

Christian Apologetics
“always be prepared to give a defense...”

IX. God [good] and Evil

The Problem of Evil

Christianity is not the only religion in the world that has to answer the question of evil. Atheism claims that it proves God does not exist. *Psalm 14:1*. Pantheism and idealism denies that evil actually exists, that it is an illusion. Humanism and naturalism use it to limit or eliminate God’s power. Nevertheless, the problem of evil is a universal one. The interesting thing is that the very fact that we are outraged at evil is a clue that we are in touch with a standard of goodness by which we measure the discrepancy.

Three forms of the problem of evil:

1. It may be claimed that *any evil* disproves an all-good God.
2. Or it may be argued that the sheer *amount of evil* disproves a loving God.
 - a. How much is too much evil?
3. Or it may be claimed that the *unjust distribution* of evil along with needless and pointless suffering – bad things happen to good people, good things happen to bad people - disproves God.
 - a. Original sin
 - b. Vicarious atonement

Summing up the arguments that leverage the problem of evil against God:

1. Aquinas - *Summa*

If one of two opposites is infinite, the other cannot exist
If God is infinite, there would be no evil discoverable
There is evil.
Therefore, God must not exist.

2. Augustine

If God is all-good, he would will all good and no evil
If God is all powerful, he could accomplish everything he wills
But evil exists as well as good.
Therefore, God is either not all-good or not all-powerful, or both.

3. C.S. Lewis

If God is all-good, he would want his creation to be happy
If he is all powerful, he can do whatever he wants
But we are not happy.
Therefore God lack either the goodness or the power or both.

What is Evil?

1. Evil is not a being. If evil were a being or a thing, then either God made it – but He is good - or else God did not make it – but he is the Creator of all things. A sword is not evil, music is not evil, a rock is not evil. Augustine defined evil as disordered love, disordered will. It is a wrong relationship, a nonconformity between our will and God’s.

2. Evil is real. Blindness is not a substance, but it is nevertheless real - a *real* lack of sight. We conclude that his blindness is a *physical* evil, because it lacks what should be there – sight. But the

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blind person is not necessarily *morally* evil. *John 9:1-3*. Evil, then, is the lack or absence of what ought to be present and is not.

Free Will

Now let us contrast *free will* with the prevalent philosophy that denies it - *determinism*.

Determinism/fatalism >>> Heredity (H) + Environment(E) = the Human Act (A)

However, the position of free will tells us that heredity and environment may *condition* our acts, but do not *determine* them.

Free will >>> Heredity (H) + Environment(E) + Free Will (FW) = the Human Act (A)

Thus, the existence of free will always holds the possibility of evil. If that's the case, then why doesn't God just stop the evil acts when they are manifest? Because total free will and total freedom allows us to not only commit or experience evil, but positions us to experience the greatest good – God's love.

Does evil have a role?

Genuine Love

- Is the greatest good (*I Corinthians 13:13*)
- Requires free will/choice

Free choice/free will

- Implies the possibility of the opposite choice/decision

God alone is perfect love...the greatest good

The greatest good for humanity is God's love

The greatest evil for humanity is to reject God

Therefore, to stop...

- *Evil* – is to stop free will / choice
- *Free choice* – is to stop access to true, *genuine* love
- *Love* – is to stop the greatest good
- *The greatest good* – would ironically, be the greatest evil

Dialogue with an Atheist – from the book, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*

