

GOD CAN'T HAVE A JUSTIFIED PURPOSE FOR THE SUFFERING OF HIS CREATURES

God is wholly against injustice and hate and suffering yet they happen. He does not stop them for he respects free will and sets them up to backfire so that good will overcome.

So evil and hate will destruct and good will sweep in. If evil leads to a greater good that makes God wise for letting the evil happen then why can't evil simply lead to a lesser evil? In reality that is what happens. Why are we to say that evil leads to good but not that good leads to evil? It has to cut both ways. Religious people are simply condoning divine evil. They are biased and unrealistic and thus crueller than they realise.

Some say they take a chance. They deny they are condoning outright. We don't believe them but anyway, it is evil to ask anybody to condone how you risk condoning somebody's seeming evil. It does not matter what the justification is. Unless the reasons are plain and obvious and not far off in the future it is different. Condoning evil is wrong and that is a principle. That principle matters more than God or any worldview that is made by man to "explain" what God is like and what he is about. It is because condoning is so bad that risking condoning unawares is so intolerable. You cannot risk condoning without being open to condoning.

Let us do some logic now. God is said to detest our evil and how we suffer for he loves us. Yet he lets these things happen. Is this a contradiction?

We are to be treated holistically which means our reason is what matters first and foremost in regard to the matter of suffering and death. Reason is about connecting to truth. We need to do that for the truth is the truth and knowing it protects you and if it is horrible at least you can start to try and accept what you cannot change.

The claim that evil and suffering is a mystery we will never solve is just a cop out. It is an evil claim for we need evidence and reason to help get or guess an answer. If no rational answer works then there is no answer. It is an evil claim for if you take evil and suffering seriously you cannot afford to risk justifying them when they are unjustifiable.

Hence the theodicy. It is an attempt to show that the idea of God letting evil happen and making bad viruses agrees with his perfect and all powerful love.

One thing that is often overlooked in this discussion is that the theodicy is supposed to be about God yes but also about inspiring us. For example, saying God has to stomach evil and try to make it discipline for us tells us to be open to treating evil that way and avoiding the need for possible discipline.

There are theodicies and then there are THE theodicies. There are two of those.

THE theodicy - without it the others are unacceptable and need condemnation. It is what is implicitly assumed by the others.

THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL THEODICIES -----

THE FIRST THEODICY: "Free will is the reason for evil and suffering not God. God's creatures chose to bring about evil and God is not responsible".

This idea which is the basic theodicy implies that we are to blame for pain and suffering and evil. If you do evil freely then logically you deserve to be punished. Religion shies away from saying that the sick are being punished for their sins because nobody will take that abuse from them but this theodicy says it is possible that they are and it is as insulting to say my sins can lead to somebody else suffering in innocence down the line as to say that if I suffer I am being punished for my sins.

Surprisingly some Christians admit the free will defence cannot get God off the hook (An Intelligent Person's Guide to Catholicism). They have to for it is now clearer than ever to more people that the defence is wrong.

The argument assumes that free will is all about doing God's way for God or otherwise. But atheists who believe in free will say it is about being free and it is up to us to make it about moral choices. It is not inherently about morals.

The defences of God's goodness all depend on the validity of the Free Will Defence. If it is wrong they are all wrong.

THE SECOND THEODICY: "Evil is simply the absence of good so it does not exist in the sense that it is not a real thing. God is right to allow it for it is a negation and nothing more. There is no evil as such - just misused good. God is not to blame for evil for evil isn't real."

So when you do wrong it could be 99% good and the remaining 1% is the problem - but it is not a 1% for there is nothing there. Good demands that we look at the good not the bad so really this is a repudiation of morality. Evil is parasitic on good so the best evil and the most dangerous long term will be the kind of evil that manages to latch on to 99% good! Thus all immoral acts are as bad as each other. There is no difference in evil intent when you are kicking somebody on the shin or when you are planning a genocide. To give evil the best chance of incurability it has to be very hard to notice if not impossible.

This theodicy reading between the lines blames the victim for experiencing evil as something that has nothing to do with good. It has exactly the same psychological effect - negative - as the previous theodicy. It amounts to saying cancer is good in itself and it is just the time and place and the person's attitude that is the problem. It is very personal. It is wholly abusive.

Evil as an experience is very real. Either God creates that and so he is as good as creating evil powers or we create it and thus deserve it.

The theodicy is presupposed by all the others for if evil is real and God alone has the say in what happens then he cannot be defended. He made evil. The free will defence needs this theodicy because if God makes all things from nothing then if we create evil then it is his power we are using to do it so God still ends up creating evil. So it assumes there is nothing there which is why it can keep God out of it and impart no blame to him. Evil is just a good that fails to be there.

The defences of God's goodness all depend on the validity of this one too. If it is wrong they are all wrong. The Free Will Defence supposes we know what evil is otherwise we cannot choose it in a way that makes us accountable so it needs to argue that the evil we choose is evil as a non-thing.

If there is no free will then we cannot really know what evil is or choosing it is. If there is no evil there is no free will if you define free will as deciding whether to be moral or immoral. In a sense we could have one theodicy here instead of two: "Evil is not real but we choose it with our free will instead of choosing good so we are accountable. God is in no way to blame and evil is an attempt to be independent of him." Free will then is defined as trying to make good fall short or to reach its full potential.

Evil is that which should not be. That is true whether it is a created power or just a void where there should be good. Surely what matters is that evil is intolerable not what it is. St Augustine said evil is not real for God makes no evil. Its a void or lack. That is dodging the point - it is what should not happen. St Augustine said God cannot create evil even for a good purpose or if he needed to for that would make him partly evil. Implicit in this logic is that evil is by definition intolerable and purposeless. It does not matter what it is - its uselessness is the point. Augustine won't admit that. He prefers to look at babies dying in agony and semi-condone it and condone God's role in it by downplaying evil to get it to fit a loving God.

LAST WORD

We have shattered the illusion of rationality that hangs over the free will defence and the notion that evil is a void so God cannot be said to have anything to do with it. Every excuse for God letting people suffer and for his making viruses to hurt us with fails. Every excuse is actually evil itself! And we need to prove that God and his creating beings who can go wrong is possible. This does not amount to proving that it is true. But we cannot even get as far as to prove it is possible which is a bad sign for belief in God.

Belief in God is evil. And there are plenty of fanatics in the world who see that and who carry out reprehensible acts because of they have been desensitised against cruelty thanks to their belief in God. The believer has to silence or ignore or battle that desensitisation in order to do good. The problem of evil needs evidence that there really is a problem. If the creator is a non-moral artificial intelligence then there is no problem. You need evidence for God that is stronger than the overwhelming Then you need evidence that there are possible understandable solutions.