

23T19b Theodicy for the Problem of Evil
(Written by Dr. Kip Wehrman 08/09/2023)

Hello everyone. My name is Kip. Welcome to the PUNLA Coffee Table. Today, we are discussing an engineer's Theodicy for the Problem of Evil.

Let's pray.

Introduction

So, why is evil a problem? How can an Omnipotent, Perfectly Loving, Omniscient God allow evil to persist in the world? The purpose of this paper is to provide a theodicy to address these arguments. First, a theodicy is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as, "defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil."

God Exists

I am a professional engineer and I love numbers and probabilities. So, before we begin our discussion, it is necessary to look at the arguments for and against the existence of God. Here is a quick list of arguments for the existence of God,

- (1) the universe had a beginning by a cause outside of matter, time and space. This is known as the cosmological argument.
- (2) the universe is fine-tuned. The universe has complexity and order which is known as the teleological argument.
- (3) Life. Complexity, beauty, diversity demonstrate design thus a designer.
- (4) DNA. Complex code means a designer.
- (5) Our mind or consciousness. No conceivable natural process has ever been put forth for consciousness, thus God.
- (6) Reason. The human capacity to think and process is beyond what our senses can detect which is evidence of God.
- (7) Object Morality which is often called the moral argument.
- (8) Old Testament prophecy fulfilled is evidence of God.
- (9) the resurrection of Jesus. What is the argument against God's existence, the problem of evil.

Evil

Let us look at this problem. First it is essential to understand that evil is the absence of goodness. It is an imperfection. If you removed all the goodness from the world, evil would not exist. This is just like rust. If I remove the rust from my car, I have a nicer car. If I remove the car from the rust, I'm left with nothing. A shadow cannot exist without light. Sunshine cannot exist without the sun. We must identify and define evil. There are two commonly accepted types of evil. We will employ the following definitions as Austin Omomia and Fatumo Micheal Gbadebo defined in their article, *"These are moral evil and natural or metaphysical evil. "Moral evil is created by mankind. It is wickedness against fellow man. It includes war, murder, rape, nuclear bombing, jealousy, envy, suicide and others. The natural evil consists of the*

consequences that are derived from the operations of impersonal natural forces such as earthquake, flood, hurricanes, epidemics and others.”

Moral Evil

While humans have and do commit horrible acts of violence against each other. It is possible to dismiss these moral evils with the free-will of man. Freedom to do good or bad, which affects others. Whether or not we believe God is justified in giving us free-will, does not change the fact that free-will and its consequences are not inconsistent with the Omnipotent, Perfectly Loving, Omniscient God. We can argue about perspectives but sense we can never fully understand the perspective of God, this argument is mute. In the final analysis it really seems to be death that we see as evil or things that lead to death. We will explore this more in a later section.

Natural Evil

Natural evils are things like disease, earthquakes, typhoons, floods, lightning, extreme cold or hot, draughts etc. Of course, the aftermath of such natural disaster seems to all to be bad. There is suffering and death and devastation. The question is why do we think this is evil? If we understand, a worldwide picture based on naturalism, then why would this be bad. This is just the planet's mechanisms working according to natural laws. I find blaming "God" for this absurd. If the naturalist perceives this to be bad, then what is their basis. Using such natural disasters in an attempt to disprove God, requires the naturalist to form a basis for calling it bad. Since naturalism cannot define anything as "bad," the result is there must be a God to define these events as "bad." Natural events are just that part of nature. If I walk up to a lion and pull its tail, what do you think will happen. When it injures or kills me, it is bad for me, but the lion is not evil. Weather and other natural events is how our world works. We don't blame the science that tries to predict the weather for the outcomes. So, no nature "evil" is not really evil at all. Bad for you if you are in its way but if you get out of the way, then maybe less bad. In the final analysis it really seems to be death that we see as evil or things that lead to death.

Death

Today I write this paper with a heavy heart. This morning I was told that one of my "kids" in the Philippines died. Point of explanation, one of the things our charity does is sponsor college students in the Philippines. Each of these students are my kids. Last year we had over two hundred students in our program, and I love each of them as my kids. Yesterday, Eden died. Eden had just graduated from college in May and looked to have a bright future in front of her. She had told me how much she looked forward to meeting me face to face this October, just a couple weeks away. Eden was not a Christian when she was selected to be one of our scholars. We, however, require all students to attend one of our partner churches. I cried last fall when I share her story about how she thanked me for making her go to Church where she learned who Jesus was. She was baptized in December. In June, she got sick and yesterday she died from colon cancer. I mourn her loss.

However, this was not evil. I don't understand why, but I know death is not the end. Death is not bad. As a Christian, death is just graduation into the rest of our eternal life. If our definition of what is bad is based on death, then we need to reevaluate what bad is.

Conclusion

Evil is the absence of goodness. There can be no evil without goodness. Goodness can only come from God. Therefore, evil is yet another evidence of God, not evidence against God. Do we understand why evil? No, not really. We lack the perspective to see a reason. Ian McFarland writes it this way, "so I shall argue. First, however, it is necessary to provide some orientation to what the word "evil" means, and why its use should be considered a "problem" at all." McFarland emphasized the difference between the problem "with" evil instead of the problem "of" evil. Heiko Schulz in an article titled "*Suffering, Guilt, and Divine Injustice*", describes how the existence of evil leads us to the logical conclusion God exists. Evil appears to be an indispensable and unavoidable element of creation.

The problem of evil begins with who and how it is defined. However, without any doubt I believe there is evil in our world. I also believe there is goodness. The very existence of goodness is proof of God, however the absence of goodness, namely evil, does not disprove God. Just like a darkness does not disprove the light. C.S. Lewis said in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, "*God whispers to us in our pleasure, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.*" If there is a God, and there is, would He not want to get our attention to correct our lives. Suffering, especially the kind that results from natural disasters, often brings people to their knees in search of God.

The atheist will again assess this as if there is an "*Omnipotent, Perfectly Loving, Omniscient God*", then why would He not eliminate all evil. The theist answer is, are you willing for God to start with you. If our definition is too broad, then all of us have done and do evil. So, if God eliminated all evil then that would include you and me. The reason the problem of evil does not disprove God. Is without God's standard of goodness there is no evil. The naturalist perspective provides no higher enlightenment. For if there is no God, then there is no goodness either. I heard Frank Turek quote the French Dominican monk from the 19th century Jacques-Marie-Louis Monsabre say. "*If God would concede me His omnipotence for 24 hours, you would see how many changes I would make in the world. But if He gave me His wisdom too, I would leave things as they are.*"

I don't blame God for the disease that killed Eden. I cannot possibly see this as evil, no matter how much it pains my heart that she is gone. As Christians we know that death is not the end. Looking at all the evidence for God, including the fact of evil, it comes down to a choice. Statistically, there is overwhelming evidence God exists. However, we are still free to choose. Blaise Pascal, a seventeenth century mathematician, physicist, inventor, philosopher, writer and theologian, wrote this, "*In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who*

don't." Regardless of whether you can identify reasons for suffering and pain, it still exists in our world. Regardless of whether you can identify reasons to believe there is a God, there is more evidence for God than the contrary.

Let's Pray.

Let me leave you with this today. Does any of this evidence prove that God exists. Well, no. We in our finite state cannot prove beyond all doubt God exists. But He does. The other worldviews cannot prove their perspective on God either. As an engineer, I do statistics for a living. Statistically speaking, all the evidence point toward the existence of God, in fact there is no evidence that I know of that proposed any rational, logical or reasonable alternative. There are other opinions for sure but they much less probable.

Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA CoffeeTable. If you liked the message, please share a link with a friend. You can contact me at kip@punla.org if you have comments or questions. So, until next time @ the PUNLA CoffeeTable. God bless.