

THE LATENTLY NASTY OUTLOOK OF THE DOCTRINE THAT EVIL IS NOT REAL BUT IS THE WRONG USE OF GOOD

The atheist does not care what evil is just that it is despicable and to be avoided at all costs. That is enough. The believer will not settle for that. It is not enough for believers in God which of course shows that they are trying to turn evil to a religious advantage.

The believer in God tries to redefine evil in such a way that one can get out of inferring that God must have created evil. The notion that evil is not a thing or a power but a defect or malfunction is key to such attempts and is the backdrop to all attempts to show that evil and the existence of a loving creator God are not in contradiction. The idea is that evil is not something that really exists but is a kind of deficiency - something is not what it can be.

This definition of evil supposes that God means a created thing to be a certain way and if it is not then that is a defect. So it smuggles in God. We end up with, "Evil is what which does not fit God's will" but this assumes that God has made all things which is what we need proof for. So God is smuggled into the definition of evil. This is a fallacy.

The doctrine that evil is nothing but the absence of good implies that the bigger the evil the more it is virtually nothing. That is a contradiction. The more evil cannot be the same as less evil. Evil cannot be fought with nonsense but merely empowered so it is a way of sounding and seeming good while sowing poison around. Evil being a mere negation means in a sense the more evil the less evil there is. See the point?

This makes any punishment of murder or adultery or bank robbery to be unfair and evil for it is the petty thief and the person telling white lies who should be punished.

The difference between good and evil become a difference of more or less. Human nature would love to hear that.

Spinoza thought that Good was merely power and Evil was weakness. All thinkers who think along those lines and who see love as a form of power and indeed the only real power are satisfying their crave for power and control. Is love being good for us more important than love being power? No. It has to be power first and foremost before it can be good for us. That is why those who love the most or talk about love the most are often the riskiest individuals you can meet.

If this stuff is not denial of the existence of evil it is trying to be. If it is refusing to call a spade a spade then it is evil. It tries to create a harmony between virtue and vice. It turns evil into a word more than anything else. And human nature does take labels and words seriously. People condoning evil does not mean they really think of it correctly as evil – they could be talking about a label!

If evil is not real then it does not need a cause. A defect that is unavoidable is enough to explain where it comes from. Or it can be blamed on somebody abusing their free will trying to spite God. To teach that God is all good creator of all pressures people to accept the notion that evil is not real. In fact, even if the doctrine is true it is not right to pressure people to believe it. It should be believed freely and because it is right and not because of pressure. Any pressure may make people seem to be morally compliant but they will explode or end up doing secret evil. It is evil in itself to oppose evil for the wrong reasons. It stops one taking the right steps in the face of a power that sucks you in and manipulates as it were.

Leibnitz thought evil was just a lack of good down to the fact that creatures by default cannot be perfect and even God cannot make them perfect but this is not the same as Augustine's doctrine. Augustine thought evil was merely the lack of a moral good.

Leibnitz actually turned sin into a necessary evil! Sin or wrongdoing are inevitable because human nature is limited and has to be limited. Does this erase the idea of God being responsible for evil if he made us? Some say yes and others say no. The answer is that if God wants to create then the creatures are necessarily limited and he knows they have to sin so it is his fault. The limitation has more to do with us going wrong than our free will as it were. We cannot say the human person is inexcusable when doing evil. It turns sin into a natural evil. It is just a necessary part of being human and thus as natural as our weakness and inability to fight against creatures in the wild.

People can easily feel that evil and suffering are illusions or less than good as opposed to evil until they get an ulcer or something. That stops them trivialising evil. It is scandalous that it needs to happen to them before they realise. Their empathy for starving babies is low. No matter how bad people are or a group is some will surprise you and help the babies. That is human nature. Religion has no right to say people who do that shows religion's unique and supernatural power to do

good. That is religion trying to happen naturally in its own favour and is a sign that religion is actually crafty. The question is not, "Why are some people in the religion so good at times to the babies?" but rather, "Why do most believers in the religion do little or nothing for the babies and why is there no real sacrifice in what they do?"

If X had cancer or lost their child, no Christian came along and said to X, "There is good in what happened. The evil itself was only good in the wrong place. It was not as bad as you thought or think." Indeed the Christian would surely be obligated to say just that and to say it is the truth. The Christian doctrine that where possible we should look at the good not the bad especially when seeing the good is seeing God who is perfect goodness demands just that. Not saying it would be very manipulative of the Christians. It contradicts their doctrine that the good is to be seen and focused on more than the bad. They claim to be trying to put God before others and to serve others for the sake of God. Thus they in fact should say it for defending God and how even the good in evil reflects him takes priority over the feelings of others. Jesus himself had that attitude when he rioted in the Temple and upset the Jews. Its very fake to say that evil is nothing and then not tell suffering people that.

To tell somebody to see their suffering as good in the wrong place is telling them they are making it worse for themselves by failing to see its goodness. It shows blatant disregard for them and a horrendous lack of empathy. It pressures them to do the impossible - see the suffering as almost a benefit - to please God. If suffering is misplaced good then it is an abused gift from God and so it is blasphemous to think it is awful. They are accused of sin if they fail to look on the suffering as somehow good that is just in the wrong place and time.

Believers might reason, "If belief in God and respect for him makes the person feel worse at least they are told something that - according to the faith - will help them exonerate God and free themselves from the danger of being angry with God." But exonerating God is the principle concern and as God is what ultimately matters it follows that it is the only real concern. This can only make an angry person worse especially considering how anger is largely irrational anyway.

The Christian faith might not voice the nastiness but it is there by implication and lurking in the heart of the faith. The hiding serves only to empower it. People who feel discomfort when priests and clergy come to "comfort" them may have sensed its presence.

It is only people who want to save God from being accused of letting evil and suffering happen with insufficient justification who concentrate on making out that evil is not good but "good". The doctrine is not natural to us and our experience which is what counts opposes it. Our experience is against it even if it is true. Is it really right to oppress people's sense of experience and judge it over a theory for God is nothing more than a theory? Of course it is not right.

The argument is an excuse for not taking responsibility. If evil is like a hole, the hole has to be made. Evil being nothing does not get God off the hook for its a causable nothing. You don't cut a foot wide hole in the Mona Lisa and then say it doesn't matter for nothing is nothing and you cannot create it. It is what you do with nothing not where nothing comes from that is the problem. And so it is with God.

If you create a God who fails to do the right thing and take responsibility, you are taking the responsibility. If you give a God responsibility then by proxy you take it on yourself especially if he is not there to take responsibility or if he cannot. Once you believe in God you by default give him responsibility for the universe and all that happens in it. If God asks you to believe he asks you to take proxy responsibility. You are responsible if you get God off the hook by saying evil is somehow unreal. That is so if there is a God. The responsibility is even heavier on you and belongs to you even more if there is no God. If the doctrine is offensive then take responsibility and apologise. Do you want to be intention wise as responsible as God for evil and suffering? Think about that.

If evil is a mere absence of good then is a disease killing innocent people as much of an evil as somebody deliberately killing them? The outcome is the same. Religion denies this for it says God can make the disease without sinning while it would be a sin if we made it. But the outcome is the same and the outcome is the reason we condemn! It is callous not to care about the outcome when God is responsible for it. It is hypocritical to pick on the wicked. Religion cares more about the nature of the action than the deaths. It should care about the deaths equally whether deliberately done by God or man.

When people say evil is just like rust on iron with the rust being evil and the iron being good they need to admit that the way the iron is allowing the rust to happen. So the good they talk about is really grey. Talk of evil being a parasite for many is confused with ideas such as, "Good will always prevail eventually" and "Good always outweighs evil." These are related to the idea but not what it is all about. They do not really know what they are saying. Obscuring the meaning of evil has real world implications and is evil.

We conclude that saying evil is not real but a defect and good is the real thing is evil or amoral. God is an evil doctrine for implying such things. Philosophies that say good is what is real, that good is existence, are calling evil a form of good if evil is a thing or really exists. It redefines evil as unreal or a sort of non-existence. That is just playing into its hands.

WORKS CONSULTED

- A HISTORY OF GOD, Karen Armstrong, Mandarin, London, 1994
- A HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY, VOL 6, PART II, KANT, Frederick Copleston SJ, Doubleday/Image, New York, 1964
- A PATH FROM ROME, Anthony Kenny Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1985
- A SHATTERED VISAGE THE REAL FACE OF ATHEISM, Ravi Zacharias, Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Tennessee, 1990
- A SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, Louis Berkhof, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1971
- AN INTELLIGENT PERSONS GUIDE TO CATHOLICISM, Alban McCoy, Continuum, London and New York, 1997
- AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS, John Hospers, Routledge, London, 1992
- APOLOGETICS AND CATHOLIC DOCTRINE, Part 1, Most Rev M Sheehan DD, MH Gill, & Son, Dublin, 1954
- APOLOGETICS FOR THE PULPIT, Aloysius Roche, Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD, London, 1950
- AQUINAS, FC Copleston, Penguin Books, London, 1991
- ARGUING WITH GOD, Hugh Sylvester, IVP, London, 1971
- ASKING THEM QUESTIONS, Various, Oxford University Press, London, 1936
- BELIEVING IN GOD, PJ McGrath, Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1995
- BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, Friedrich Nietzsche, Penguin, London, 1990
- CITY OF GOD, St Augustine, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1986
- CONTROVERSY: THE HUMANIST CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER, Hector Hawton, Pemberton Books, London, 1971
- CRITIQUES OF GOD, Edited by Peter A Angeles, Prometheus Books, New York, 1995
- DIALOGUES CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION, David Hume, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1907
- DOES GOD EXIST? Brian Davies OP, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1982
- DOES GOD EXIST? Herbert W Armstrong, Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California, 1972
- DOING AWAY WITH GOD? Russell Stannard, Marshall Pickering, London, 1993
- EVIL AND THE GOD OF LOVE, John Hicks, Fontana, 1977
- GOD AND EVIL, Brian Davies OP, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1984
- GOD AND PHILOSOPHY, Antony Flew, Hutchinson, London, 1966
- GOD AND THE HUMAN CONDITION, F J Sheed, Sheed & Ward, London 1967
- GOD AND THE NEW PHYSICS, Paul Davies, Penguin Books, London, 1990
- GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING, Philip St Romain, Liguori Publications, Illinois, 1986
- GOD THE PROBLEM, Gordon D Kaufman, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1973
- HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli, Monarch, East Sussex, 1995
- HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY, VOL 2, Frederick Copleston SJ Westminster, Maryland, Newman, 1962
- HONEST TO GOD, John AT Robinson, SCM Press, London, 1963
- HUMAN NATURE DID GOD CREATE IT? Herbert W Armstrong, Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California, 1976
- IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH, Dave Hunt, Harvest House, Eugene Oregon, 1996
- IN SEARCH OF CERTAINTY, John Guest Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1983
- JESUS HYPOTHESES, V. Messori, St Paul Publications, Slough, 1977
- NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, The Catholic University of America and the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., Washington, District of Columbia, 1967
- OCR Philosophy of Religion for AS and A2, Matthew Taylor, Editor Jon Mayled, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2007
- ON THE TRUTH OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH, BOOK ONE, GOD, St Thomas Aquinas, Image Doubleday and Co, New York, 1961
- OXFORD DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY, Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996
- PHILOSOPHY AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, Colin Brown, IVP, London, 1973
- RADIO REPLIES, Vol 1, Frs Rumble and Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1938
- RADIO REPLIES, Vol 2, Frs Rumble and Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1940
- RADIO REPLIES, Vol 3, Frs Rumble and Carty, Radio Replies Press, St Paul, Minnesota, 1942
- REASON AND RELIGION, Anthony Kenny, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1987
- SALVIFICI DOLORIS, Pope John Paul II, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1984
- SEX AND MARRIAGE – A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE, John M Hamroque CSSR, Liguori, Illinois, 1987
- TAKING LEAVE OF GOD, Don Cupitt, SCM Press, London, 1980
- THE CASE AGAINST GOD, Gerald Priestland, Collins, Fount Paperbacks, London, 1984
- THE CASE FOR FAITH, Lee Strobel, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000
- THE CONCEPT OF GOD, Ronald H Nash, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983
- THE HONEST TO GOD DEBATE Edited by David L Edwards, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1963
- THE KINDNESS OF GOD, EJ Cuskelly MSC, Mercier Press, Cork, 1965
- THE PROBLEM OF EVIL, CTS EXPLANATIONS, Fr M C D'Arcy SJ, Catholic Truth Society, London, 2008
- THE PROBLEM OF PAIN, CS Lewis, Fontana, London, 1972
- THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING, Alan Hayward, Christadelphian ALS, Birmingham, undated
- THE PUZZLE OF GOD, Peter Vardy, Collins, London, 1990
- THE REALITY OF GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL, Brian Davies, Continuum, London-New York, 2006

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF BELIEF, Charles Gore DD, John Murray, London, 1930
THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY, WH Turton, Wells Gardner, Darton & Co Ltd, London, 1905
UNBLIND FAITH, Michael J Langford, SCM, London, 1982
WHAT IS FAITH? Anthony Kenny, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992
WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? LG Sargent, Christadelphian Publishing Office, Birmingham, undated
WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? Misc, Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California, 1985
WHY DOES GOD? Domenico Grasso, St Paul, Bucks, 1970
WHY WOULD A GOOD GOD ALLOW SUFFERING? Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1990

Recommended Reading

Aquinas, Thomas (1998). *Selected Writings*. edited and translated with an introduction by Ralph McInerny. London, Penguin.

Aristotle (1988). *Ethics*. Translated by J.A.K. Thomson. London, Penguin.

Augustine (1844-64). *Patrologia Latina*. Paris: J.P. Migne.

Augustine (1986). *The City of God*. Edited with an introduction by JJ O Meara. London, Penguin.

Augustine (1961). *Confessions*. Translated by R.S. Pine-Coffin. London, Penguin.

Caputo, J.D., Dooley, M, & Scanlon, M.J. (eds.) (2001). *Questioning God*. Indiana, Indiana University Press.

Chadwick, H (1986). *Augustine*. Oxford University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1993). 'Circumfession', translated by Geoffrey Bennington in Bennington, G. and Derrida, J. Jacques
Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2002). *Acts of Religion*. Edited and with an introduction by Gil Anidjar. London: Routledge, 2002.

Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Being and Time*. Translated by John McQuarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford, Blackwell.

Kolakowski, L. (1993). *Religion If There Is No God: On God, the Devil, Sin and Other Worries of the So-Called Philosophy of Religion*. Indiana, St Augustine's Press.

Matthews, G.B. (1999). *The Augustinian Tradition*. Berkeley, University of California Press. McGrath, A. (1990). *A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. Oxford University Press.

Plato, (1961). *Collected Dialogues*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Plotinus (1986). *The Enneads*. Edited by John Dillon. London, Penguin, 1986.

Taylor, A.E. (1986). *Plato: The Man and His Work*. New York, Methuen Press.