world actualisation. This is called the axiogenetic optimality principle (AOP). He writes: "The result is that things exist, and exist as they do, because this is for the (metaphysically) best." (Rescher, 2004:103.) I am not here attempting to defend Rescher, but I am claiming that, for all we know, he is right. If he is correct, then (3) is false. The PAE advocate needs to provide an answer to Rescher on this note.

Suppose something like Rescher's view is correct. It is plausible to argue that one can either: (a) evaluate the world from the bottom-up via a case-based method; this would involve counting, comparing, and measuring every value-bearer in an empirical approach to determine via inductive generalisation whether the world is a combinatorially optimised (or satisficed) knapsack (i.e., a PVW) or not; or (b) one can take a top-down approach by evaluating the world based on a plausible metaphysical principle; this would involve arguing metaphysically that the world as a whole is positively valued (or negatively valued, or value-neutral, whatever the argument may be), and thus determining the world's combinatorial status via reasoning deductively from plausible metaphysical principles.

We have argued that human beings are not cognitively capable of accomplishing the bottom-up approach. Michael Byron (2004:2), for instance, argues: "Maximization requires rational agents to assign a utility, or numerical index of preference, to each possible outcome of

every available alternative action. Everything that might happen after one acts must be rated on a common numerical scale. Putting the point this way already seems daunting." Not only are we unable to identify every good and evil in the world, we also cannot identify every possible alternative. The task is a combinatorial explosion.

However, Rescher argues that we can accomplish the top-down approach. He holds that the metaphysico-axiological law of optimality determines the following: that it is better for there to be something rather than nothing at all; that in the competition between possible worlds for world actualisation, the actual world wins out against its competitors because it is – all things considered – the best (or among the best) of options; and that the actual world has a natural entelechy to achieve an optimal telos.[199]

7.4.5 Objections and replies

Objection: one might protest here by noting that it seems implausible to claim that this world, with its suffering and its other repugnant features, is the best or among the best of world-alternatives. For example, one might have experienced intense suffering and thus, from his own experience, conclude that the world is not positively valued and that there is no God. Consider the following three replies to this objection.

First, Rescher provides plausible arguments to defend his view. For example, the law of optimality has explanatory value; it explains why something exists rather than nothing – which is a longstanding and significant problem in metaphysics. The law of optimality also explains why this world rather than some other world exists, which is another pressing metaphysical problem. The fact that Rescher's position answers these questions gives it some rational force.

Second, Rescher notes that possible worlds such as ours are not simple things; rather, they are highly complex mereological entities which must achieve combinatorial optimisation in order to qualify as best. The human inability to see all the details of this optimisation is not

[199] Rescher thus holds that at least some worlds are value-bearers and are axiologically comparable. It is important to note that this argument is consistent with and indeed very amenable to theism. But it does not require theism, nor does it entail theism. Thus, this argument does not beg the question in favour of theism regarding the PAE.

adequate evidence that the world is not, in fact, optimal. Each human being has a very limited perspective on the objective world *in toto*. Collective humanity also has a restricted view. Similarly, the fact that some individual humans do not like the arrangement of the world because some aspects of the arrangement are subjectively distasteful to them is not a sufficient argument against the world's objective optimality. An optimal world is good in whole, not necessarily liked from each subjective point of view.[200]

Third, Rescher emphasises the points that (i) imperfection is built into the nature of the world and that created worlds cannot be perfect (2011:508); (ii) that world optimisation is always maximisation under various existential constraints imposed by the taxonomic nature of the things whose realisation is being contemplated, and thus that if the world as a whole is optimised, it does not follow that each of its parts is optimised (2011:509); and (iii) that the idea that the actual world is the best of possible worlds "emphatically does not commit one to an overly rosy view of its merits, for what optimalism maintains is only that this world, however imperfect, is such that any other possible world … will involve a still greater imbalance of negativity over positivity" (Rescher, 2011:512).[201]

A good world achieves combinatorial optimisation, in a minimal or a maximal sense. This optimisation involves trade-offs, compromise, and balance. Consider a house. Various features make for a good house: affordability, durability, utility, aesthetic beauty, safety, space, feasibility of maintenance, etc. But one cannot maximise each of these features to their extremes of value. One cannot make do with a house that costs $10; it might collapse in one day. One cannot

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[200] Here, Heathwood's (2015:137) distinction between *axiological value* (value *simpliciter* or value as such) and *welfare value* is relevant. The former refers to value for the world as a whole; the latter refers to value for a part of the world (for example, value for a person or a group of persons). If a world contains negative value for a specific person or group, it does not follow that the world is NV as a whole. One needs to be careful to avoid the fallacy of composition by arguing that since a part of the world has negative value, the world as a whole has negative value as well. Zimmerman (2015:14-15) makes a similar distinction between *what is good for a particular person* and *what is good for the world.* Perhaps Russell (1997:Chapter 15) put it best: some investigations of the world attempt to assimilate the world to human beings, as if man were the measure of all things. But philosophy ought to attempt to view the whole impartially, at least to the extent that such an attempt is possible for human beings.

[201] With respect to (ii) and (iii), it is important to avoid the fallacy of division. If the world as a whole possesses optimal (or even satisficed) value, it does not follow that every part of the world bears such value.

maintain a house that is 100 square-miles in space (and therefore quite good in terms of its spatial feature) but is wholly unaffordable, infeasible to keep clean and orderly, and unsafe. A good house has an appropriate balance of these and many other features. Such a balance requires limits on each feature such that, taken in isolation, each feature could be better. But the whole cannot have each feature at its extreme best; instead, the whole is the best (or at least a satisfactory) combination of these values. Worlds have similar combinatorial balances and trade-offs.

One might support this top-down argument by noting that, if God has middle knowledge (MK), then he knows prior to actualising a world of free creatures that it is the combinatorially optimised best possible world, or tied with others for the combinatorially optimised best possible world, or that it is a combinatorially adequate world worthy of actualisation. In addition, one might argue that God will forever continue to create value-bearers of great value (e.g., persons, universes, states of affairs which include the unadulterated flourishing of persons, other creatures, etc.). God's ongoing creation of value will forever increase the value of this world, making whatever unpleasantness and badness it now contains gradually decrease in significance as the world grows ever more excellent and the unpleasantness grows forever smaller and smaller.[202]

Yet arguably, if the world which God has actualised is good enough, God need not continue to create value-bearers forever. As Michael Byron (2004:6-7) has noted, maximising is not necessarily good. In some cases, maximisation can be a vice and satisficing a virtue:

> "… the adoption of satisficing as a strategy of rational choice exhibits a virtue, especially the virtue of moderation … Maximizing and optimizing can seem greedy: Those who maximize are by definition always seeking more, indeed as much as possible. Misers maximize their money, gluttons maximize their food, sadomasochists maximize pain, and hedonists maximize pleasure. In each of these cases, and perhaps generally, maximizing appears to be morally objectionable … In contrast, moderation has from antiquity been regarded a virtue… For essential to any concept of moderation is the idea of steering

[202] Climenhaga (2018) has suggested such an argument.

between excess and deficiency: neither too much nor too little. And to have application, the idea of avoiding excess must generally eschew maximizing …"

Voting is a good example of satisficing. Voters often realise that there is no ideal candidate available in a political election. The alternatives are all less than excellent. However, perhaps one of the candidates is good enough for the voter. The voter thus votes for that candidate. The question of whether God is required to maximise the value of the world and whether God can satisfice, remains open here and falls beyond the scope of this study.

Objection: One might find it implausible to think of the world as the best of possible worlds.

Reply: To answer this concern, we can modify Rescher's argument. Instead of arguing that the law of optimality determines that the actual world is the best (or among the best), one can argue that there is a *law of axiological adequacy*; this law determines that whatever world is actualised is a sufficiently good world. Rather than being a metaphysical principle of optimality, the law of axiological adequacy is a satisficing principle of metaphysics such that any world which is actualised must be sufficiently good, and any NVW (i.e., any world which falls short of the law of axiological adequacy) is prevented from being actualised. One advantage of this modification is that its adoption does not require one to hold that the actual world is the best (or tied for the best) of possible worlds. One disadvantage of this modification is that it loses explanatory value with respect to the question of why this world was actualised rather than another axiologically adequate one (assuming that there is one), or rather than a better one (assuming worlds stand in relations of axiological comparison).

Objection: One might demur by admitting that, based on a bottom-up approach, we cannot conclude that the world is NV. However, we can mount a top-down argument for world-pessimism and ultimately for an NVW. Schopenhauer and Benatar are representatives of this objection.

Schopenhauer (1818) argued that, paradoxically, the objective world is fundamentally a non-conscious striving for life in a world which cannot satisfy the striving. This insatiable striving is the source of all suffering experienced by conscious individuals.[203] In Schopenhauer's (2004)

[203] Compare Buddhism, which makes a similar claim.

view, the world is marked by constant striving without satisfaction, by an incessant becoming without being, and by a moment-to-moment passing away. This fugacious world is, for Schopenhauer, objectively meaningless. Overall, this is an NVW. As Schopenhauer (1818:373) might say, this world is "a business which doesn't cover its costs". Schopenhauer's argument is plausibly construed as a top-down argument. He assumes a metaphysical principle concerning the disvalue of a world which contains an insatiable striving for life, and he deduces from the top-down approach the conclusion that this world is an NVW.

Benatar (2017:1-2), an ontological naturalist, argues that human life is on balance objectively bad, and even awful. He explains that the common view that human life is on balance good, is unreliable; i.e., this view is an unwarranted "optimism bias"[204] (Benatar, 2017:67). The objective badness of human life puts us in an existential predicament the details of which are summarised as follows (2017:2-3): life is objectively meaningless, and we are insignificant specks of dust in a meaningless and indifferent universe; the quality of human life is objectively poor, and even the best human lives contain more badness than goodness; death is objectively bad, and the fact that all humans die contributes to the badness of the human experience. Like Schopenhauer, Benatar's argument (at least aspects of it) are top-down. Given his naturalist commitments, he might be construed as arguing top-down that the world itself and human life in particular are objectively meaningless and purposeless, and that human life contains more badness than goodness. Such a world is NV.[205]

Response: I will first respond to Schopenhauer's objection, then to Benatar's. Schopenhauer (2011:66) clearly asserted his belief that the existence of objective moral normativity requires the existence of God as its source. He wrote: "The objection will perhaps be raised that Ethics is not concerned with what men actually do, but that it is the science which treats of what their conduct ought to be. Now this is exactly the position which I deny … the conception of 'ought' is valid only in theological morals, outside of which it loses all sense and

[204] The optimist might return the favour here and claim that Benatar operates on a "pessimism bias".
[205] This claim that the world contains more badness than good, or that it contains too much bad to prevent the world from being good, might be a bottom-up claim. If so, given the intractable nature of world-evaluation, the claim is unwarranted.

meaning." He proceeded to indicate that the goal of philosophical ethics is to describe the different forms of human conduct, which is a completely empirical project based on observing how humans behave.[206] Thus, if there is no God, there is no objective normativity. Schopenhauer thus might argue in something like the following way:

1. If God does not exist, then objective moral normativity does not exist.
2. God does not exist.
3. Thus, objective moral normativity does not exist.
4. Thus, there are only non-normative differences in human behaviour.

In short, Schopenhauer denied the existence of normative morality. Instead, he claimed that there are only descriptive truths about behaviour: i.e., there are various types of behaviour, none of which are morally right or wrong, better or worse, in an objective sense. There is no normativity, and presumably no objective axiology, but only behavioural difference. Schopenhauer's denial of moral normativity and oughtness was his main reason for rejecting Kant's normative ethics, which – although he admired Kant – he believed requires the existence of God. Kant was a theist, whereas Schopenhauer was not.

Given Schopenhauer's commitment to the denials of objective moral normativity and axiology, his claims that human life is a business which does not cover its costs, and that the world and human life are objectively meaningless[207], seem inconsistent. These are axiological and normative claims. Yet his system requires the rejection of objective axiology and normativity, as he has clearly asserted. I conclude that his (implicit) claim that the world is NV is unconvincing, given its inconsistency.

There is a second objection to Schopenhauer. He seems to be a value monist (VM). In various locations in his *oeuvre*, he indicates that pleasure is the only value. He thus shoulders the burden of proof. Why should we accept VM, given that most philosophers reject it, and that most

[206] One might wonder here how, on Schopenhauer's worldview, moral philosophy differs from descriptive disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, and sociology.
[207] For present purposes, I am construing these claims as equivalent to the assertion that this is an NVW. Even if Schopenhauer himself did not explicitly claim that the world is NV, it is fair to imagine that someone from a roughly Schopenhaueran perspective could make such a claim.

people assume VP? Schopenhauer's VM-motivated claim that this is an NVW is thus unconvincing.

Benatar's position is open to a similar objection. Benatar is a naturalist who claims that human life is objectively bad. For Benatar, human life is plagued by daily discomforts, aches, and pains. Moreover, we experience meaninglessness, death, serious physical and mental illness, and horrendous suffering. Our pleasures do not outweigh these pains. Unlike Schopenhauer, however, Benatar does not seem to endorse VM. He seems to be a value pluralist who recognises the values of pleasure, meaning, knowledge, and physical health. He notes that our pains outweigh our pleasures (both quantitatively and qualitatively), that absence of physical health denigrates the value of physical health, knowledge is so difficult and time-consuming to acquire and maintain, even though it is a value. Thus, Benatar (2017:203) concludes: "The human predicament is in fact an inhuman predicament because it is so appalling … the product of blind evolutionary forces that are indifferent to us," and (2017:212): "if we take a cold, hard look at the human condition, we see an unpleasant picture."

However, arguably, naturalism is inconsistent with the objective approaches to morality and axiology that Benatar takes. Vallicella (2018) has argued against Benatar's anti-natalism and ontological pessimism, claiming that "metaphysical naturalism does not have the resources to support such a negative evaluation". According to Vallicella, Benatar is trying to have it both ways, constructing what Vallicella calls "the hybrid or mixed response". Benatar is a naturalist, and naturalism does not recognise non-moral and axiological standards which have a non-naturalistic foundation. Nevertheless, Benatar makes moral and axiological claims which presuppose exactly the non-naturalistic foundation that his naturalism denies. Hence, although Vallicella agrees that the human condition is something of a predicament, Benatar's hybrid response is "incoherent". Although we may be in an objectively wretched state, as Benatar suggests, such an objective evaluation requires a "Platonic-Theistic" foundation. If Benatar is right that human life is objectively bad, then metaphysical naturalism is false. This poses a problem for Benatar's claim that human life – and by extension, the world itself – is objectively bad.

Objection: the PAE advocate could reply to my argument in this section by claiming that we do not need a comprehensive and precise knowledge of the axiological status of the world in order to reason from the bottom up that the world is NV. One need only judge based on his limited but considered experience of the range of values in this world (perhaps this range of experience

includes severely negative experiences for the person developing the judgment); on such a judgment, one is warranted in concluding that this is probably an NVW and thus that theism is probably false. The objector could deny Michael Bergmann's (2017:506) theses: we have no good reason for thinking that the possible evils we know of are representative of the possible evils there are; and we have no good reason for thinking that the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods there are. The objector could claim the following: we have good reason to believe that the possible evils we know of are representative of the possible evils there are, and that the possible goods we know of are representative of the possible goods there are. Hence, based on these assumptions, one is inductively justified in concluding that the world is NV if one's experiences support such a conclusion. One is then inductively justified in accepting the conclusion of the COPAE based on one's subjective experience of evil: probably, there is no God.

Response: Bergmann (2017:506-507) notes that his theses "have an initial ring of plausibility that is due to an awareness of our cognitive limitations and the vastness and complexity of all reality. It just doesn't seem unlikely that our understanding of the realm of value falls miserably short of capturing all that it true about that realm. One can recognise this even if one is not a theist." As Bergmann (2017:507) also suggests that attempts to defend the PAE which deny these plausible theses, are weakened by this denial. To elaborate on Bergmann's point, we might say that, given the plausibility of these theses, they are reasonable to believe (in Chisolm's sense) and that the burden of proof is on the one who denies them. The world's axiological status simply outruns our epistemic abilities to grasp it inductively. Furthermore, one might respond that that the PAE advocate who says that the goods and evils we know are probably representative of the goods and evils there are, is assuming the principle of induction. Although this principle works in science, it is not necessarily feasible in the axiology of worlds (i.e., modal axiology) as well.

Moreover, one can appeal to Heathwood's (2015:137) distinction between axiological value (value *simpliciter*) and welfare value. The former concerns the value of the world as a whole; the latter concerns value for a person or group of persons (i.e., value for a part of the world). If a part of the world contains negative value, it does not follow that the world as a whole is an NVW. Lastly, one can offer a Kantian response. Kant (2004) held that the pursuit of the *summum bonum* requires a belief in God. This belief is a matter of practical reason rather than pure (theoretical)

reason. Similarly, one can argue that commitment to the moral life requires a practical belief that the world is PV and therefore worthy of our moral commitment and contribution. If one takes the world to be irredeemably NV, one might find it hard to justify (in a practical sense) one's commitment to the moral life.

Consider again the COPAE:

1. God would not actualise an NVW. (*Value Assumption*)
2. Therefore, if God exists, the actual world is not an NVW. (*from 1*)
3. Probably, the actual world is an NVW. (*Atheistic Premise*)
4. Therefore, probably, God does not exist. (*from 2, 3*)

I have given reason for denying (3) of the COPAE. What about (1)? (1) is ambiguous. (1) is open to a consequentialist or a non-consequentialist reading. Consider the former: If there is a God, then he is justified in actualising a world only if he can bring outweighing good results from it: why think that God's actions must be justified according to some external standard? And suppose *arguendo* that God's actions must be externally justified: why think the standard is a consequentialist one?[208]

Consider a non-consequentialist/deontological reading of (1): If there is a God, then he is justified in actualising an NV world only if doing so is morally obligatory or at least morally permissible: why think that God has moral obligations and permissions? If God is the moral authority of the universe, then there is no moral authority to impose obligations on God, and thus God has no moral obligations. Moreover, God does not require permission to act. Thus, the concept of moral permissibility does not apply to God.

Lastly, consider a non-consequentialist/virtue ethics reading of (1): If there is a God, then he would actualise an NV world only if doing so is consistent with his perfect character. A PAE advocate could then argue as follows:

1*. If there is a God, then he would actualise an NVW only if doing so is consistent with his perfect character.

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[208] Refer to section 7.3 for a detailed discussion of this point.

2*. Probably, doing so is not consistent with perfect character.

3. Thus, probably there is no God.

(2*) is doubtful. How can humans with cognitive limits and imperfect characters judge with confidence what a perfect being with perfect character and unlimited intellectual resources and power would do in complicated situations such as world-actualisation such that the actualised world contains creatures with morally significant LFW? Moreover, one person's *modus tollens* is another's *modus ponens*. The theist could modify the argument as follows:

1*. If there is a God, then he would actualise an NVW only if doing so is consistent with his perfect character.

2. There is a God.

3. Thus, actualising an NVW is consistent with perfect character.

Here, the theist might hold that (2) justified given one or more of the philosophical arguments for theism, and that (2*) is not justified, and thus that (2) has more warrant than (2*).

Moreover, I have said that in a PVW, there is a limit E, which is the maximum amount of evil which the world can bear while still counting as PV. There is also a set of *n* goods, each of which has a precise value *v*+, and a set of *n* evils, each of which has a precise value *v*-. A PV world would have a more or less maximised cumulative value of goods V without exceeding E. There might be a range of combinatorial optimisation between a V that is minimally optimised yet still PV; and a V which is maximally optimised. Such a range would introduce the possibility that God creates a world which is PV and thus worth creating, and yet which is not the best of all possible worlds. Perhaps there is no best possible world. (Many hold that such a world is impossible.) An NVW would be any world which fails to achieve PV status. For example, on the assumption that God would not permit gratuitous evil, a world with gratuitous evil would be an NV world.

But what is E? E is the maximum amount of evil a world can bear while qualifying as PV. How would one determine the precise value of E? This might be beyond our ability as well. But suppose we say, roughly, that E is such in relation to some carrying capacity. Per analogy, in a knapsack problem, given a set of *n* items – each of which has a precise value *v* and weight *w* – and a knapsack with a precise weight limit (i.e., carrying capacity) W, one has the goal of placing items in the knapsack in a manner that maximises the cumulative value V of items while not

exceeding W. So, the knapsack has a weight limit W. This is a precise carrying capacity. That is, W is the sack's inherent ability to hold weight based on its properties of strength, durability, etc.

What is a world's capacity to bear E? It is the world's ability to hold evils. How does one figure out what this precise capacity is? Moreover, the theist can argue that a world which contains God is a world which contains a being of infinite value. So, a world with God – which is every possible world if any – is a world which contains a being of infinite value. Thus, perhaps it makes sense to say that a world which contains God is a world which can bear any E that is logically possible and, furthermore, can maximise (or at least satisfice) V while bearing E. Hence, if one has a sufficient reason for believing that God exists (e.g., some version of the cosmological argument), then one has a sufficient reason for thinking that this world – and indeed every possible world – is a PVW, since no world which contains God could be an NVW.[209] The modal intuition which seems to indicate the possibility of a very bad world is a faulty intuition. Tom V. Morris (1987:48) offers the following explanation: "God is a delimiter of possibilities. If there is a being who exists necessarily, and is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and good, then many states of affairs which otherwise would represent genuine possibilities, and which by all non-theistic tests of logic and semantics do represent possibilities, are strictly impossible in the strongest sense." In this line of reasoning, the arguments for theism can be weighed against the arguments for concluding that the actual world is an NVW (such as arguments from Benatar or Schopenhauer). Arguably, the support for theism outweighs the support for taking the world to be NV.

Moreover, note that virtually all people as a matter of ordinary activity presuppose that the world and their lives in it are PV. This factor is sufficient justification to believe that the world is PV unless and until one can demonstrate otherwise. This factor does not prove that the world is PV, but it justifies one's belief that the world is on balance not NV and thus is either neutral or good. The burden of proof is on the metaphysical pessimist to show that the actual world is NV.

We have addressed various versions of the PAE, and we have noted that the COPAE fails with respect to its axiology. How might one weigh the existence of goodness against other

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[209] One thinks here of Plantinga's claim that any world with Incarnation and Atonement is an axiologically great world indeed.

versions of the PAE? We might weigh the existence of goodness against each version addressed in Chapter 2.

First, there is the PBI version. It can be expressed as follows (let's suppose the probability involved is some version of epistemic probability):

1. It is metaphysically possible that God and evil coexist.
2. But if God exists, evil probably does not exist.
3. Evil exists.
4. Thus, probably, God does not exist.

Setting aside the *prima facie* inconsistency of admitting the possibility of God to conclude that God is improbable, we can consider how the existence of goodness influences this version of the PAE. In this version, how does evil make God epistemically improbable? Is it supposed that the sheer *quantity* of evils makes God improbable? If so, what would happen if we were to calculate and include the total quantity of goods?

As we have seen, human beings are not in the epistemic position to count <u>all</u> the goods and evils that have occurred in history (not to mention all the possible goods and evils which might yet occur) and to factor them into a probability judgment about God's existence. This task is beyond our ken. We do not know the total count of goods and evils and therefore do not know whether this count makes God's existence probable or improbable.

Moreover, even if we were to complete this task, the PBI version seems to presuppose that a quantitative calculation would settle the matter. I.e., in any possible world, if the total number of evils is greater than the total number of goods, then God is epistemically improbable. But if the total number of goods is higher, then God is probable. This approach seems flawed. Suppose there is a possible world in which there are 10 evils and 9 goods. The evils are minor: a few small cuts and bruises, a headache, a nightmare, a case of poor eyesight, and a minor instance of gossip. All 9 goods are highly valuable and significant. Does the contrast of 10 minor evils against 9 highly valuable goods justify a conclusion that God is improbable? I would think not.

Does the possible-but-improbable (PBI) argument hold that the *quality* of evils makes God improbable? Granted, there have been horrendous evils. But what if we factor the quality of goods? Surely there are highly valuable goods in addition to horrendous evils. Does the quality of these highly valuable goods outweigh the badness of the horrendous evils? Do the horrendous

evils outweigh the great goods? Are the goods and evils qualitatively counterbalanced? Are we in the cognitive position to answer these questions reliably?

Second, there is the probabilistic argument from gratuitous evil. An evil is gratuitous if and only if (i) it is not necessary to bring about a greater and justifying good, and (ii) it is not necessary to prevent an equally bad or worse evil. The argument from gratuitous evil can be articulated as follows:

1. If God exists, there is no gratuitous evil (i.e., God would not permit gratuitous evil).
2. Probably, there is gratuitous evil.
3. Therefore, probably, God does not exist.

Theists usually attack (2) by adopting some form of sceptical theism. But Peter van Inwagen has questioned (1). He has argued that God and gratuitous evil are compatible.

It seems to me that, if (1) is true, the existence of goodness poses no problem to (1). If God and gratuitous evil are incompatible, then they are incompatible regardless of the quantity and quality of existing goods. However, one could apply the quantity and quality of existing goods to support van Inwagen's argument that God has good reasons to create a world which contains gratuitous evils (in this sense, the evils are gratuitous at a micro-level but not at a macro-level). Also, it seems that one could appeal to the quantity and quality of goods to argue further against (2). For example, one could argue that only an omniscient mind endowed with middle knowledge could know the complete quantity and quality of all actual and possible goods and evils, and that only such a mind could providentially orchestrate human affairs to achieve the greatest possible good via human freedom given the quantity and quality of good and evil. As such, we are not in an epistemic position to be confident about (2) (i.e., we are not in the position to claim knowledge that there is gratuitous evil.) Third, Draper has argued that the actual distribution of pains and pleasures is more likely given atheism than given theism. Theists usually respond by noting that we are not in the epistemic position to make this judgment. For all we know, every possible world that contains the complexity of our world also contains the same distribution of pain and pleasure. We might be able to extend this point by cataloguing many of the goods and evils, including pains and pleasures (assuming VP).

We might also respond to Draper by using something like the response to the PBI argument: we are not in the epistemic position to count *all* the goods and evils (on his view, pains

and pleasures) that have occurred in history, not to mention all the possible pains and pleasures which might yet occur, and to factor them into a probability judgment about God's existence. Even if we could manage such a task, it is not clear that such a quantitative calculation would settle the matter.

The Christian seems to have a unique response to Draper. The Christian view is that God's purpose for creating human beings is not to provide them with a perfectly calibrated balance of pains and pleasures. We are not God's pets. Rather, God has created us to know and love him forever, and to achieve the wholeness of mind and will included in eternal life in God's presence. Whatever the distribution of pains and pleasures in this life are, they are preparatory – perhaps a vale of soul-making – for eternal life with God. Moreover, on the Christian view, we should expect a distribution of pains and pleasures much like what we see in this life, given the story of fall and redemption. Hence, this distribution of pains and pleasures is highly probable on the Christian view. Therefore, if there are good reasons to accept the Christian worldview, then one who accepts that worldview can adequately explain the supposed distribution of pains and pleasures.

I have suggested two general approaches for weighing goods against evils: a *quantitative* and a *qualitative* one. Each of these can be modified by considering the distribution of goods and evils. In terms of the former, we count all the goods and evils that have occurred (and will occur) in history. If the evils quantitatively outweigh the goods, then God is epistemically improbable and the PAE succeeds. If the goods quantitatively outweigh the evils, then God is probable and the PAE fails. Or, we count all the goods and evils that have occurred (and will occur) in history, and we discover the distributions of goods and evils. If the goods and evils are unjustly distributed (depending on a reasonable standard for distributive justice), and the evils quantitatively outweigh the goods, then God is improbable. If the goods and evils are justly distributed, and the goods quantitatively outweigh the evils, then God is probable. (At this point, I set aside the possibility of the goods outweighing the evils but the goods and evils being unjustly distributed, and the possibility of the evils outweighing the goods but the evils and goods being justly distributed.)

As noted, this approach seems infeasible. No human being is in the position to count all the goods and evils that have occurred and will occur in history. Our knowledge of the past is incomplete, and our knowledge of the future is even less reliable (if it is even possible, which is a complicated epistemological issue that I will not pursue here). Moreover, even if we had a

complete and reliable grasp of past and future, our moral knowledge might be insufficient to account for all the goods and evils in the entirety of human history.

Further, and for the same reasons, no human being is cognitively equipped to determine either the distributions of every good and evil over the whole of human history or the justness of those distributions. And even if we were to accomplish this task, it is not clear that the quantitative method would be effective. Suppose the actual world contains *n* evils and *n*-1 goods. And suppose the positive quality of the goods outweighs the negative quality of the evils. (Thus, there are great goods with more positive value than the cumulative negative value of all evils.) Would such a quantitative analysis of goods and evils make God improbable? Plausibly not. For example, on the Christian view, knowing God is an incomparable value that arguably outweighs any evil. And Alvin Plantinga (2017) has argued that the incomparably great values of Atonement and Incarnation outweigh all evils. So, if this world contains Atonement and Incarnation, then the positive quality of goods in this world outweighs the negative quality of evils, even if there are quantitatively more evils than goods.

In terms of the qualitative approach, we compare the positive quality of the goods that have occurred and will occur (or at least to compare the positive quality of those goods we know or have reason to believe) against the negative quality of the evils that have occurred and will occur (or that we know). If the positive quality of goods outweighs the negative quality of evils, then God is probable. If the reverse, then God is improbable. This approach might be more effective. But it would be difficult to accomplish, since (like the quantitative method) it would require that we count up all of the goods and evils past, present, and future.

Objection: One might argue that my case against the COPAE supports global moral scepticism and/or axiological scepticism. Alternatively, it might be thought that my argument suggests a paralysis of moral decision-making and ultimately a life of indifference and passivity. Lastly, there might be a concern that my argument entails that human efforts to live well and to make the world better are pointless.

Response: I will respond to each of these objections in order. The first objection seems to falter via the fallacy of division. From the proposition that human beings do not (or cannot) know the overall value of the world, it does not follow that a human being does not (or cannot) obtain knowledge about the value of mundane parts of the world. In other words, if the whole world has

the property of being axiologically unknown/unknowable to human beings, it does not follow that each part of the world (for example, Jones's stealing of Smith's car) has the same property. One might be capable of knowing that, say, his neighbours is intrinsically valuable and ought to be helped when in need, even if one does not know the overall value of the world. Therefore, the objection to global moral and axiological scepticism is blocked. My response can be modified to address the second and third objections as well. From the fact that we do not/cannot know the axiological value of the world, it does not follow that we lack knowledge and rational decision-making capabilities about the value of parts of the world. For example, one can recognise that his neighbour is injured and needs help in the form of grocery shopping, home maintenance, etc.

Objection: One could reply that values are subjective and thus that axiology is merely a subjective matter. Hence, my axiological case against the PAE is weakened by subjectivity.

Reply: One could take this approach. But there would be at least two problems. First, one would need to respond to my arguments in Chapter 5 against moral and axiological subjectivism. Second, as noted in Chapter 1, if the PAE advocate claims that values are subjective, then his PAE is also weakened by subjectivity. A probabilistic argument against theism which rests on subjective dislikes of the world does very little to support the conclusion that theism is false.

7.5 Conclusion

This concludes my work on Chapter 7. In this chapter, I provided a cumulative axiological case against the PAE. First, I constructed a set of abductive arguments to show that the conclusion of the PAE does not explain specific goods in human life as well as theism explains them. I emphasised goods such as consciousness, happiness, freedom, and meaning. Second, I argued that the PAE ignores several important and conceptually prior moral and axiological issues, and that this factor undercuts the PAE. In particular, I addressed the topics of value monism (VM), value pluralism (VP), value comparabilism, and the nature of a good person. Third, I argued that the PAE includes a claim about the nexus of goods and evils in the world, and that the complexity of this nexus undercuts the PAE. The axiological status of the world provides us with an intractable problem of combinatorial optimisation. As Kant (1964:131) might put it, we cannot comprehend the objective value of the world as a whole, but we can comprehend its incomprehensibility. This is all that can be fairly expected of philosophy. Taken together, these arguments pose a significant axiological challenge to the PAE. Recall that the PAE issues the

conclusion that, probably, there is no God. Recall also from Chapter 4 that we are working with the following conception of epistemic probability:

> *p* is epistemically probable for S = Df S is more justified in believing *p* than in believing the negation of *p,* given *S*'s access to background information K which is evidentially supportive of *p*, and given the degree of support K provides for *p*.

In sum, my conclusion is that the axiological arguments presented in Chapter 7 significantly weaken the degree of epistemic probability for atheism that is claimed by the PAE. Hence, the PAE advocate ought to address these arguments substantively before concluding that the PAE is successful.

In Chapter 8, I will summarise the content of this study.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Summary

This chapter summarises the dissertation and addresses its significance and unique contribution. In the first chapter, I noted that this study involves listing, categorising, and discussing various kinds of objective goods and evils. After introducing the PoE in Chapter 2, addressing crucial terms and assumptions in Chapters 3 and 4, and investigating good and evil in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, I examined how axiology relates to the PAE. Do the axiological issues addressed in Chapter 7 (a) render the epistemic probability of God's existence at 0.5; or (b) render God's existence more epistemically probable than atheism; or (c) render God's existence less epistemically probable than atheism; or (d) render the PAE indeterminate and therefore unsuccessful?

Given the axiological arguments in sections 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4, I concluded that the existence of goodness renders the PAE indeterminate and therefore unsuccessful. With respect to the axiological aspects of the PAE, this argument is based on axiological determinations that are largely inscrutable and intractable. Within the context of this study, the conclusions from Chapter 7 seem to render the PAE unsuccessful. In other words, the PAE does not provide an epistemically probable degree of support of above .5 for atheism. Rather, from the perspective of axiology, the PAE is unsuccessful on the grounds outlined in 7.3 and 7.4, and theism is more probable than atheism with respect to the arguments in 7.2.

In Chisholm's terms (1989:10), the set of arguments in Chapter 7 support the conclusion that, with respect to the axiology of the PAE as laid out in this study, one is more justified in believing that God exists than in believing that God does not exist. In other words, the arguments in this study constitute a cumulative axiological case against the PAE, making theism more probable than atheism with respect to the axiological factors addressed in this dissertation.[210] I

[210] It is important to underscore comments made in Chapter 1. My conclusion in this study is non-dogmatic. I have tried to follow the arguments where they seem to lead. However, I am open to dialogue and to cross-examination. I do not claim to have the final word on this topic. Moreover, my goal in this study is philosophical rather than apologetic, even if my conclusion is of interest to theistic apologists (or perhaps to apologists for agnosticism). Lastly, my argument is confined to certain aspects of axiology

take no position in this study about whether my arguments make theism more probable or less probable than agnosticism.

8.2 Significance

The significance of this study is threefold: first, the study raises important questions about the axiology of the PAE. For instance, which axiological position is more plausible: value monism (VM) or value pluralism (VP)? How does one's answer to this question pertain to the PAE? Which axiological position is more plausible, value comparabilism or value incomparabilism? How does one's answer to this question pertain to the PAE? Are possible worlds axiologically comparable? If so, are human beings capable of accurately comparing the value of possible worlds? What does it mean to be a good person? How do these questions relate to the PAE? Can human beings accurately determine the overall value of the actual world? Is this task beyond human ken? How does one's answer to this question pertain to the PAE? What assumptions are PAE advocates making with respect to these issues? Are these assumptions warranted?

Second, as far as I know, this study is one of the first attempts to apply the resources of axiology to the PAE. Thus, the study addresses a new area of emphasis in discussions about the problem of evil (PoE). Sterba (2017:1) notes that, so far, philosophers have not paid much attention to the question of how moral philosophy relates to the PoE, despite the fact that ethics is fundamental to the problem, and an application of the resources of moral philosophy is likely to advance the discussion. Similarly, the resources of axiology (including axiological issues which go beyond moral philosophy) should prove useful. Hence, this study addresses a gap in the literature regarding how moral theory and axiology bear on the PoE.

Third, the study may be of interest to theists and agnostics who are sceptical of the PAE. Theists seeking objections to the PAE might find this study useful. Moreover, agnostics who, given their agnosticism, are inclined not to affirm atheism, may find this study similarly useful. In

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which would fit into a complete investigation on this topic. However, my study is not itself a complete investigation.

addition, atheists who defend the PAE might find this study to be of interest as an investigative incursion into the axiological underpinnings of the argument.

8.3 Suggestions for further research

I mentioned *supra* resources from axiology which warrant further examination. I thus conclude this thesis by posing some axiological questions related to the PAE which seem worthy of study by philosophers. What follows is just a sample of such questions. There are probably many more.

The topic of population axiology was briefly raised in Chapter 7. However, a detailed treatment of the topic falls beyond the scope of this study. Some interesting questions arise with respect to this topic: Does it make sense to think of population axiology from the divine perspective? What might it be like for God to engage in population axiology?

In Chapter 7, I also discussed the problem of comparing possible worlds, and noted that philosophers disagree on this issue. Can God axiologically compare possible worlds? Is the principle of axiogenesis true (see Chapter 7, section 4)? If so, how does that principle relate to divine creation? How does it pertain to the PoE? Does God have moral duties which restrict his creative decisions? Moreover, in Chapter 7 I discussed difficult topics concerning VM, VP, value comparabilism, and value incomparabilism. Does the PAE presuppose VM? VP? Does it presuppose value comparabilism? Value incomparabilism? Does the PAE presuppose that possible worlds are comparable? Can human beings plausibly evaluate the world from the bottom up? From the top down? Do such evaluations require VP? Value Comparabilism? For those in the tradition of phenomenology, is there a phenomenology of world evaluation? How might such a phenomenology be described?

The topics of world optimisation and world satisficing were also addressed in Chapter 7: Must God optimise the world? Can God satisfice with respect to his actualisation of a world? Assume that possible worlds are axiologically comparable: given the intrinsic value of human life, is it always a value to create human beings? Should there be an endless increase of human or otherwise personal lives, even if this increase leads to what Derek Parfit has called the “repugnant

conclusion"?[211] Or is it better to create fewer human (personal) lives, thereby maintaining a higher level of flourishing for each, even though the overall value of such a world might be less? Would the overall value of the latter world be higher than the former?

Is it axiologically better to have a world with more people, each of whom has a lower quality of life? Or is it axiologically better to have a world with fewer people, each of whom has a higher quality of life?[212] If so, what is the precise number of people that such a world should have? What sort of flourishing should each individual enjoy? What specific goods are needed for human flourishing? What is their proper distribution? What is more valuable: the individual human person, or the set of all human persons? Are they axiologically comparable? How would God address such problems?[213]

Lastly, in Chapter 7, there are some questions about the overall value of the world. Assuming that values are objective and that possible worlds are value-bearers, is the world negatively valued? If so, what challenges would this fact pose to theistic and agnostic worldviews? Is the world positively valued? If so, what challenges would this fact pose to atheistic and agnostic worldviews?

It seems to me that these are significant and under-emphasised questions in axiology and the philosophy of religion. My thesis raised but was not able substantively to address these

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[211] This is the idea that we should always add human lives to the world even if the increase in lives decreases the overall well-being of each human person, since in such a world there would (presumably) be more overall value, even if each human life is flourishing only in the barest minimum of ways given the limited resources available to each.

[212] The popular films *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) and *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) address these questions. In the films, the villain (Thanos) considers the suffering of the persons in the (Marvel) universe and reasons that it is better to have a world with fewer people, each of whom has a higher quality of life. Given this position, Thanos attempts to kill 50% of the persons in the (Marvel) universe, thus creating what he believes is a better world for the remaining 50%. The heroes of the Avengers team disagree with Thanos's axiological position, thereby setting the stage for an interesting (though stylized) story.

[213] Perhaps God can address such problems by creating more habitable space for his created persons, or by making available more existing space which is currently unavailable. God would thus be able to avoid the problems raised by Parfit's repugnant conclusion. A universe with plenty of living space and resources would make feasible the creation of more persons, each of whom has access to a rich environment and can enjoy a high degree of well-being. Thus, the world would increase in overall value, and each human life would have a high level of flourishing.

questions. Therefore, there is much important and interesting work for philosophers in these areas.

8.4 Last Word

Rather than pursue thoroughly each of the questions posed in the previous section, this thesis has emphasised the following research question: Is the existence of objective goodness a problem for the PAE? To answer this question, I claim that the existence of objective goodness presents a problem for the PAE. In support of this claim, I have provided the following reasons: first, some objective goods are best explained by theism, thereby counting against the claim that theism is probably false; second, there are significant and conceptually prior axiological and moral questions which pose an axiological problem for the PAE; and third, the difficulty of understanding the nexus of goods and evils in the world undercuts the PAE. Taken together, these reasons pose a significant difficulty for the PAE. This difficulty, as I have raised it, has not been addressed elsewhere in the literature to date. To defend the PAE successfully, the advocate should thoroughly address these points. Such a defence would move the problem of evil further in the axiological direction I have proposed in this study. I believe this would be an interesting and fruitful development.

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