

The Problem of Moral Evil

The Problem Stated in Logical Form

- (T) **The Traditional Nature/Essence of God** (from the view of people)
1. God is *creator* (cause of *all* existent beings)
 2. God is *perfect* (being complete essence/Being in himself)
 3. God is *omniscient* (being and having *all* the knowledge)
 4. God is *omnipotent* (being and having *all* the power)
 5. God is *omnibenevolent* (being and having *all* goodness, no evil)
- (E) **The Empirical Facts of Reality** (from the view of people)
- A. people are *imperfect, limited creatures* (being and having *some* knowledge, power, goodness)
 - B. people commit *evil acts* of injury to themselves and others
 - C. God *appears* to be incapable or stopping the evil acts or God *appears* not to want to stop evil acts

If T is true and E is true, then at least one logical contradiction may be present.

1. If people (P) commit evil acts of injury, and God is omnipotent (Op), then God is capable (C) of stopping heinous acts of injury.
 2. God appears incapable ($\sim C$) of stopping heinous acts of injury.
- \therefore It is not the case that people (P) commit evil acts of injury, and God is omnipotent (Op).

$$\begin{aligned}(P \ \& \ Op) \supset C \\ \sim C \\ \therefore \sim (P \ \& \ Op)\end{aligned}$$

1. If people (P) commit evil acts of injury, and God is omnibenevolent (Ob), then God wants (W) to stop heinous acts of injury.
 2. God appears unwilling ($\sim W$) to stop heinous acts of injury.
- \therefore It is not the case that people (P) commit evil acts of injury, and that God wants (W) to stop heinous acts of evil.

$$\begin{aligned}(P \ \& \ Ob) \supset W \\ \sim W \\ \therefore \sim (P \ \& \ Ob)\end{aligned}$$

& and
 \supset if . . . then
 \sim not
 \therefore therefore

Philosophical Issues

Definition and Existence of Evil

1. moral evil—injury to other humans
2. natural evil—natural disasters causing “evil”
3. personal vs. impersonal
4. role of Satan?

Theories of Reality

1. substance/essence—that which cannot be reduced
2. materialism—reality reduced to matter
3. idealism—reality reduced to ideas
4. dualism—two ultimate substances; Platonism/Zoroastrianism—dualistic thought
5. monism/pluralism—one or many things
6. pantheism—God (i.e., reality) *is* all things

Human Nature

1. freedom vs. determinism
2. role of reason/mind
3. selfishness/pride/sin(s)
4. lost/depraved vs. children of God

Theodicies (“solutions” to the existence and problem of evil)

1. Hinduism/Buddhism/Christian Science—evil not real
2. dualism, Gnosticism—evil only material
3. Platonism and Neo-Platonism—evil as deficiency of the good
4. Pantheism—Baruch Spinoza
5. Irenaeus and John Hick—“soul making”
6. Augustine—free will defense
7. John Calvin—predeterminism
8. cynicism (i.e., Schopenhauer)—“curse the darkness”
9. Whitehead and Hartshorne—process philosophy and theology, evil as part of God’s nature
10. God's self-limitation

Biblical Texts

Selected Biblical References

Gen. 1:1-3:24; (esp. 1:1; 1:2; 1:31; 3:1-24)
1 Kings 22:19-23; 1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Sam. 24:1
Job 1:6-8; 7:12; 9:13; 26:12-13
Pss. 74:13-14; 89:9-18
Isa. 14:12-20; 27: 1; 30:7; 51:9-10
Zech. 3:1

Matt. 5:45
Luke 10:17-20; 13:1-5
John 8:44; 9:1-12; 13:27-30
Rom. 7; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 11:17; 1 Tim. 1:20