



## The Problem of Evil with Dr. David Schenk

### Lesson 8: Rowe's Evidential Problem of Evil

#### Outline:

##### William Rowe's Argument for the Evidential Problem of Evil

- (1) There is a wealth of genuinely pointless suffering in the world.
- (2) God would never allow genuinely pointless suffering.
- (3) Therefore, there is no God.

##### William Rowe's Example

- There are no special moral lessons for deer to learn from their sufferings. Where deer suffer, their moral character will not (in any measurable way) improve.
- A fawn gets trapped in a forest fire. He suffers horrible burns in the forest fire. He suffers greatly before finally dying.
- Why is it that under traditional orthodox theism that God has to permit that to happen? What is the greater good that justifies that allows for all of that superfluous suffering?
- In response to this challenge:
  - **Direct Attack**
    - For every instance of an apparently pointless suffering, come up with some plausible redeeming greater good for which the suffering might be necessary.
    - Go straight after the first proposition, and try to undercut the evidence for it.
    - Rowe thinks the direct attack will eventually be implausible.
  - **Indirect Attack** (G.E. Moore shift)
    - (1) There is a God.
    - (2) God would never allow genuinely pointless suffering.
    - (3) Therefore, there is no genuinely pointless evil.
    - Which one? Is it more plausible to claim there is a God, or is it more plausible to claim that there is for genuinely pointless suffering?
    - The Moore shift is to claim that there is more evidence for the existence of God.
    - Rowe thinks that the evidence for truly pointless suffering is too strong.
    - Rowe was writing this writing this in the early 1970s, before the three great arguments for the existence of God were resuscitated:
      - Ontological Argument



- Cosmological Argument
- Argument from Design (Fine tuning argument)
  - Today it may be that the pendulum has swung the other way. Today we do have good independent evidence that there is a God than the atheist has for genuinely pointless suffering.
  - Admit that the atheist does have excellent independent evidence for genuinely pointless suffering. If this was the only evidence, Rowe's argument would be successful.
  - However, there is vastly better evidence in favor of the existence of God.
- It is a good thing that the evil that we are familiar with is not the only relevant consideration when making a judgement about whether or not God exists.
  - It is the best evidence the atheist has, but it is dwarfed by the positive evidence in natural theology for the existence of God (fine tuning argument, Robin Collins).