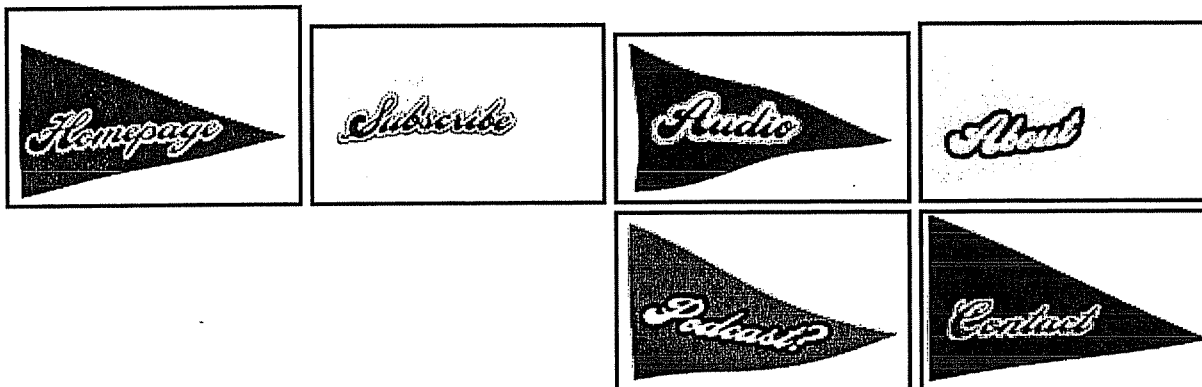


**"THE CUBS REALLY MAKE YOU WONDER ABOUT THE MORAL ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE."**

**- DR. THOMAS CARSON**



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## **Cubscast Interviews Dr. Thomas Carson on 'The Cubs, Baseball, and the Problem of Evil'**

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Recently we had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Thomas Carson, professor of Philosophy at Loyola University. Unfortunately the audio was damaged, but we were able (with Dr. Carson's help) to transcribe the interview, which is presented below:

**Sneetch:** Welcome to Cubscast.com, with us today is a very special guest, Dr. Thomas Carson, professor of Philosophy at Loyola University, in Chicago. Dr. Carson, I understand you have developed a theory you'd like to share with our listeners, which may explain the sources of the Cubs' suffering the last century or so.

**Carson:** The cubs really make you wonder about the moral order of the universe.

**Sneetch:** Something's gotta be amiss, right?

**Carson:** Yeah, and I would just say there's a problem of cosmic injustice when you compare the amount of pennants and playoff appearances by Chicago teams to all the World Series appearances and World Championships by that New York team, it's disturbing.

**Sheps:** Dr. Carson, is it right you've been a Cubs fan for over forty years?

**Carson:** I started following the Cubs around '57 or '58 because my Grandfather was a fanatical Cubs Fan, so I remember the heavy hitting bad pitching team of the late 50 with Banks and Bobby Thompson.

**Lou:** Do you think there was one certain event that triggered your philosophy regarding the Cubs' suffering?

**Carson:** Sixty-nine was just a shattering year for me, and so some of these ideas concerning the Cubs and the problem of evil started to crystallize. I spent many games that summer in the right field bleachers and I still haven't gotten over it.

**Sneetch:** Many years seem to be troublesome and heartbreaking, and you don't always have time to recover from the heartbreak before the next one begins.

**Carson:** Well, it's not every year, thankfully. 2003 and '69 for me are the worst with '84 close. Those are the big years for me.

**Sneetch:** I know you give a lecture called Cubs, Baseball and the Problem of Evil, so I assume you would argue that these events play in to some sort of bigger picture?

**Carson:** The philosophical problem of evil simply says that existence of so much suffering and evil in the world is an argument for the non-existence of God. If God were omnipotent, God could eliminate any evil in the world. If God were benevolent then God would want to eliminate any evil or suffering, and there is lots of evil and suffering, not just some. The philosophical question is raised by what is called gratuitous suffering, that is suffering for which there is no good reason and which leads to no greater good.

**Sneetch:** And I guess then a good definition of gratuitous suffering would be having Jerry Hariston Jr. in the starting lineup every day?

**Carson:** And having him traded for Sammy Sosa while we still pay part of his salary for The Orioles. That's certainly a gratuitous evil. But then you have to ask if there is a greater good for which this evil is necessary. The argument for me really doesn't prove the non-existence of God because an atheist would then have to prove that there is no possible reason for which God could be allowing this. In the case of The Cubs I think it's fair to say that the reason isn't clear. In his book ++The Cubs Fan Guide to life++ James Langford argues that suffering for a Cubs fan produces certain virtues. Hope, for example.

**Lou:** It's definitely a faith builder to be a Cubs fan.

**Carson:** He says we also develop the virtues of patience and charity. My problem with that is that Cubs fans also develop vices. Despair, pessimism, bitterness, et cetera.

**Sheps:** Are we then just silly to continue watching this team? Why are there so many Cubs fans? Is it all about beer?

**Carson:** When I was growing up Wrigleyville was poor, it wasn't a big singles bar atmosphere.

**Sheps:** Why do you now continue being a fan?

**Carson:** I feel I'm stuck in a way, it's part of my identity. How was I supposed to know as a kid that I'd be waiting so long? I'm 55 years old and have never seen my team in the World Series. It's really starting to bother me. One argument then is that the suffering of Cubs fans is freely chosen and it couldn't be God's responsibility. You could root for another team, which parallels the philosophical argument called "the free will defense" The Free Will Defense is that most of the evil and suffering in the world is the result of the misuse of human free will and thus can't be blamed on God. But I would argue that it is immoral to simply root for the winning team.

**Sheps:** And ultimately not as satisfying. The possibility of a World Series win would be vindication for all the suffering.

**Carson:** But what about those who die [before the Cubs win]? The sixth game in 2003 was one of the worst experiences of my life. Maybe the worst.

**Lou:** I think we would all agree.

**Sneetch:** Furthermore, the next game as well.

**Carson:** Well, you knew they were going to blow the next game.

**Sneetch:** So you say it's immoral to root for a winning team? **Carson:** I believe in geographical determinism [you should be a fan of the home team] and the kind of person who would root for the winning team is the kind of person who would trade his wife in for a younger model, but there is the option not to be a fan at all, or the stoic option of just not worrying about your team, not worrying about things that are beyond your control.

**Sheps:** Some White Sox fans feel they're more stoic and are better off. Do you agree?

**Carson:** I think maybe Cubs fans are a little more theatrical about complaining. But everyone knows about The Cubs, but in many ways the Sox are an even more disappointing team. They've only been in one World Series since 1919. The Cubs aren't that bad.

**Sneetch:** And The Cubs have at least never lost the World Series on purpose.

**Carson:** Yeah, but I really deplore the way the two teams' fans delight in the suffering of the other. We're all fellow sufferers, I think it's really inappropriate.

**Sneetch:** The fans should embrace each other because of their suffering?

**Carson:** I'm not gonna become a White Sox fan, but I feel for them.

**Lou:** It's unfortunate that Frank Thomas went ahead and started the baseball strike when they were winning in '94.

**Sneetch:** Can we still hate Cardinals fans.

**Carson:** yeah, well, I think\*

**Sneetch:** Please?

**Carson:** It's natural to dislike teams that win too much.

**Sheps:** Hating the Yankees is definitely good to go.

**Carson:** That was one of my earliest instincts.

**Lou:** Teething, and hating the Yankees.

**Carson:** I mutilated a lot of Yankees baseball cards when I was a kid, and now they're very valuable, all those Mickey Mantle cards. And you can't blame any one player, it's a team thing.

**Lou:** Like Jose Macias?

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**Carson:** it's just when it all adds up year after year after year, there's a pattern. Bad Bullpens are part of the Pattern.

**Sneetch:** Is there anything we can be doing to change this pattern, is there a formula or anything?

**Carson:** I'm 55! I used to joke about this when I was in my twenties. Would we live to see The Cubs in the World Series.? It's not funny anymore. I just want them to make a respectable showing in the World Series, and not get blown out.

**Sneetch:** So they couldn't be The Cardinals last year? Who got SWEPT?

**Carson:** And I've had it up to here with all these Red Sox fans who kept complaining. The Cubs and White Sox had each waited longer, even before last year. Even before last year (2004), the Red Sox played in 3 exciting 7 game World Series in my lifetime 67, 75, and 86. In 75 they played in the best WS ever and won the most exciting baseball game ever played. If the Cubs did what the Red Sox did in 75 we would all be ecstatic even if they lost the seventh game. We have complaining and whining rights over everyone.

**Sneetch:** I've got a lot of complaining to do, so I'm glad.

**Sheps:** What happens if this season in the most magical fashion, we win the Series? Does God exist?

**Carson:** Well I really should be clear. I'm saying the Cubs record and other evils raise serious questions about the existence of God, but it doesn't prove he doesn't exist.

**Sheps:** Ok, well then would it all be worth it if we win?

**Carson:** Probably, but you have to think about all the people who have died. You have sixty more years [to live], The Cubs will do something by then. I don't have that much time. Would I have been better off never having been a Cubs fan? I wonder. There have been a lot of highs and lows. In '67 we were in first place for a couple days in July. A lot of people forget that one. The Home Run Race [in 1998] was a special season even though we lost in the playoffs to a much better team. I saw the game where Sosa went ahead of McGuire at Wrigley field. and then McGuire hit 2 homers to regain the lead. Even if they were on steroids, you have to be thankful. Time in Wrigley Field is well spent, in spite of everything. I guess it's better to have loved and lost than to never have loved a team at all. That's the final conclusion. It's difficult\* I didn't know what I was getting myself in to.

**Sneetch:** So we should all remain Cubs fans?

**Carson:** I think so. It's not mandatory to be a Cubs fan, but don't be disloyal. Don't jump to another team. Maybe we should all write letters [to the Cubs] about the bullpen.

**Sneetch:** So when we win the World Series in 2028, we'll all be better people.

**Carson:** Or we could all be diminished. I just hope I'm alive in 2028.

**Sneetch:** If we actually win in 2028, I will be rich! **Sheps:** Well, Dr. Carson, thanks so much for coming on today, it's been a great an interesting discussion.

**Carson:** Thanks to you guys, and go Cubbies!

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