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A Nietzschean theodicy

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Abstract. A Nietzschean theodicy would claim that God has created the world exactly the way it is in order to produce morally autonomous agents in Nietzsche's sense: self-conscious moral subjectivists. Both atheism and a 'Nietzschean theodicy' make the same prediction: the world will appear to contain gratuitous evil. Thus, observation of apparently gratuitous evil is not evidence for or against either hypothesis. In the absence of any other evidence for or against theism, the most reasonable position is agnosticism.

Humean skepticism

In part XI of the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume makes the well-known argument that the distribution and amount of "misery" in the world, though consistent with theism, is quite different from what one would expect *beforehand* from a very powerful, wise, and benevolent Deity. The difference is so great that there is no foundation for an *a posteriori* inference concerning the existence of such a Deity. Hume concedes that theism can be "saved" by a "supposition" of "unknown" (divine) reasons, but asserts that this kind of supposition is not sufficient to establish the truth of theism. The point is amplified through an analogy with a house or palace which is noisy, confusing, fatiguing, dark, too hot or too cold, and generally inconvenient and disagreeable. Hume says we would always "blame the contrivance" and condemn the architect. We certainly would not be persuaded that in some inscrutable way the plan, and the architect, were excellent.

After a discussion of the variety of evils in the world, Hume concludes that the best explanation is a first cause which is indifferent to good and evil. Paul Draper[1] has re-stated Hume's non-theistic alternative as a hypothesis of indifference (HI): neither the nature nor the condition of sentient beings on earth is the result of benevolent or malevolent actions performed by non-human persons. Draper interprets Hume's argument as the claim that HI makes the known facts about sentient creatures experiencing pain and pleasure (O) antecedently much more probable than does theism (G). 'Probability' in this argument has an epistemic meaning, which is roughly that a "fully rational person" in some "epistemic situation" would have a

higher degree of belief in one claim rather than another. Thus, HI is more probable than G if such a person would find O less surprising on HI than on G. Draper also considers the possibility of dispensing with the notion of epistemic probability and simply reverting to the Humean claim that HI 'explains' O better than G.

William Alston[2] has criticized Draper's argument for failing to specify a detailed version of theism and of some alternative hypothesis, both of which would truly 'explain' O. Alston asserts that "a genuine explanation throws light on the explanandum; it enables us to see why it happened or was brought into being."[3] In Alston's view, neither G (generic theism) nor HI meet this condition. Further, Alston rejects the claim that explanation can be understood in terms of 'epistemic probability', since there are cases of epistemic probability in which the antecedent probability of a state of affairs x is greater given a proposition p than a proposition q, even though neither p nor q explains x.[4] Finally, Alston asserts that if one simply interprets Draper's argument as a claim about epistemic probability, the argument doesn't "stack up," given the many ambiguities in that notion, some of which have been exploited by Plantinga in a critique of Draper's argument.[5] In fact, Alston and Plantinga are among those who have proposed a so-called 'skeptical defense', arguing that the 'inscrutability' of evil can't be taken to lower the probability of theism, because human beings are in no position to understand God's reasons or to decide whether or how evil is morally justified.[6]

Critics of this 'skeptical theistic' claim counter that we would normally expect a morally good agent to show compassion for those who are made to suffer by that agent, and to do so by comforting and to the extent possible explaining to those individuals why the suffering is necessary.[7] That is, the inscrutability of (much) misery is certainly part of the "problem of evil" which confronts theism. It may be that for some unknown or unknowable reason it is logically impossible for God to provide comfort or explanation, or do so without sacrificing some (unknown) good, but that sort of reply further diminishes the explanatory power of theism. A skeptical defense jeopardizes the ordinary theistic view, often developed in theodicies, that we *can* make certain claims about God's nature and intentions, which at least provide a partial explanation for the nature of the universe.[8] Plantinga counters that theists don't think of religious beliefs as 'explanations' of anything,[9] but if that is true then there is no point in discussing the problem of evil with such people.

For those who do not simply believe in (some) religion, and who are troubled by the apparent absence of any transcendent purpose for human existence (as well as for the pain and suffering of sentient creatures), the problem of evil is a question with emotional weight. The way one imagines

the world – as an 'absurd' situation, in Camus' sense,[10] or as, at least possibly, the setting for the unfolding of a divine intentionality – entails very different existential consequences. In the absence of any plausible proof, or even strong evidence (arguably, the absence of *any* evidence) for theism, the observation of *apparently* gratuitous evil in the world may provide a rational basis for non-theism. A skeptical defense, which, as Hume put it, tries to save theism by a mere "supposition" of "unknown" (divine) reasons (for being *entirely* 'inscrutable' and withholding comfort), does not provide any *evidence* for theism and would not be persuasive to a genuine agnostic. Without any other evidence for theism, the *prima facie* case for gratuitous evil places a burden of proof on the traditional theist.[11] If the burden cannot be met, then the most reasonable position would be non-theism.[12]

In this paper I will propose a theodicy which counters Humean skepticism by explaining why the world must be exactly as it is (and why misery must be inscrutable). While I do not claim this theodicy is either probably or certainly true, I believe it is sufficient to shift the burden of proof in a way which makes agnosticism the most reasonable position.

Dostoevsky's theodicy

In Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, the skeptical Ivan challenges his saintly brother Alyosha to justify worshiping a God who permits such cruelties as the torture and death of an infant. Paradoxically, it is Ivan who tells a story – *The Grand Inquisitor* – which can be taken as an answer which is well worth considering in detail. Briefly, the story imagines Christ has returned to Earth, to Seville, during the Inquisition, and is immediately recognized by the ordinary people, and by the Roman Catholic Cardinal who is the Grand Inquisitor. The Cardinal has Christ arrested, and then visits him in prison. In what follows, Christ says nothing as the Inquisitor speaks, and then asks (and answers) three questions, which repeat the three biblical "temptations" of Christ by Satan. The questions are: (1) why didn't Christ turn stones into bread for the benefit of humanity? (2) why didn't Christ throw himself off the temple, assured that God would perform a miracle by sending angels to catch him? and (3) why didn't Christ accept the sword of Caesar and choose to rule the world? More generally, of course, the Cardinal is confronting Christ with the apparently gratuitous evil of the world: the absence of the "earthly bread" which would satisfy humanity's material needs, ending 'misery' and transforming a "parched, barren wilderness" into a paradise; the painful consequences of God's decision to remain inscrutable rather than to provide the "miracle, mystery and authority" which would convince everyone of the truth and provide humanity with

"a stable conception of the object of life"; and the suffering caused by moral conflict and violence stemming from God's refusal to rule humanity directly.

The Cardinal's explanation is that evil (apparently gratuitous 'misery') is a necessary condition for human freedom. If God satisfied all human needs and directly revealed Himself to humanity in a way that was beyond all dispute, human beings could only respond with complete submission. So Christ must refuse to "buy" obedience with bread, to enslave humanity with miracles, and to serve as a "conscience" for humanity by ruling directly as an omnipotent conqueror. Instead, as Ivan says, "man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as his guide." Dostoevsky also suggests that God protects human freedom as a necessary condition for human love of God: "Thou didst crave for free love and not the base rapture of the slave before the might that has overawed him forever."

The Cardinal says he rejects Christ's (or, God's) plan, and does not love God, because he (the Cardinal) is a humanist. In short, he asserts that the vast majority of humans are too weak to act freely, in fact they are anxious to "hand over" their freedom to any power which will give them bread, moral certainty, and community of worship. Human nature is such that happiness requires "complete submission." So, to provide this happiness, the Inquisitor (or, the anti-Christ) has corrected the Deity's plan. In the end, Christ merely kisses the Cardinal, who lets him go and tells him never to come back. Alyosha says the Cardinal does not believe in God. Presumably, therefore, he doesn't believe God's "plan" can work, i.e. does not believe that the vast majority of people are capable of exercising moral freedom or coming to a "free" love of God. And, on the face of it, the Cardinal is right.

Elements of Dostoevsky's theodicy have been re-stated more recently by John Hick, although Hick derives his concept of a necessary 'epistemic distance' between God and humanity from Irenaean theology, without acknowledging Dostoevsky's contribution.[13] Hick may be seen as making three points, at least (the first) two of which are implicit in Dostoevsky's theodicy. First, the world must appear 'as if there were no God' in order to allow the possibility of "human autonomy".[14] It must be entirely possible (and reasonable) to believe that God does not exist. Knowing God (i.e. experiencing the world as "mediating the divine presence") depends on "an uncompelled interpretative activity".[15] Second, Hick asserts that God's purpose in creating humanity at an epistemic distance is to ensure "the freedom in relation to God that is essential if he ['man'] is to come to his Creator in uncompelled faith and love . . ."[16] Ultimately, redemption for

humanity means turning away from the "suffering" caused by a self-centered, or human-centered life (which Hick considers 'sinful'[17]), and centering life upon God.[18] Third, Hick rejects Hume's assumption that theism would predict a world which was similar to a comfortable and convenient house, or a 'hedonistic paradise'.[19] His argument is that, not only must God be "hidden" (to permit freedom and love), but that God must permit real pain, suffering, injustice, hardship, etc. as a necessary condition for "soul-making": the growth of such values as unselfishness, compassion, courage, and the capacity for love.[20]

Hick's third point may be taken as a kind of "character-building" rationale for evil, an argument which has been vigorously disputed.[21] Since I do not find this approach plausible, I shall set it aside, and focus on the first two claims: the world must be exactly as it is, i.e. must contain *prima facie* gratuitous evil, as a necessary condition for human autonomy and for the possibility of free love of God.

Free will

Obviously, the theodicy proposed by Dostoevsky and Hick presupposes that human beings are in fact endowed with free will in some sense. The heated debate on the topic of 'compatibilism' suggests the conclusion is not obvious. Hick argues that although it would be logically possible for God to create men who would always freely choose the good,[22] it is not possible to create men who could be guaranteed to respond freely to God with "authentic faith and love and worship."[23] Since God would know that the "love and faith and worship" were forthcoming as the inevitable result of God's manipulation, or "hypnosis" of the human agents, God could not truly value this love as a "genuine and free response."[24] Therefore, Hick proposes a "stronger" conception of freedom as 'limited creativity' which, he says, allows the possibility of *genuine* freedom and independence in relation to God.

Hick claims that such a free act is not *random*, but is determined by the nature of the agent, expressing that agent's character interacting with a situation. However, he also claims a free act is not the *inevitable* expression of character, so there is an element of unpredictability:

> for, whilst the action proceeds from the nature of the agent, the nature from which it proceeds is that of 'the actual self alive in the moment of decision'. Thus, whilst a free action arises out of the agent's character it does not arise in a fully determined and predictable way . . . For the character is itself partially formed and sometimes partially re-formed in the very moment of free decision.[25]

On Hick's view, God creates humanity with the cognitive freedom to respond, or not respond to God in "uncompelled faith."[26]

However, Hick's conception of free will is not without difficulties, and in fact is not necessary in the 'Nietzschean' theodicy I shall propose. Hick suggests 'authentic' human responses to God are not guaranteed or "fixed" in advance,[27] because if they were we would be "mere puppets."[28] However, if 'creativity' is a non-random response to a specific set of causes ultimately set in play by an omniscient first cause, creative behavior should be entirely predictable by God.[29] Moreover, on the face of it, *any* type of human response to an omnipotent God would seem to be necessarily ultimately determined by the causal conditions set in motion by such a creator.[30]

Hick believes a libertarian concept of 'creative' free will is necessary in order to explain how God could actually *value* love, faith and worship from God's creatures. But Dostoevsky's approach to "free love of God" suggests an answer to Hick's problem which is compatible with the view that God is the omniscient and determining cause of all human action. God could cause human agents to respond with a type of love, gratitude, obedience, and worship in two different ways. One would be to accept the Cardinal's proposal. However, the resulting 'love' would be entirely conditioned by the utter dependency of humans on the essential goods handed out by God. The love of an infant for the mother who nurtures it, or perhaps the gratitude of an addict toward the dealer who offers a free sample, might be reasonable analogies for this kind of emotional response. Similarly, obedience and worship of an indisputably omnipotent being could not be distinguished from terror and abject slavery. The other option for God would be to create a world in which it is entirely reasonable to reject theism but still possible to love, obey, and worship God for reasons having to do with admiration for God's character as opposed to God's power to reward or terrify humanity.[31] Of course, one may wonder why God doesn't simply "hide" without creating a world with so much apparently gratuitous evil. It is one thing to love someone regardless of, say, their power and wealth, and quite another to love someone despite an apparent indifference, even cruelty.

But the notion that God might create, or permit, any amount of apparently gratuitous evil as a necessary condition for human love of God, faith, and worship suffers from a more fundamental defect. On the face of it, such a Deity is, at best, narcissistic, and at worst immoral.[32] What is needed is a theodicy which, even stipulating that an omnipotent and omniscient creator is *entirely* responsible for the character of the world and for the nature of the agents who make choices in that world,[33] finds a morally sufficient reason for the world to be exactly as it is, i.e. characterized by *prima facie* gratuitous evil.

A Nietzschean theodicy

At this point one rationale from Dostoevsky's theodicy remains: God must create the world exactly as it is as a necessary condition for human autonomy. Dostoevsky's Cardinal asserts that if God exercised power directly, whether to reward or terrify humanity, we could only respond with "complete submission". Indeed, perhaps this condition would be best for overall human happiness, as Ivan says, though Dostoevsky's well-known aversion to utilitarian rationalism suggests an ironic reading.

The counterpoint to the image of "God's happy slaves" – the "sheep" and "happy babes" who take their moral certainty from priests – is that of the rebel who rejects the "rigid, ancient law" and insists on deciding for herself "with free heart . . . what is good and what is evil." Ivan's statement that 'everything is lawful' is an expression of rebellion against God and, perversely, against his own (human) need to submit to God, submission which, on his account, is a condition for happiness. Ivan says that if God exists (and he declares himself a believer), if he is an honest man he would be bound to refuse to acknowledge God's 'justice', and would return his ticket to paradise on judgment day, because he cannot accept the price of universal happiness, even if it is only a single baby which must be tortured to death. In short, whether or not God exists, and regardless of what value norms God may dictate, Ivan must assert and act on his own value judgments or lose his integrity.

Nietzsche's concept of an '*übermensch*,' endlessly straining against the 'herd-like' slavish impulses of humanity, is a moral prototype directly influenced by Dostoevsky's portraits of rebellion. Rejecting authoritarian religion with its priestly pacification of the masses, Nietzsche imagines a new ideal of moral autonomy: the individual taking responsibility for finding a value and purpose for her own existence, without appeal to any external authority, divine or human. Nietzsche takes it as given that 'God is dead,' i.e. that there is no rational foundation for belief in the Deity which had been taken to justify morality, law, and even a certain conception of objectivity. As a consequence, Nietzsche expected a crisis of nihilism for the masses, which could have disastrous social and political results. However, the crisis also created an opportunity for a kind of moral progress, or perhaps moral maturity, at least for a few superior individuals: self-conscious moral subjectivism.

Theists often use the image of a parent–child relationship as an analogue for God's relation to humanity. Ivan also uses that analogy, but in a critical way: theists are "children" who want to believe a happy story (the "good news"). If the children are obedient, they will get a reward. If not . . . One theistic story, from the bible, is especially interesting in this regard: the story of Abraham, who was, we are told, visited by an angel who conveyed God's command that he 'sacrifice' (i.e. murder) his son. Kierkegaard has taken this

story as a paradigm of Christian faith, describing Abraham as a "knight of faith" and a role model to be emulated.[34] On Kierkegaard's account, Abraham faced an agonizing choice, since he not only loved his son, but considered the murder to be a patently immoral act. However, he was willing to do it, simply because of his faith that God had commanded it and that since God had the right to make *any* demand on him he was obligated to obey. Kierkegaard emphasizes that Abraham exhibits (laudable) faith, *not* because he believed God would stop the execution, but because he was willing to make a "leap of faith" which violated his own conscience and reason. And Kierkegaard imagines that God was well-pleased by Abraham's submission.

But suppose God was not pleased? In fact, what if Abraham made the *wrong* decision? The Abraham story illustrates a master–slave relationship, projecting a God who is bent on testing his power over his "children". A human parent who acted in that way would no doubt be condemned by all God-fearing theists. What is the basis for this double standard? Presumably, the assumption that God wants blind obedience, and that God's values are 'correct' (and always trump a human value judgment), either because there are "objective values" which apply both to God and humanity but only God is in a position at all times to make the "correct" value choices (and so we must defer to God's commands), or because whatever God wills is "correct" simply because God wills it. A Nietzschean theodicy, in contrast, would begin with the phenomenological intuition that a *value* logically requires a (subjective) act of valuing. Values are necessarily subjective.[35] Moral values can be thought of as existential limits, in the sense that acting on them, defending them, even, perhaps, risking one's life for them, is taken (or discovered) to be essential to maintaining a coherent sense of one's identity and the purposiveness ("meaningfulness") of one's existence.[36] If Abraham had acted as an *übermensch* he would have rebelled against God's (apparent) command. Perhaps he would have demanded an explanation from God. And if he didn't get one which satisfied his own sense of morality, he would have refused. Or, he would have done so had he not been terrified of God's punishment.

A Nietzschean theodicy would claim that God has created the world exactly the way it is in order to produce morally autonomous agents in Nietzsche's sense: self-conscious moral subjectivists who would, if they had the strength to do so, rebel against God if they, like Ivan, found God morally deficient. Of course no human being would have the strength to rebel against an omnipotent being. Therefore, 'epistemic distance' is required. We find ourselves, in Heidegger's terms, 'abandoned' in the world, confronted with the unanswerable question of why (in a teleological sense) we exist. In this condition, we have the possibility of creating, or discovering, our own conscience. To the extent that we attend to this moral, and existential, task[37]

and act in a way which is consistent with our conscience, we achieve what may be called moral integrity or coherent identity. Integrity (moral freedom) is compromised whenever one acts in violation of one's own values because of external coercion (threats, force, or confinement), or some external reward which has sufficient appeal to override one's conscience. The result is a crisis of conscience, even an existential (identity) crisis.[38]

Reverting to the analogy of a parent and child, the claim is that God wants humanity to grow up and become morally independent. God is not an authoritarian patriarch who wishes to rule over (and be loved by) slaves. But why can't God simply "hide" in order to allow this autonomy to develop, without actually creating so much apparently pointless evil? One reason might be that *prima facie* gratuitous evil, coupled with the absence of evidence for theism, makes belief in God *unreasonable*. This unreasonableness reinforces the intuition that we are on our own to justify our existence. More importantly, perhaps, it is only in a morally indifferent universe, in which there is no (detectable) systematic link between acting on certain 'moral' values, including the value of acting with integrity, and receiving any kind of reward or punishment, that we can be free of conditioning which would lead us, consciously or not, to adopt one set of values rather than another for those reasons. What we experience is a world in which no matter what values we affirm, and whether or not we act, or attempt to act, with integrity, we are all exposed to approximately the same risks, random and assured forms of suffering, and, of course, inevitable death. Thus, the apparently indifferent universe, with its apparently gratuitous, morally unjustified evil, is a universe which leaves it to us to discover what we value.

The, admittedly unreasonable, Nietzschean theodicy would add that this world is not merely a necessary condition for the possibility of moral autonomy, but a sufficient condition. That is, God has created exactly the right amount and type of apparently gratuitous evil in the world to (1) render theism unreasonable, (2) permit moral autonomy, and (3) actually produce morally autonomous *übermenschen* in each and every case: human beings who, at least before they encounter God directly as an omnipotent being, are fully capable of rebellion. The last assumption is required, of course, if God determines the character of the world and the nature of the agents who make choices in that world, and if evil is justified by the development of moral autonomy. That is, God would be the ultimate cause of any failures, and evil would not be justified (by this theodicy) in those cases. However, the claim that everyone becomes a fully autonomous *übermensch* is implausible at the very least, unless one assumes that it may take more than one lifetime for everyone to achieve the intended result. For this reason, and one other which will be discussed below, it seems an adequate theodicy must posit some form

of reincarnation, or perhaps an equivalent hypothesis such as purgatory or progression through a series of worlds.

Supplemental hypotheses

There are two major points relevant to this Nietzschean theodicy which require special consideration. The first is animal suffering. The concept of 'epistemic distance' goes some way in explaining why God must create an apparently self-contained natural world. Perhaps one could argue that to this end God must create animal species which evolve through a natural process which eventually produces higher levels of awareness and intelligence. That is, a naturalistic explanation for human origin is readily available, whereas there is (arguably) no evidence for a Divine creation. But why must these animals suffer, both in nature and, perhaps especially, at the hands of humans? Perhaps if God created a "utopia" for animals, and only allowed humanity to suffer, that disparity might create suspicion about the existence of God? But, even if there were some reason why animal suffering were necessary for the development of human autonomy, that would still not justify animal suffering from the animal's standpoint, or one which viewed animals with compassion. It seems the only way this theodicy can account for animal suffering is to assume that animals will also evolve through some form of reincarnation, and that the suffering of every sentient creature is of a kind and amount which is necessary and sufficient to produce, in the end, a successful outcome for every sentient being.

The second point concerns the implication of moral subjectivism for the claim often made by theists that the relation between God and humanity is analogous to that between loving parents and children. If this analogy holds, it seems reasonable to assume that God (at least a God of love), would wish to have "children" with similar values, and this should be true even if one stipulates that values, including God's values, are subjective. So, although God may create a world which produces morally autonomous agents, wouldn't God also design a world which produced such agents *and* also caused them to end up with God's own values? After all, a Nietzschean theodicy doesn't rule out morally autonomous *übermenschen* with values which some (including God) might find quite horrifying. Perhaps the best supplemental hypothesis to deal with this problem, if it is a problem, would be to assume what many theists in fact do assume: something along the lines of a claim that God creates humans (or, sentient creatures) with a nature which only permits happiness (or, flourishing) when certain needs are met. There is, then, a natural foundation for values, in the sense that certain choices cannot bring happiness, while others are requirements for happiness. Since

God determines our nature, in the end God determines the nature of the most satisfying value choices – the ones which will eventually be made by all rational and morally autonomous agents. And of course the theistic claim that humanity is somehow made in the image of God suggests a common foundation for values. An additional way to imagine a divine influence on the formation of human values is to speculate about something analogous to an initial exposure to 'paradise.' Suppose God creates an initial instant in which each (un-self-conscious) infant's "soul" experiences God's love, and, given its nature, responds in turn with complete love and joy, before being "cast out" into the absurd universe. Arguably, the imprint of such an experience would create a powerful need to re-create the event. If theistic myths about paradise turn out to be "true," everyone will find their own path to that same end.

Conclusion

I have proposed a theodicy which counters Humean skepticism by explaining why the world must be exactly as it is: characterized by *prima facie* gratuitous evil. Since this theodicy makes the same prediction about the (moral) nature of the world as does non-theism, including atheism, apparently gratuitous evil is not evidence for or against either hypothesis. Thus, although this theodicy is neither probably nor certainly true (and, by the nature of it, *must* in fact be unreasonable), it is sufficient to establish agnosticism as the most reasonable position.

That is, a Nietzschean theodicy is sufficient *if* the claim about moral autonomy provides a morally sufficient reason for apparently gratuitous evil. Does it do so? Dostoevsky imagines Ivan at the Last Judgment, unable to say 'Thou art just, O Lord' even if he understands "what it has all been for" and sees the mother embracing the torturer of her child. A Nietzschean theodicy must propose a very different "last judgment" – one at which God is judged by each sentient being, but more especially, one at which each individual makes a judgment about her own life. The question is not whether the life of some tortured child was worth it, because that question must be asked and answered by the child who was tortured. The question for each individual would be, given that there was only one causal pathway to the person I am now, was it worth it to take that path? A Nietzschean theodicy explains how it is possible that in every case the answer would be yes. Without a theodicy, one might still hope to give that answer to oneself.

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Notes

1. Paul Draper, 'Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists', and 'The Skeptical Theist', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
2. William Alston, 'Some (Temporary) Final Thoughts on Evidential Arguments from Evil', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
3. *Ibid*., pp. 328–329.
4. *Ibid*., pp. 329–330.
5. *Ibid*., p. 330; Alvin Plantinga, 'On Being Evidentially Challenged', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
6. William Alston, 'The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition', and Alvin Plantinga, 'Epistemic Probability and Evil', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Of course, as J.S. Mill argued against an earlier attempt to render God 'inscrutable,' God's 'goodness' must be understood as essentially the same quality as human goodness, rather than as "the unknown attribute of a thing unknown" if we are to call it 'good' and to agree that it is deserving of worship. See John Stuart Mill, 'The Philosophy of the Conditioned, as Applied by Mr. Mansel to the Limits of Religious Thought', from *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* in J.M. Robson (ed.), *John Stuart Mill Works* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979), vol. 9, p. 107.
7. William Rowe, 'The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look', p. 276; Daniel Howard-Snyder, 'The Argument from Inscrutable Evil', pp. 305–307; Richard Gale, 'Some Difficulties in Theistic Treatments of Evil', p. 211; in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
8. Paul Draper, 'The Skeptical Theist', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
9. Alvin Plantinga, 'On Being Evidentially Challenged', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
10. See Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.
11. If theism is true, then there is no gratuitous evil in the world, i.e. no evil without a morally sufficient reason. But, *prima facie* gratuitous evil, coupled with the absence of proof or good evidence for theism, places a burden of proof on any theistic "story" which does *not* imply that the world must be exactly as it is, i.e. containing apparently gratuitous evil.
12. Rejecting theism while leaving open the possibilities of alternatives such as there being no transcendent cause of the world (atheism), or there being a morally indifferent transcendent cause, or of any other causal hypothesis compatible with the *prima facie* case.
13. John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), Ch. 7.
14. *Ibid*., p. 281.

15. *Ibid*., p. 281.
16. *Ibid*., p. 323.
17. *Ibid*., p. 287.
18. *Ibid*., p. 323.
19. *Ibid*., pp. 256–258.
20. *Ibid*., pp. 258, 322–336.
21. Edward Madden and Peter Hare, *Evil and the Concept of God* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas, 1968), Ch. 5:I; J.L. Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind* 64 (1955): 200–212; H.J. McCloskey, 'God and Evil', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1960): 97–114; William Alston, 'The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition', in Daniel Howard-Snyder (ed.), *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
22. Such choices would be free in the sense of flowing from the nature of the agent and its environment as they were created by God. See Hick, *op. cit*., XIII:3,4.
23. John Hick, *op. cit*., p. 275. Hick says that in order for human faith, love and worship to be "authentic" God must somehow create agents whose love of God is *not* determined by God's "initial fashioning of that nature and its environment," or "forced" by anything outside of the agent. See Hick, *op. cit*., pp. 273, 274. However, if God chose to create an agent such that the result would (or even might) *not* be "love, faith and worship," there is a further difficulty for a theodicy of the type proposed by Hick, as argued, for example, by J.L. Mackie, *op. cit*. and H.J. McCloskey, *op. cit*.
24. John Hick, *op. cit*., p. 275.
25. *Ibid*., p. 276.
26. *Ibid*., p. 277.
27. *Ibid*., p. 274.
28. *Ibid*., p. 274.
29. This may be because, on one view, God has no time-predicates, and so encompasses what we experience as moments in time in something analogous to an expanded "present moment." Or, it may be because the character of the "actual self alive in the moment" continuously emerges in the way it does as a function of a set of antecedent causes which are completely transparent to the omniscient and omnipotent being which created that causal chain. If God has created persons with natures which allow choices to be, to some extent, causally independent of circumstances and even the experiences of some agent, then decisions might be a function of three causal factors (environment, character, nature), but, again, the causal chain should be transparent to an omniscient God. Hick attributes an "ultimate omni-responsibility" to God because "His decision to create the existing universe was the primary and necessary precondition for the occurrence of evil, all other conditions being contingent upon this, and He took his decision in awareness of all that would flow from it." See Hick, *op. cit*., pp. 290–291. For some more recent libertarian approaches to divine foreknowledge of 'free' choices see Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sandas, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994); Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence: the Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1998); and the exchange between Goetz and Stump: Stewart Goetz, 'Stumping for Widerker', *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (1999): 93–101; Eleanore Stump, 'Dust, Determinism, and Frankfort: A reply to Stump', *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999): 413–422; Stewart Goetz, 'Stump on Libertarianism and the Principle of Alternative Possibilities', *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001): 93–101.

30. I do not understand what it would mean to say an omnipotent God is not the ultimate, sufficient cause of the actions of all creatures, whether or not one assumes agents have some degree of power to act independently of their circumstances and experiences, since God would create those agents, endowing them with whatever nature and degree of causal power they would possess. Even among libertarians, the debate on this point is far from resolved. For example, see the exchange between McCann and Rowe: Hugh McCann, 'Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will', *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995): 582–598; William Rowe, 'The Problem of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom', *Faith and Philosophy* 16: (1999): 98–101; Hugh McCann, 'Sovereignty and freedom: A Reply to Rowe', *Faith and Philosophy* 18 (2001): 110–116.
31. God would presumably value such a response, despite having caused it.
32. Since I am an 'ethical subjectivist' I shall simply make this value judgment, and defend this approach to values in the next section.
33. A 'Nietzschean' theodicy is consistent with a deterministic ('compatibilist') or libertarian concept of free will (if the latter is coherent), if one can assume that all sentient creatures ultimately achieve what I shall call moral autonomy.
34. See *Fear and Trembling*.
35. Of course, as Plato argued, *if* one values 'excellence' or 'happiness' in the sense of flourishing as the kind of being one is, then a rational person will need to discover what kinds of activities and choices are most likely to produce this result and which therefore ought to be "approved of". In other words, to say value choices are subjective does not imply they are logically arbitrary.
36. This notion of values as existential limits asserted within an 'absurd' universe was developed in an interesting way by Albert Camus in *The Rebel*. Fundamental existential values are revealed most clearly when they are threatened, provoking an individual to rebel, drawing a line of resistance – saying 'no' to the negation of a value to which a 'yes' is thereby implied. The civil rights movement in the southern United States is a good example of this kind of rebellion.
37. As Camus argued in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, the basic existential question is 'Should I commit suicide?' Answering that question is, for Camus, the beginning of morality in a Nietzschean sense.
38. Martin Buber is a theist who takes this existential approach to conscience, assuming that God has given each person a unique 'path' and that following the path is a condition for integrity or authentic existence. See Martin Buber, *Good and Evil* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).

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