

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

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HOUSE KEEPING BEFORE WE BEGIN

- There are different kinds of the problem of evil (logical, evidential, and emotional).
- But all focus on the relationship of a good God to evil and suffering in the world.
- In short, if God exists, why is there evil, or so much of it?



HOUSE KEEPING BEFORE WE BEGIN

- We have different kinds of responses to evil.
- Defenses are responses that show the atheists arguments fail (bomb defusing).
- Theodicies are responses that give possible reasons God might have for allowing evil.



QUESTION 1: DOES EVIL DISPROVE GOD?

- Atheists have argued that evil is a defeater for belief in God, suggesting that statements like these below are contradictory:
 1. God is all powerful and all good.
 2. Evil exists.
- But at first look, it is hard to see why this is contradictory.



QUESTION 1: DOES EVIL DISPROVE GOD?

- To show the contradiction, atheists add additional premises to the argument.
 1. God is all powerful and all good.
 2. From (1), an all-powerful God could eliminate evil, and an all-good God would eliminate evil.
 3. From (1-2), evil cannot exist.
 4. Yet, evil does exist.

QUESTION 1: DOES EVIL DISPROVE GOD?

- The problem with their argument is in premise 2—From (1), an all-powerful God could eliminate evil, and an all-good God would eliminate evil.
- This would only be true if God had no reasons for allowing evil.
- But we have good reasons to think that God allows evil for various purposes.

QUESTION 2: WHY MIGHT GOD ALLOW EVIL?

- This is the question of theodicy—reasons God might have for allowing evil in the world.
- Here we will look at several possible answers.
 - Greater-Good Theodicy (special policy).
 - Free-will Theodicy (general policy).
 - Soul-Making Theodicy (general policy).

QUESTION 2: WHY MIGHT GOD ALLOW EVIL?

- A Greater-good theodicy states that from evil, God brings about greater goods in our lives.
- Joseph in Egypt.
- Romans 8:28. “We know that causes all things to work together for the good for those who love God.”



QUESTION 2: WHY MIGHT GOD ALLOW EVIL?

- A Free Will Theodicy states that God allows evil so as to allow for our ability to have free will.
- The value of free will here is not rooted in the human desire for autonomy, but rather in giving us the capacity to actually love God.
- Sure, evil and suffering are undesirable, but a world wherein we lack the agency to love God is even less desirable.

QUESTION 2: WHY MIGHT GOD ALLOW EVIL?

- A Soul-Making Theodicy states that God allows suffering and evil to form us and shape us in specific ways.
- Paul's Thorn in the flesh (II Cor. 12).
- Romans 5:3-4. "we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope."



QUESTION 2: WHY MIGHT GOD ALLOW EVIL?

- A Soul-Making Theodicy states that God allows suffering and evil to form us and shape us in specific ways.
- James 1:2-4. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

QUESTION 3: WHY IS EVIL HERE?

- God is Himself good and the creator of the world.
- The world that God created was good (Genesis 1), and this explains a lot about our world.
- (1) We laugh, (2) we enjoy tastes, colors and sounds, (3) we fall in love, etc.



QUESTION 3: WHY IS EVIL HERE?

- But everything is not good, evil exists and this seems to surprise us in a world made by a good God.
- Why is there evil here in this world?



QUESTION 3: WHY IS EVIL HERE?

- In this good world, God gave a warning that rebellion would result in death (Gen. 2:16-17).
- To turn away from God is to turn from life.
- To turn from life is a turn into death.

QUESTION 3: WHY IS EVIL HERE?

- As a result of Adam rebellion, curses were pronounced on man and all creation.
- Thorns and thistles spring-up, pain becomes a part of child-bearing as creation as a whole is bent and twisted.
- And in the midst of that, God says, “and thus it will be until you return to the earth.”



QUESTION 3: WHY IS EVIL HERE?

- Atheists think that the presence of evil disproves God because evil should be expected in a world made by God.
- But actually, the presence of evil means that we find the world to be exactly the way the Bible says it will be.

