

**Why Is There Evil?**

- why is there evil?
  - because we have free will and we choose to do bad things
  - because we will improve morally

# the argument from evil

- we have been looking at arguments in favor of God's existence
  - the agnostic and atheist usually base their case on the absence of evidence for God's existence
  - but they have one arrow in their own quiver, the argument from evil

- with it the atheist hopes either
  - to neutralize any positive evidence for God's existence based on whatever in the traditional arguments survives their criticism or
  - to demonstrate that it is unreasonable to believe in God

- Epicurus (341–270 BC):
  - Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? then he is impotent.
  - Is God able, but not willing? then he is malevolent.
  - Is God both able and willing? whence then is evil?

- the problem of evil arises because of the paradox of an omnibenevolent, omnipotent deity allowing the existence of evil
- the Judeo-Christian tradition has affirmed these three propositions:
  - 1. God is all-powerful (including omniscience).
  - 2. God is perfectly good.
  - 3. Evil exists.

- But if God is perfectly good, why does he allow evil to exist?
- Why didn't he create a better world, if not with no evil, at least with substantially less evil than in this world?

- Some say that it is an implicit contradiction for it contains premises that are inconsistent with one another.
- These philosophers argue something like the following:
  - 4. If God (an all-powerful, omniscient, omni-benevolent being) exists, there would be no (or no unnecessary) evil in the world.
  - 5. There is evil (or unnecessary evil) in the world.
  - 6. Therefore, God does not exist.



- Generally, Western thought has distinguished between two types of evil: moral and natural.
  - “Moral evil” covers all those bad things for which humans are morally responsible.
  - “Nonmoral evil” or stands for all those terrible events that nature does of her own accord, for example, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, natural diseases, which bring on suffering to humans and animals.

# the free will defense

- the main defense of theism in the light of evil is the free-will defense
- the free-will defense adds a fourth premise to Epicurus' paradox to show that premises 1–3 are consistent and not contradictory. This premise is
  - 7. It is logically impossible for God to create free creatures and guarantee that they will never do evil.

- The proponent of the free-will defense claims that all moral evil derives from creature freedom of the will.

- But what about natural evil? How does the theist account for it?
  - There are two different ways.
- The *first* one is to attribute natural evil to the work of the devil and his angels. Disease and tornadoes are caused by the devil and his minions.

- The *second* way argues that natural evil is part and parcel of the nature of things:
  - a result of the combination of
    - deterministic physical laws that are necessary for consistent action and
    - the responsibility given to humans to exercise their freedom.

- One further distinction is necessary to work through this problem.
- Some theists attempt to answer the charge of inconsistency by simply showing
  - that there is no formal contradiction between propositions 1 through 3,
  - so that the atheist hasn't proved his point.

- But others want to go beyond this negative function and offer a *plausible account* of evil.
- These latter are called “theodocists,” for they attempt to justify the ways of God before humankind.
- They endeavor to show that God allows the temporary evil to bring out greater good.

# there is a reason why God allows evil

- Theodicies can be of two types, depending on how they justify the ways of God.
- 1) The *Augustinian* position is that God created humans without sin and set them in a sinless, paradisaical world.
- However, humanity fell into sin through misuse of its free will.
- God's grace will save some of us, but others will perish everlastingly.



- 2) The second type of theodicy stems from the thinking of Irenaeus (120–202), of the Greek church.
  - The *Irenaeian* tradition views Adam not as a free agent rebelling against God, but as a child.
  - The fall is humanity's first faulty step in the direction of freedom.
  - God is still working with humanity to bring it from biological life to a state of self-realization in divine love, spiritual life.
  - This life is a vale of soul-making.

- two responses to the problem of evil,
  - one aimed at moral evil and
  - the other at nonmoral evil
- moral evil is a necessary result of finite persons (moral agents) acting freely
  - God chose to create finite persons, and the “possibility of wrongdoing or sin is logically inseparable from the creation of finite persons.”

- There is nonmoral evil in the world to allow humans the opportunity to improve morally, to be more like God.
- The purpose of nonmoral evil, then, is “soul-making.”
- Given this purpose, an environment without nonmoral evil “would be the worst of all possible worlds.”

- what is the atheist answer to the question of evil?
  - this is how things are
- if God does not exist everything is permissible; there is no rational justification for morality

- what do we do?
- there is the fact of beauty and suffering; how to cope with this mixt picture?
- is there a God you can trust with this fact of beauty and suffering in the world?
- yes there is

- He proved it at the cross of Christ
- God incarnate dying on the cross
- resurrection of Christ tells us that death is not the end
- the day of judgment will bring final justice for all evil

- Gen. 50:19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?”
- 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.
- 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.