

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL AND A CRITIQUE OF RELIGIOUS REASON

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Abstract. The author's goal is to weigh capabilities of theistic reason in regard to the problem of evil, and two formats of reasoning in this regard are strictly differed, i.e. attempts at building theodicies (as universal, generally valid and transparent for all reasonable persons, both believers and nonbelievers, models of explanation of causes, dimensions and distributions of evils and sufferings in the world of the Divine origin and government) and defenses (counterarguments to atheistic inference of the non-existence of God from the abundance of sufferings in the world). The upshot is that while there is no doubt that the great multitude of evils and sufferings in the world are surely beyond reach of any theodicies, it is similarly doubtless that many sound reasons are suitable for countering atheist "evidential refutations". Some new arguments are offered to counterbalance Rowe's "friendly atheism", Draper's "hypothesis of indifference", and Schellenberg's "argument from hiddenness", along with analysis of wishful thinking underlying all of them.

The problem of evil, one of the most discussed in philosophical theology¹ from its very beginnings, is being solved nowadays in a fashion different from the prevailing manner of coping with it during the former ages. Instead of resolving the issue by means of rational argumentation in the

¹ I emphasize that the question is about *philosophical theology* and not *philosophy of religion* in spite of very widespread identification of these disciplines, especially in analytic philosophy. Here I allude to my view that philosophy of religion should be *philosophy-on-religion* having *Religiöse* (Johann Gottlieb Fichte) and not *philosophy-in-religion* for its topic. For detailed arguments see, inter alia: V.K. Shokhin, "Methodological Pluralism and the Subject Matter of Philosophy of Religion", in *Knowledge, Action, Pluralism*. Ed. by S.T. Kolodziejczyk and J. Salamon. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2014, pp. 321-324.

framework of the established religious world-outlook, contemporary religious philosophers try with increasing frequency to modify the very concept of God to fit it unto current ways of thinking. The case with open theism, where God is being relieved from responsibility for the world overburdened with moral evil and physical suffering by delivering Him from the burden of “meticulous providence”(Michael Peterson) along with “ultimate attributes” of theistic Personal Absolute has been only first gambit here to be followed by such devices as what I would call “theology of a weak Divinity” (in vogue with many continental “theological avant-gardists”) , i.e. of a low-powered God from whom abuses for bad state of affairs in the world could be safely called away. In my opinion, the price of such endeavors to “help God” is too high, approximately as counteracting hair loss by using a guillotine.

In a slightly similar way opposition to the atheistic argument from evil at the cost of essential characteristics of classical theism is on hand also in the latest issues of EJPR. To give one example, in his controversy with the renowned argument from unbelief one author admits that one can have personal relations with another without being aware who exactly that other is, to the upshot that “one might have a relation to Truth or Justice, while not realizing that those absolute values are God”². What is overlooked there is that, first, personal relations have nothing to do with respect for abstract values and, second, that Truth and Justice might be understood so differently and widely that even an avowed atheist can be regarded a theist with such expanded understanding of the communion with God. The main thing, however, with such an argument is that Personal Absolute is evened to “absolute values”, and this is a farewell to theism. In another article the endorsement of the former verdict of the author on the issue of evil (along with on the issue of religious diversity) is made³ which resolves the problem by means of “theodicy of justice as fairness” (methodologically in line with Rawls’ theory of justice). According to this theodicy based on “our newly acquired egalitarian insights” it is more plausible to assume that good and just God never intervenes to change the natural course of events to prevent evil from

² Cyrille Michon, “On Schellenberg’s Argument from Ignorance”, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2015, Vol. 7/1, pp. 87-88.

³ Janusz Salamon, “Atheism and Agatheism in the Global Ethical Discourse: Reply to Millican and Thornhill-Miller”, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2015, Vol. 7/4, p. 212.

happening than to admit that He does it sometimes in an “outrageously selective way” (and has therefore some “favourites”)⁴. But such a God is closer to deistic than to theistic divinity inasmuch as deism insisted just on the Divine non-intervention into the affairs of the world, as was the case with “aristocratic” Epicurean gods dwelling in the intermundia, the space between the cosmoi without any concern for our concerns⁵. On the other hand, we have here a typical deistic “religion within the limits of reason alone”, because theistic God says of himself that *my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways ... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts* (Isaiah 55: 8-9) and it is highly doubtful therefore that He should be governed by our philosophical theories of justice⁶.

In contrast, I suppose that classical theism has not as yet exhausted all its potentialities for self-defence against atheistic argument from evil in such a degree that it should be substituted by some other, more “up-to-date” religious doctrine, provided that it should be able for critical

⁴ J. Salamon, ‘Theodicy of Justice as Fairness and Sceptical Pluralism’, in: *Knowledge, Action, Pluralism*. Ed. S.T. Kolodziejczyk, Frankfurt, 2014, pp. 250-251; for a related argument in favour of “mystical inclusivism”, cf. J. Salamon, ‘Light Out of Plenitude’, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2(2010), pp. 141ff.

⁵ It was not by chance that the first critics of Deism in the 17th century nicknamed its champions Epicureans. Deists of that age were by no means atomists, and neither is Janusz Salamon, being much closer to Plato and Kant. The point is that deistic *attitude* to religious issues is by no means historical heritage alone and is in a sense a theological archetype. For example, the whole movement of “religious pluralism” culminating with John Hick has many parallels with deistic attitude to religious diversity in the fashion of Wolff’s follower Georg F. Meier (1718-1777), Hermann S. Reimarus (1694-1768) and his famous pupil Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781).

⁶ The Old Testament is corroborated by the Gospels. One can refer only to the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard where those who worked the whole day and *have borne the burden and heat of the day* were made by the householder equal to those who *have wrought but one hour* and listened that it was his right to do what he wills with his own (Matthew 20: 12-15). There is no doubt that such reasoning is in the way of implementing any versions of distributive and even moral justice theories from Aristotle to Rawls’ followers to “Divine economy”. Other transgressions of the principle of human justice are at hand also in the Parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 29:30) and of the Unjust Stewart (Luke 16: 18-19), while some elements of “injustice” are present also in that of the Lost Sheep (15: 3-4). The reason thereof from the classical theistic point of view is ontological: our reason is not an appropriate instrument for measuring all the reasons of its Creator.

attitude not only to its opponents but also some its own historical clichés. And I express profound gratitude to the editorial board of EJPR for giving me an opportunity to defend this thesis.

When one hears the term *the problem of evil*, one does not need many comments. The argument under discussion has always been the most vexing for religious mind, and not only for classical theism, but also for other religious world-views. Two and half millennia ago Plato had to take into account the views of those who were skeptical about gods' participation in the affairs of this world because of prosperity of impious people and their descendants, as well as misfortunes of the virtuous ones⁷. At the same time some early Brahmanists, who were in a sense "open theists"⁸, had to deal with Buddhist taunt concerning doubtful compatibility between the existence of a good creator and sufferings of living beings⁹. But classical theism is indeed highly sensitive to the issue of evil. In truth, the argument against it from allegedly more rational materialist alternative world explanation can be counteracted without much toil by unmasking its essential fideism, where faith in God is only replaced by the irrational faith in the designer omnipotence of quite blind and accidentally acting forces¹⁰. A more modern argument from

⁷ Plat. Leg. X.899e-900b. But similar reproach of Zeus was expressed still earlier, e.g., in pessimistic verses of Theognis of Megara (approximately the six century BC) who complained that it was against justice to distribute equal fates to righteous and impious people.

⁸ Like God of open theists, Īśvara of Indian theists was not viewed as the Omnipotent Being, but in this case not because of desire to deliver him from the burden of responsibility for everything in the world and to bring him nearer (also in the ontological sense) to created beings, but in accordance with the all-powerful faith in the law of karma/samsāra which was thought of as the general mechanism of causality without beginning and independent in itself.

⁹ We can find sarcasms toward the pretended "unrighteous lord of the world" who might be incapable to prevent sufferings of living beings or even satisfied with them as early as in the collection of the Jātakas from the Pali canon (VI.208). The same manner of discourse on Īśvara is on hand in Vasubandhu's commentary on his own famous *Abhidharmakośa* (II.63-64) and in Samantabhadra's commentary on the same text (the fourth century A.D.). Related to the topic under discussion is such still not outdated contribution as *Hayes R.P. Atheism in Buddhist Tradition // Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 1988, Vol.16, p. 5-28.

¹⁰ A historical survey of the *reductio ad absurdum* argument against this naturalistic world-view (from the Stoics up to Fred Hoyle), where what can be designated as short-cut narrative argumentation was implemented is presented inter alia in my recent paper: V.K. Shokhin, "Natural Theology, Philosophical Theology and Illustrative Argumentation",

the very existence of alternative religious traditions allegedly of equal (if not excelling) value is less irrational, but it can also be countered by comparison between the attributes of the theistic God and other "ultimate realities". In contrary, the argument from evil encroaches just on these very attributes by contrasting their ideal perfectness with the robust quantum of negative realities of the empirical world which cannot be explained away by a supposition (popular in Antiquity and Middle Ages) that evil has no rights for existence.

Meanwhile, the other word-combination used in the title of this paper, *critique of religious reason*, calls for amplification, since, in the first place, I use it in the Kantian sense. The question is about the resources of this reason in relation to the subject under discussion. My view is that this reason has always struggled to fulfil the task beyond its capacities but often simultaneously, fails to do its best with one quite commensurate with its capabilities. Time constraints prevent me from delving into details, so I have to confine myself with only a few contours¹¹.

An unfeasible task which no one has imposed on this reason and in which it has ever been very interested is building theodicies, i.e. universal, generally valid and transparent for all reasonable persons (both believers and nonbelievers) models of explanation of causes, dimensions and distributions of evils and sufferings in the world of the Divine origin and government. From the Late Antiquity up to the Late Modernity four such main models were not only acknowledged but also highly praised: 1) evil as something ontologically unlawful or a kind of non-being in the final analysis, 2) evil as, contrary to this, a necessary element of the world system and its harmony and order, 3) evil as a product of a free and false will of limited conscious beings; 4) evil as an instrument of Divine dispensation aiming at the improvement of human beings.

None of these explanations managed to be sufficient in and of itself, inasmuch as all the most distinguished "theodacists" combined them in their texts without, usually without being aware of it. To begin with, Plotinus, whose influence on developing theodicies in the later, in the first place Christian, natural theology can hardly be overestimated, presents all the four models in a clear-cut fashion. His interpretation of

De Gryuter Open Theology, 2016, Vol. 2, pp. 804-817: <https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/opth.2016.2.issue-1/opth-2016-0060/opth-2016-0060.xml>

¹¹ The ideas contained in this paper were first presented at the 21th Conference of the European Society for Philosophy of Religion in Uppsala, 25-28 August 2016.

evil as either a product of matter which is almost the same as non-being, or only a diminuation of good (Enn. I.8, cf. III.2.5) corresponds to model (1); snickering at those who would like to get rid of evil in the world as similar to ignorant critics rebuking an artist for not using one color, a producer for including also negative characters into his play, citizens for establishing the service of an executioner (III.2.12, 17) is model (2); his view of evil as a result of free choice of the outward world at the expense of divine contemplation and, in addition, of arrogance and self-isolation of a soul (III.5.1, III 9. 3; V 1.1) is (3), while consideration of evil as a means to help humans in increasing vigilance, waking sound reason, withstanding obstacles and realizing how beneficent virtue is in comparison with the disasters which befall wrongdoers (III.2.5) definitely corresponds to (4). With Origen we have pattern (1) when he insists that evil is something nonexistent because everything existent must have been created by God who could not create what contradicted to his nature (In Ioan. II.3.93,99), pattern (3) in explanation of the origin of evil by bad upbringing of human beings, free self-corruption and vicious environment (De princ. II.6.4-6; III.1.3; Contra Cels. III.69; IV.12, 20, 21, 64), but he was also sure (pattern 4) that sufferings were similar to bitter drugs used by doctors for recovering patients (Contra Cels. VI.56; Philok. 27,7). A very similar distribution of explanatory models we find also with Tertullian. For St. Augustine evil was a lawful condition for the proper world-government (pattern 2) and he supplemented Plotinus' similarities by the necessity to combine high-pitched sounds with low-pitched to produce a song and long syllables with short ones to make a poem (De ord. I 1, 7; II 19), but it was he who emphasized more expressively than all his predecessors pattern (3), i.e. that perverted and sinful free will is the main (if not singular) cause of evil, the will that (again in accordance with Plotinus) prefers transient goods to eternal ones (De lib. arb. II 19; Enchrid. 23- 24, De ver. rel. 14; Contr. Fortunat. 15 etc.), while acknowledging (pattern 4) also an "educational" dimension of evil which makes one understand attractiveness of good (Enchrid. 11 etc.). All the four patterns are at hand with Pseudo-Dionisius and Aquinas. And the same is with Leibniz whose *Theodicy* (1710) displays the renown medieval "privative conception" of evil (which is *privatio boni*), corresponding to model (1), still more renown his own conception

of the best of all possible worlds (2), along with detailed reference to (3) and resolute acknowledgement of (4)¹².

In principle, such a "multi-explanation" is not contradictory to reason, inasmuch as evil is a very profound and multidimensional reality, but these explanations have been not too well compatible with each other. Some of them contradicted to all others, i.e. model (1), while model (3) to model (2). One contradicted even to itself, i.e. model (2) which treated evil as a lesser but, in reality, indispensable good. And one of them, i.e. model (3), being in itself very cogent for spiritual reason, led inquisitive minds to dead-end disentanglement of puzzles, e.g., how Lucifer, created as good and lightful, could have fallen, if the very "place" wherein he could have "entered" was just the result of his very fall. Models (1) and (2), which I prefer to call metaphysical, are not in real use now¹³, but models (3) and (4) retain their places, along with model (5) that treats suffering in this life as a means to acquire bliss in the afterlife. They are evidently less vulnerable to criticisms than counterintuitive model 1 (we can regard evil as non-existent only when we inflict it on others and by no means when they inflict it on us) and model 2 (evil as a good), but they also do not work as universal explanations. It would be very presumptuous, for example, to interpret all environmental disasters as resulting from by moral evils in the world of reasonable beings, and still more arrogant to explain ruin of persons *A*, *B* and *C* in a plane crash by their better preparation for the heaven than in case with persons *E*, *F* or *G* who had not managed to get tickets for the same flight.

All said above does not contradict to the fact that presumptions behind models (3), (4) and (5) conform well to religious reason, and, what is still more important, religious vision. More important inasmuch as inner feelings, intuitions and contemplations (cf. the basic meaning of the term *theōría*, one of the fundamental notions of the European culture¹⁴) are first-rate sources of knowledge in epistemology of

¹² On some non-Christian counterparts of these models (in Islam, Judaism and Hinduism) see, e.g.: V.K. Shokhin, "Philosophical Theology and Indian Versions of Theodicy", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2010, Vol. 2/2, pp. 177-200.

¹³ Among most notorious expositions of model (2) one could mark: N. Pike, "Hume on Evil", *Philosophical Review* 1963, Vol. 72, pp. 180-197 and R. Chisholm, "The Defeat of Good and Evil", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, 1968, Vol. 42., pp. 21-38.

¹⁴ One of the best investigation of both the origin and essence of *theōría* (with very valuable remarks also concerning pre-Platonic contexts of the notion) is doubtlessly:

religious beliefs and have more access to the topic under discussion than syllogisms. A man of even average spirituality can discern with his inner eye that many evils in his life are allowed for his profit and that there are some connections between some of his sufferings and sins, while very rare persons of highest spiritual gifts can behold some future rewards for their patience in this life. But any attempts to erect generalized explanatory patterns split against Revelation which asserts definitely *for now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known* (1 Corinthians 13:12), and any self-confident “theodist” should be, one can believe, so scarcely agreeable to God as were Job’s friends rejected by Him (who were also “theodists” with ready clear-cut explanations of the sufferings of the most righteous man in the world). In reality, Revelation cannot be anything but uniquely authoritative for any “man of the Book”, and it does not encourage any explanatory universalism. In some cases, and even numerous, severe diseases and other sufferings are said to be definitely connected with sins, as, e.g., in the narrative about healing of the man sick of the palsy according to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 9:1-7, Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:18-25) and the fourth one (John 5:14), in other cases – as with a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years – with Satan’s actions (Luke 13:10-16), in other ones – as was the case with the man blind from his birth – with their use for manifestation of the works of God (John 9: 1-3). And God, who nurses a man more diligently than a mother her babe in arms (according to Isaiah 49:15 at least), allows, as in the last two cases, vast volumes of human sufferings for realization of the highest goals. In addition, what is of great significance for our topic, He prohibits any measurement of correlations between human actions and their retribution, as we see from Jesus’s discourse on the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices and those slain by the tower of Siloam (Luke 13:1-5)¹⁵.

More feasible for religious reason could be the task of counteracting attempts to repudiate the existence of God by evidence from negative

G. Picht, “Der Sinn der Unterscheidung von Theorie und Praxis in der griechischen Philosophie”, *Idem.. Wahrheit, Vernunft, Verantwortung. Philosophische Studien*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1969, pp. 108-135.

¹⁵ Cf. very resolute emphasis in Jesus’ answer (after resurrection) to the Apostles’ question about the future kingdom of Israel: *It is not for you to know the times or the season, which the Father hath put in his own power* (Acts 1:7).

facts (and even their abundance) in the world, which is not a theodicy but a defense. But here theistic achievements in the contemporary controversies are not too impressive. It is true that Alvin Plantinga has managed to coerce into silence the so called famous logical argument from evil offered by John Mackie¹⁶ (in reality very similar to one offered by Pierre Bayle more than three hundred years ago), i.e. from incapability of the Omnipotent Being to create such perfectly free wills which would not be able to carry out unrighteous choices. Plantinga convincingly demonstrated that even Being “than which a greater cannot be thought” (to use Anselmean idiom) cannot produce anything self-contradictory and, therefore, absurd, because it would contradict to its perfection¹⁷. But after this unsuccessful frontal attack the “friendly”, “indifferent”, “modest” and other atheists learned how to make more skillful mine holes – from what is called evidential arguments. Many theists have not found anything better than to reply to the renown William Rowe’s argument from gratuitous disasters exemplified in the basic version of it by an imaginable example of a fawn perishing in a forest fire¹⁸ by a logical trick known as G.E. Moore’s shift of premises, ironically suggested to them by Rowe himself, instead of answering him to the point. Counterarguments from the position of skeptical theism presented by Stephen Wykstra and then elaborated by William Alston¹⁹ were much better, but analogies they adduce are more suitable in cases of more as it were “calm evils” than with “horrendous ones”, to use Marilyn Adams’ words²⁰. In addition, some atheists managed to use very theistic reasoning on the Divine Hiddenness to their profit, as we see with John Schellenberg’s argument from cases of the so- called human inculpable

¹⁶ J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”, *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology of Contemporary Views*. Ed. by M.Stewart. Boston, 1996, pp. 333-344.

¹⁷ A. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity*. Oxford, 1974, pp. 164-196.

¹⁸ W. Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism”, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1979, Vol. 16, p. 337; *Idem*. “Evil and Theodicy”, *Philosophical Topics*, 1988, Vol. 16, p. 119.

¹⁹ See, e.g., S. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments for Suffering. On Avoiding the Evils of Appearance”, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 1984, Vol.16, pp.73-93; W. Alston, “Some (Temporarily) Final Thoughts on the Evidential Arguments from Evil”, *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Ed. by D. Howard-Snyders. Bloomington, IN, 1996, pp. 311-332.

²⁰ See already her early manifesto: M.M. Adams, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1989, Vol. 63 (Supplementary), pp. 297-310.

unbelief (which God as a loving father, had He existed, could have removed without problem for the welfare of His children)²¹, to which theists usually object using traditional patterns of theodicies mentioned above which are scarcely useful here²².

Meanwhile, it is not a secret that any defense can be effective only when escorted also by counterattacks on the territory of the opponent, and they are here mostly lacking. To fill some gaps in this regard, I would ask Row's followers to ponder a little bit on why he summoned God to "a Hague tribunal" for sufferings in the animal world²³ and not for horrors of the Gulag, Sino-Japanese war, Holocaust, massacres in Kampuchea, Rwanda or Sudan (I follow the chronological order) not to mention other genocides. May be because innumerable human victims have not been "gratuitous" and, correspondingly, have been justifiable? Or, in other words, by the reason that animal lives are regarded more valuable nowadays than human ones, as was the case with some medieval Jains who cherished bacteria and regarded some Hindus deserving violence? To Paul Draper, the author of the so-called hypothesis of indifference²⁴, I would put another question, i.e. whether his outright equating of evil with physical sufferings and good, correspondingly, with bodily pleasures does not remind one of extremely oversimplified ethics thrown away on the level of reasoning already in the works of Aristotle? And those for whom his reasonings sound persuasive, I would ask to

²¹ See: J. L. Schellenberg, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, Ithaca. 1993, p. 83; *Idem*. "The Hiddenness Argument Revisited (I)", *Religious Studies*, 2005, Vol. 41 (2), pp. 201–215; *Idem*. "The Epistemology of Modest Atheism", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2015, Vol.7/1, pp. 51-69 and numerous other papers of the same author, as well as his responses to opponents.

²² Schellenberg himself (as well as his followers like Theodore Drange) does not acknowledge his argument as a variety of the argument from evil (because he aspires to opening of the new era of atheism which has to use new weapons instead such old ones), but in reality it doubtlessly is, because he stresses that God's admission of unbelief of some people deprives them of consolation in their hardships and enlightenment and deprivation of a very important good is, certainly, evil.

²³ It was only much later that he decided to use a report from a Detroit newspaper about rape followed by cruel murder of a five-year-old girl "Sue" as an additional piece of evidence against God after the primary "Bambi" case – W. Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look", *The Evidential Argument from Evil*. Ed. by D. Howard-Snyder. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 264.

²⁴ See: P. Draper, "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists", *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*. Ed. by E. Stump and M.J. Murray. Malden, 1999, pp. 164-175.

meditate on why it was still in the first decades of the twentieth century (to say nothing about previous ages) that the moral evil (injustice in the first place) predominated attention of those who discussed the topic and it is again only nowadays that physical evil occupies almost the whole horizon of those dealing with it. Is it not again a mark of retrogression of the culture? Schellenberg's attention could be attracted to such a nuance that his calculations of the inculpabilities in human unbelief (and here we have the pivotal member of his syllogisms) are accessible only to the Omniscient Being that knows the hearts of all humans along with their inner histories and whose existence he endeavors to refute just on the ground of these calculations²⁵. And does his attempt to deprive God of his parental rights (for admitting unbelief of His pretended children) really disclose problems with the existence of God and not (I again attract attention to the change of "historical seasons") with today's sociocultural patterns of thinking in accordance with which all the required for the good of a child should be required from a parent alone? But even at the level of elementary logic, if unbelief of some people is regarded a sufficient reason for negation of the existence of God, should not belief of others (who are more numerous) be regarded a good argumentum a fortiori for affirmation of His existence?

But here we come to the most profound layer of atheistic mentality which lies at the bottom of all concrete arguments. This is typical wishful thinking dressed up in the objective (if not even scientific) investigation of the correlations between Divine attributes and states of affairs in our world. I mean that we observe manifested double standards or, in other words, false scale in all the discussed solutions of the problem of evil. However serious and dramatic this problem is in itself, adversaries of theism prefer to ignore completely that profusion of gratuitous benefactions (let us use Rowe's language), which is being poured out every hour of the universe's history and still oftener on all sentient beings including themselves and which (if one embarks on calculations like

²⁵ E.g., I'm not sure that Schellenberg himself is capable to determine how far his own "fair unbelief" was caused by his "innocent ignorance" of the Divine existence and how far by his ambitious desire to open a new era in the history of atheism and then promulgate a new "experiential religion" better accommodated to the present stage of the evolution of the mankind (whereas theism and "classical atheism" do correspond to a lower stage of it in his opinion). See: J. Schellenberg, *The Will To Imagine: A Justification of Skeptical Religion*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

those offered by Draper) surpasses volumes of all evils a lot. Not to notice it (as does, for example, Rowe's eminent disciple Alex Trakakis who wonders wherefrom he could infer the goodness of God²⁶) is to become like a chief character of one old Russian satirical poem who asserted that the sun is useless because it lights only when there is full day light even without it. Or, to take another analogy, atheistic investigation of evil is mostly similar to investigation of a hated husband's way of life by a wife yearning to divorce from him or of work of a bank-employee by a top manager wishing to dismiss him at any rate²⁷. Without realizing that they encounter motivations, theists will continue be sure that they do only with propositions.

But why they themselves do not appeal to abundant gratuitous benefactions, is not too clear for me. One could surmise they may be sure that it is the sun's natural obligation to shine (and carrying out natural obligations does not deserve gratitude). But, surely, it is a topic of quite a separate paper.

²⁶ N. Trakakis, "The Evidential Problem of Evil" : <http://www.iep.utm.edu/evil-evi/> (28.09.2016).

²⁷ To give only one example, Drange, a veteran atheist and faithful follower of Schellenberg acknowledged quite frankly that the argument from unbelief is more effective weapon than earlier ones inasmuch as it strikes the Christian God better, because "there is Biblical evidence that if the God of Christianity were to exist then he would have a great concern about humanity's widespread lack of belief": Th. Drange Th. "The Arguments From Evil and Nonbelief (2006): http://infidels.org/library/modern/theodore_drange/aeabn.html (30.02.2016). Such a hatred and animosity toward a presumably non-existent object (as God for those who deny His existence) is one of the most profound paradoxes of atheistic mentality which in reality is moved much more by feelings than by rationality.