

The Problem of Evil

1. God is wholly benevolent
2. God is omnipotent
3. There is evil and suffering in the world

This is an inconsistent triad.

Solutions

In order to solve the problem of evil, it must be shown that the triad is in fact consistent (theodicy), or 1. / 2. / 3. Is not true. This problem **only** requires a solution is God actually exists.

Augustine

- We have fallen from grace, everything was created good (God is wholly good so creates good)
- God giving us free will has resulted in moral evil.
- Natural evil is created due to fallen angels operating with Satan etc.
- The world is like a piece of art some parts that look blotches close up are required overall
- **Modern logicians** have suggested we could have free will and never do evil
- **Angels are finitely perfect**, although free to sin they will never do so. If they do then they were not flawless to start with and God must share some responsibility for this
- **Modern science** suggests a development through evolution not a fall from perfection
- God would **have foreseen** that evil would become in his creation
- **Morally unacceptable** that evil is balanced by good
- If everything depends on God for existence, **God must be involved in free human actions!**

Irenaeus

- Evil is necessary to bring about some good – ‘soul-making’ theodicy
 - Acts as a growth of understand
 - Proper development of human beings to mature and become morally good
- We were not created perfect, we were created in God’s image and we must move toward perfection
- Pointless evil (rape, paedophiles etc.)
- The experience of evil is not equally spread amongst all
- The suffering could not justify the ultimate joy (Concentration camps etc.)
- What happens if we never reach the end? How will we justify the evil?
- Could God have not helped us become properly related and good from day 1?

God is not omnipotent

- Modern Process Theology – God is not omnipotent, physical matter must obey certain laws once created, that even God cannot change.
 - This is not the God of classical theism
- Evil may well be necessary, without it we could not have any physical laws or any failure – the world would be completely non functional without some form of suffering. The real question is why so much (pointless) suffering?

Evil is an illusion

- Regardless, the illusion **STILL IS BAD!** If I am actually in pain or not is irrelevant if I think I am in pain
- Not merely an intellectual problem, could you ever tell those of Auschwitz it was for a ‘greater good’? - *‘Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent’ (Wittgenstein)*
- Although this is a problem, people still believe regardless of the problem – peoples reasons for belief **may** still be strong enough to say even when faced with this problem – God exists.

Miracles

- A transgression of a law of nature by a particular violation of the Deity (Hume)
- Will most likely remain ambivalent and become a 'seeing-as' issue.
- Holland argues that if you pray for someone's safety and they are saved by an unexpected turn of events (etc.) then that also can be considered a miracle.

Do Miracles Happen?

- Under Holland's view they happen all the time! How are we to distinguish?
- Natural laws are retrospectively formed to cover what has actually happened, and from this we can declare *a priori* that there are no miracles – widen natural laws
- That does not mean there is no divine intervention however. Resurrection of Jesus etc.
- Things once thought miraculous can turn out not to be (radioactive rock)
- HUME
 - Regular laws of nature that happen day after day – impossible to prove a miracle
 - The falsehood would have to be even more miraculous
 - Lack of many learned men's testimony
 - We all like hearing about the miraculous so tend to believe things are miracles
 - Different religions miracles cancel out (not today...all essentially worship same God)
- CRITIQUE OF HUME
 - Men on the moon went against all past evidence – then we should disbelieve this?
 - Memory/Physical/Testimony can all support miracles, and all these are what is used for the formation of scientific laws.
 - Hume does not rule out possibility of miracles and under Hume, even if miracles did occur we would rule them out
- Miracles could just be coincidence (Holland's view...cancer patients being cured etc.)
- Pointless miracles (dried blood becoming liquefied)
- Why does God not help all his followers? Surely an all-good God would do this and favourite some and not others. Exodus and Holocaust.
- Lack of evidence is the case for nearly all miracles (1 persons account)

What are Miracles (if they happen) for?

- Increase faith in religion / God
- Allow us to see the intervention of outside agents and bring about belief

In conclusion, miracles in no way demonstrate the existence of a God with all the divine attributes and seem only to act as a proof for a believer. We cannot prove the non-existence of miracles but if they happen we tend to reject them because of the nature of our world. They in no way can serve as sufficient for an atheist to start believing in God.

Ockham's razor can quite easily be applied to miracles, why search for a cause to be the most complex thing ever (God) rather than naturalistic causes.

Religion and Morality

Is God the sole ground for our moral obligation?

- *Divine Command Theory*
 - Morality stems from what God tells us to do, our 'ought' is Gods command
 - *Euthyphro Dilemma*

[Is something right because God commands it or, does God command what is right?]

Is goodness independent of God – if so; is this a limit on his omnipotence?

- X is commanded by God
- God is the source of our morality
- Therefore X is a moral action
 - Religion is interlinked into morality, as we in general still follow the majority of Christian teachings and a lot of law is based on Christian versions of right and wrong.
 - *However, people followed the 10 commandments and saw them as 'wrong' before they were officially commanded*
 - God has created us and given us these rules to live by. Made our nature in a certain way.
- If 'X' is 'it is right to kill', then following divine command theory, killing is a moral action
- This to us in our perspective is absurd, it seems to imply goodness is independent of God.
- God is good, he would never command killing (or other immoral actions). But surely the statement 'God is good' is synthetic God does not **have** to be good.
- What is God commands us to 'put our left sock on first' – how should be consider this a moral action? To us, it is irrelevant, pointless and morally neutral
 - Moral actions need to be recognised by the subject to be moral.
- Why does command some things and not others (X and not Y)?
- What if God had not commanded anything at all, how could we know if the action is good/bad
 - *God made our nature to know what is 'right' and 'wrong'*
- Morally autonomous beings – to follow God is an abandonment of our autonomy. Cardinal Newman famously stated '*drink to the pope but conscience first*' - Our conscience is our first source of morality
- No matter what God commands, if we believe X to be wrong...it will never become 'right' to us
- Whatever God thinks about rape etc. is irrelevant only what *we* think about them

Responses to Euthyphro Dilemma

Geach

- Moral knowledge is independent of God – it comes in the form 'we should not usually do X'
- This means that in some cases X might be right – X is only generally undesirable
- God allows our moral knowledge to become absolutes – 'never do X'
- *Why should we obey God's command?*
- Because of God's power
- *Well...plenty of organisations, governments etc. have power and can instill fear into is, so what they say should go also?*
- If God commands X it does not necessarily follow that X is right.

Swinburne

- Contingent moral truths
 - Attending church on Sunday, Caring for the sick in Africa
 - These only become moral/obligatory because of Divine command
 - *However, this would just make these commands sensible in no way would they suddenly become 'moral' truths. I can never recognise going to church as a moral action.*

- Necessary moral truths
 - Genocide, torture, rape
 - These are independent of any divine command – necessarily true.
 - This means God could never make these right – limit on omnipotence?
 - Swinburne argues that these moral truths are like maths, and to make rape etc. right is logically impossible.

Even if we agree with the necessary moral truths, divine command can still never make other things become a moral action if they are not recognised by the moral agents as being moral. It would appear that God cannot take away our moral autonomy and no matter what he commands we still remain autonomous in what we decide is right or wrong. It would appear that 'right and wrong' remain outside of God and become a limit on his omnipotence, although it may be argued that God is 'all-good' anyway, or he created us with such a nature that we would recognise right and wrong – however, could he ever change this nature?