

## EVIL IS IT A POWER OR JUST AN ABSENCE OF GOOD (NON-POWER)- DOES THE ANSWER MATTER?

### THE QUESTION

If evil is just a missing good, a lack? A lack is nothing but real in its effects. Or is evil something darker and real. Lack or real? Does it make any difference?

### WHY ASK?

Is the motive about protecting the God theory? Yes.

The starting point is the notion that God is good and all things come from him. If pure evil exists then God made it or it always existed. Either way, you cannot depend on God and God is not God. He is just a powerful being and we have the right to ignore him if we choose for he is not that special. So the religious claim that there would be nothing without God and God is love would be refuted if pure evil had to have been created by him or existed without him.

No loving God would ask you to dump belief in pure evil and put yourself at risk from it by blinding yourself to its power over a doctrine!

### DOES THE NATURE OF EVIL MATTER?

Evil as in lack of a good that should be there

+ means that you can say God did not make evil for evil is not a thing but a lack that hurts a thing

+ cannot last for it is a parasite and depends on good

+ is based on a lie - an attempt to pass un-good as a real good - and a lie is always threatened by truth

+ un-good is anti-good in the same way as not being treated for a disease is being anti-health

+ is fixed by repentance and doing the right thing

+ does not justify hate of the perpetrator but appeals to see sense for there is still a lot of good behind the bad choice (debatable!)

+ allows religion to say that though sin is opposition to the will of God there is some good will in sin so that God can use even sin to do good

+ does not fit ideas of eternal damnation though Christians lie that it does

Evil as in a power like something of substance like tar

+ can last forever for it is a power in its own right and it and good are incompatible so one cannot mix with the other and are independent

+ tells lies but does not need lies to exist

+ is not fixed by repentance for telling yourself your flu is cured when it is not makes no difference

+ does justify those who become it or absorb it being hated and destroyed - they are culled for they have an infection

+ it may not intend to be around forever but still there is no point in doing anything about it except waiting

+ means it could go away but return in another form or at a later time when got rid of. It could be banished not vanquished.

+ has power to grow and replicate

+ the evil person is really a person with an evil side like Mr Hyde was Jekyll's

+ If evil is a power and if we create it then it follows that you are pure evil whether you steal apples or whether you are genocidal. It is about what evil is not what it does. It makes bad people all equal even if some of them don't do much harm

+ explains eternal damnation neatly

The two understandings of evil totally oppose each other. One says evil is something and the other says it is "nothing". Any similarities are only coincidental.

The pair only have danger in common. It could be said that pure evil wants you to think it is only a good that falls short. That makes its true nature. It could be said that pure evil at its zenith is when it wears that mask. So saying evil is a lack of good and is not a force could be pure evil or even the pure form.

## WHAT'S WORSE?

Evil is as real as a brick or real as in merely assessing something to fall short of a standard. There is no in-between for evil is either a thing or it is not. However, human nature makes mistakes and can indeed muddle this subject which means a person can be trying to make an in-between.

Anyway that aside, is John creating evil the power worse than John making good less than the good it can be?

Pure evil would want you to think it is merely a missing of the mark. Pure evil may be pure evil just because it camouflages. People find it hard to see sin as a serious matter if it is just a good that could be better. It is impossible to emphasise with the notion of making your soul evil and godless which you have in the Catholic Church with its doctrine of mortal sin which is seen as a terrible failure and dark state.

The emptiness on your plate is not evil just because you want your dinner. Notice how the doctrine actually is more driven by and popularised by selfishness than you would realise.

## RESPONSE OF TOTAL OPPOSITION

It seems that evil whether real or a lack demands a response of total opposition for it is just bad.

But evil that is a lack of good cannot really be equated with one that is a power! The latter will get the total opposition!

If you don't oppose evil then you oppose good. Evil gets a mind of its own. It is contagion – it can infect a good person who sees the evil in another. It has unexpected results that may be far-reaching. So it risky to say it is not a thing or not real. It softens it. Evil being a falling short and not a thing or power means that when we do evil we try to make it real. That means that what we do is not so much bad as what we are. It is about us as shown by what we do - not what we do. In a sense and in the only sense that counts, we make it real by becoming it. Our good side does not undermine the bad. It is what makes you bad for you can do better.

## FAITH IS EVIL'S FRIEND

Fulfilling an intention to do something that you wrongly think is pure evil means you are still choosing to be pure evil. Religion creates pure evil by condemning things that are not actually evil. That is extremely serious.

Religion tries to make you make your evil real by telling you it will bring you to everlasting Hell and breed evil that will bring much pain on earth. It makes evil that is "really" bad really bad. In that light the sophistry about evil being a non-thing is rendered pointless.

## SIN

Sin is a legalistic term that condemns wrongdoing not just as bad but as a crime against God - an offence. Sin is defined as a good in the wrong place and time. But in fact it is not. Making something a crime or sin is not enough to make it wrong. What matters is that it is wrong not that it is a sin. Talk about sin is just an attempt to punish you for harming others and harming yourself in the way that harming another is supposed to harm you. If evil degrades yourself then punishment is just hate for trying to add to the degradation. The Christian teaching is that God does not punish to get his own back or vindictively but merely uses punishment as a tool to discipline us is out.

## WHAT MADE EVIL?

If God is good and made all things where there was nothing before then as the Bible says God made all things good. So he did not make evil. It came about as a choice – a refusal to live up to God's good plan.

Naturally Christians say that evil is not a power but a good that should be there and is not. So suffering is not bad but the absence of happiness or well-being. Death is not bad but the absence of life. Wrongdoing, sin or unrighteousness is a good that is in the wrong place and time. Its misdirected good such as when a man goes out for dinner with his lover and leaves his wife at home.

Christians (theologian Alvin Plantinga is a good source) enunciate that God though all-good and all-powerful cannot guarantee evil won't happen. In other words he cannot guarantee people will not become evil. In other words, free will is to blame for evil for it is refusing to let a good thing be its full potential. For example, you destroy your potential by choosing to steal instead of honouring yourself by earning what you want.

Manichaeism is a (dead) religion that says evil is a power. Christians then are saying that evil has a good side. Manichaeism says it cannot have.

Christians and Manichaeism say that evil is real but don't mean the same thing by real. The difference is that Christians say evil is not a thing so the question of creating it does not come up. Manichaeism says it does and that a bad God created evil. They had good and evil in opposition.

If evil is a power, then God cannot stop it making itself. He made it. Or it always existed. In all these cases he should be as highly regarded as some idol in an obscure grove.

But evil clearly exists in human nature which brings us to our next study.

### DOES GOD CREATE OUR POWER TO CREATE EVIL?

If evil then is a lack do we create the lack like we create a hole in a doughnut? Or do we convert good power into purely evil power? Do we create evil from nothing at all?

If evil is not what describes a person falling short but describes a power then God is the creator of HUMAN evil. If evil is a power then he created its power to infect us for otherwise how can it get in? Has he heard of quarantines? How incompetent is he?

Some will ask if the only real evil power is only made by and in persons.

God then would still be responsible for he is the one who makes things in and through us for as creator he is more responsible for what his creatures do than they are.

### DOES IT MATTER?

If evil is a lack or nothing then we cannot literally create it. We intend to create it even if that is not what happens.

God being unable to make evil as in power does nothing to get him off the hook. He could still intend to create evil and evil being a lack does not change that. A God who had to make do with less good when he is trying to create evil is as vile as one who creates evil as in power.

To say that somebody trying to kill you by firing a water pistol at you does not matter for it will not work is not paying attention to the presence of evil. The evil is there and its lack of success and yours is not the point. It is about it being there.

### WHAT IF?

Suppose if God cannot create evil, what if we can? Is he responsible in any way if we do?

God can try to create evil by using and manipulating us to do it for him. Plus as God is creator he has more to do with anything we do than we have. We would be literally non-existent without him. So he is responsible for our choices but religion says he is not morally culpable for he has to let us have free will. If free will were not worth it then he would sin when we sin. If a person cannot be evil but everything else can be then this denies free will can be blamed for evil.

The problem is the sinner not the sin. You cannot make the sin the problem for it merely shows what kind of immoral person committed it. God goes with the notion that the problem is the sin and this is just a dodge to avoid hate speech and

violence towards sinners. But the hate is still there. When you combine God and the notion you must conclude he is evil for he is lying to us.

FINALLY

For pragmatic reasons it matters if evil is just a lack of good or a power. A power cannot really be dealt with. You may say that there is nothing saying that a lack can really be dealt with either. But as it is just a parasite on good and it needs good it follows it has no strength in its own right. We refuse to be insulted by being told that there is a God therefore evil is to be minimalised and downgraded as stupidity.