

THE "WE PUNISH OURSELVES" OR "SIN NOT GOD IS ITS OWN PUNISHER" THEORY

Religion says that God lets us harm one another because he wants us to freely choose whether we will do good or bad. This is the free will defence. God gives us morality so we are told. Therefore he authorises punishment as a necessity and must punish evil people so that the injustice of the good and bad being treated alike is avoided.

Oddly some say that sin punishes us not God. How core is the idea of sin punishing itself to some forms of Christianity? It implies that God may not will the punishment. So it amounts to worshipping an unjust God and one who has to observe punitive justice doing the justice itself. It is a core matter for issues of justice and love are central questions for any faith.

This seems to describe how natural laws are not human laws or created by people but if you break them you get dangerous and bad results but this is a natural result of what we do and is not a punishment. They still call it punishment though!

Jesus said that a person who is evil is in fact a slave to evil. This treats evil like it was some kind of controlling power that knows what it is doing. That type of thinking leads you to not seeing that anybody is evil but as a sort of puppet. You are lying to yourself for if evil acts like a person possessing you then maybe it is a person and there are evil people after all! So why are you trying to make out that evil is like some puppeteer ghost? Why are you trying to get the bad man or woman off the hook? Why are you saying that evil is not real but just good in the wrong place and time when you turn it into some kind of real god? It contradicts the notion that evil people such as rapists and murders and child molesters damage themselves more than the victim for they make themselves bad and filthy and degrade themselves thus even if they feel good about it. The good feelings are adding to the degradation. It in a sense then tells them they are good deep down and thus this damage is not real or true. It in a sense is evilly telling them that they can do evil and remain basically wonderful and good deep inside. Evil is like a cloak over how you shine so angelically. That is not evil at all but playing with words.

Christians say that God is always for us and what is best for us so God did not curse us with death and punishment for sin. Sin does that. That idea tells us that sin must be an intelligence and a power after all. It is like God when it can punish and kill those who serve it and "reward" them like that. Sin is turned into a higher power so if it is that clever we cannot really think our love is true and genuine for thinking that could be a trick.

Religious people say the person with a dark soul thinks they are not effected and can be happy. They are supposed to be damaged at their core and the not realising is part of the damage. This dreadful argument implies that the child molested by a rapist has no deep and profound damage inside - their "soul" is okay. It is the soul of the attacker that is in question. The attacker is the one worse off. This seems to mean that you need good values to be a true human being and if you choose to push them out of your soul you are less than a person. Your dignity and potential are damaged.

Surely if God sets up sin so that we will suffer for it then that is punishment. Punishment whether indirect or direct is still punishment. Those who say sin punishes us not God are trying to manipulate us and play on our hatred for being punished as if justice is suspended for us.

Annie Besant claimed that that only real way for sin to be punished is for it to injure and damage yourself as a person who is moral in nature. Similar doctrines appear in spiritual circles and Catholic writings. The idea is that harmdoing or sin is an attack on yourself, your personhood and your identity. She is right in a sense that it is best for sin itself to punish you and be allowed to and to say that is what punishment should be. But it is not. The fact remains we all feel that if it does not feel bad then it is not punishment. Happy people who have done harm do not feel damaged. Jail is not punishment in any important way if you love being there and it is so good that it does not matter if you are guilty or innocent. For sin to self-punish we would need a radically different psychology than the one we have.

The notion that evil always and inherently has the seeds of its own destruction and consists of them for it is destruction is interesting.

It has certain implications.

- You don't need faith in an intervening God. Evil will vanquish itself without any help from God.
- You don't need to intervene either.
- You don't need the concept of justice or fairness as such. Sometimes the thought of being unjust is enough to make people behave! Evil does not need this deterrence for it can deter itself by being something that eats itself up.

- Don't need a God to forbid or condemn evil or to command somebody to be good instead of evil.
- Bad people need pity not punishment. Let them suffer and learn the hard way for it is the only way to really learn. They will learn from experience.
- Your motive when you are silent and do nothing as others sin could be to see them destroyed by their evil.
- Trying to convert sinners could be vindictive if leaving them to wallow and learn through experience is the best way to learn.
- Love the sinner and hate the sin is nonsense for it presupposes justly dealing with the sinner. The idea is that sin deserves censure and the person deserves to be criticised for it so that they can comport themselves in a dignified way that is free from sin.

The fact remains that we all see this self-punishment as a pack of lies. It is not the same thing as being found guilty and condemned.

It is true that a sin ideally should punish itself. Suppose in an imaginary world it does. Then the problem with that is that it rules out any need for a God or society to punish. Indeed if they do then that is just revenge and vindictive. It implies that a person - and that would be everybody! - who does not understand that all evil you do as beneficial as it looks damages your core personality cannot administer justice and indeed should not be let in a courthouse door.

Spiritual people do tend to see punishment as damaging your soul and being internal retribution which shows they have to stop pretending that sending people to jail is intended to do justice. Its spite.

Another expression of the doctrine of sin being inherently punishment is this: Evil consumes the person who harbours it by embracing it and doing it. It is like acid that devours. But it is self-defeating and self-destructive for it kills itself with killing its victim. It is like a disease. It ends itself by becoming nothing when it kills the victim.

This idea says that evil is in fact comprised a lot of stupidity and you cannot truly be evil and smart in doing so. Again the trouble is that you cannot call yourself fair and justice and punish a person for mere unintelligence! It would be revenge! And what are you even calling stupidity evil for? The two are not the same even if they are inseparable.

God has to punish sin or he is unfair. Forgiving is seen as a different matter for the person has reformed and needs a second chance. And this second chance becomes another second chance and so on on and to absurdity. No sane or fair God can give a person a second chance every day of the week for the same sin! Repenting and forgiving are meant to be painful processes so in a sense they are punishment too. That aside if we punished every sin we would only end up making people hide their sins. Punishing somebody for swearing and taking God's name in vain seems too harsh which is why it will probably only result in the person cursing God inside and internalising their sin more. Resentment against the punisher will arise. But these consequences have absolutely nothing to do with proving that it is wrong to punish everything if possible. It is like arguing that maths should be made easier for most students fail their exams. You are left with a new bad consequence: telling people that their disobedience will be rewarded and that you are blaming punishment for the bad consequences which in fact are not really consequences but just the result of people refusing to take their just deserts. The argument is bizarre in the light of the fact that God will punish all unforgiven sin - and in a sense even the forgiven - for he is perfect justice. How deeply do believers really love God and how much do they really want him to be fair?

New Age and trendy religion says that God never punishes but we punish ourselves. It is obvious that such a scheme thinks punishment is bad which is why it has to be distanced from God. What kind of morality do those people believe in?

Many Christian liberals argue, "There is no need for a God to judge us as sinful when we judge ourselves by making bad decisions. Sin is not punished by God. The evils and punishments that follow sin are nothing more than the consequences of sin. Sin does not draw punishing on you from anything or anyone out of itself. It damages you and makes you crave for more evil and to do more evil and thus does more damage (James 5:16-17). That is how it punishes. It is thought that 1 John 4:18 says we must not fear the punishments of God for he does not punish but simply loves." But John is only speaking to forgiven sinners. He is not speaking to people who are sinning and don't care. And if sin has bad results and these are not punishments then why argue that if you take tablets to keep yourself alive and you suffer terrible side effects that taking the tablets is a sin? Bad consequences do not prove that anything is necessarily a sin. And if sin is not punished then God wants to treat it as if it were a virtue. It is more vicious to argue that doing wrong brings bad consequences on you and that is fine than to say it brings punishment for the consequences cannot be controlled and the punishment can. I wonder do Christians think that if you burgle a house end up in jail that it is a consequence of your sin?

It is hard to restrain a stab of affection for God upon hearing this sweet stuff about a God who is too loving to punish. Upon thinking, the only thing we have to restrain is the disappointment.

Do we punish ourselves for sin instead of being punished by God? Some say yes. They might give an example, "The heavy drinker's punishment is ill health which he has brought on himself." This makes God look like a bland. People like the idea of God letting the natural consequences follow a bad action for they want a banal God and/or want to deter you from bad actions. They like to deny that God punishes which is an implicit denial that good people and evil people should be treated different. Bad results then of your actions are not punishment and cannot be. And the bad results may do less harm or more harm than the sin warrants. A wife can suffer little when she is caught out in adultery. The drinker is accused of causing the bad results. So he will get no sympathy - not even if he ends up in Hell for all eternity. And the drinker is not the only cause of the bad results either. If he were being punished you might say it is a pity he has to be punished but he still has to be punished. No doctrine that blames the drinker or sinner for the terrible aftermath of a wrong action can be compassionate.

If punishment is wrong then it makes no sense to approve of somebody suffering for doing wrong as in bad results not punishment! It is cruel. If a person does not deserve punishment then he should be protected by God from bad results.

However, God thinks that the ill health and other calamities that befall the drunkard are is good enough for him and only refrains from punishing for he doesn't need to administer it. By not acting to stop the suffering he is causing it and meting out retribution. So he is administering punishment after all. Passive punishing is still punishing. God could change your molecular structure so that you are immune to the ravages of drink. The doctrine that the drunkard punishes himself is deplored by many as insipid hypocrisy. God does punish. I was aware of the obvious errors of the doctrine since the first time I heard of it which was why it confused me tremendously.

An atheist might look at an evil person and judge that person to have caused the devastation that his actions have brought on him. But there will be no suggestion that these consequences in any sense should happen. The atheist says they do happen not that they should. The believer holds that God has programmed the action to result in bad things and that we should approve of God's role. There is no need for that view and it does no good and thus is just an insult.

Jesus could not have called Hell eternal punishment if people punish themselves there for they cannot. If they hate God then they wouldn't punish themselves for sin. To do that is to hate themselves for hurting God which is not hating him in the sense that it would be wishing they could love him. They are not making themselves pay for opposing God - for to punish is to intend to pay back evil for evil. They are hurting themselves to offend him for he is against unnecessary suffering. They are trying to punish him and not punishing themselves.

The notion that what goes around comes around that that nature punishes immorality or acts as if it it does is nonsense. A very promiscuous person or who takes drugs is not suffering for BEING LIKE THAT. What if they have an addiction so it is not their character that is the problem? Morality would be about making a person pay for having a bad character. The person is suffering not even for their actions but for HOW they have done them. That is why one profligate can live a happy life and another one is destroyed by it. The former was only okay because of chance and luck. It is not breaking the law of nature that causes trouble but how it is broken. You are "punished" for being incautious in the wrong place and the wrong time. A lot of the time you get away with being incautious.

If God has no right to allow natural evil to happen and that is the biggest evil then he has no right to punish. That is how it can be so terrible to call God a sign of justice. He should punish himself. Christians give no reply except to say that natural evil happens and God is good so it cannot be the worst evil. They say that sin is the worst evil which leads to the odd idea that an earthquake is better than a small lie. This is irrational and starting with the conclusion and rationalising the way to it.

You might sympathise with somebody who cannot undo their crime and goes to jail but how can you sympathise with the alcoholic who is in the throes of liver disease if you blame him for it?

If sin punishes itself then what about the fact that disapproval and rejection by others is the biggest part of the punishment? Where does forgiveness come in? So if forgiveness is not needed when somebody does wrong then what is?

If sin punishes itself then there is no need for forgiveness from God. Or anybody else. Civil justice is just revenge and cruel and lacking faith in the power of evil to self-punish. It is like saying the law of the land forgives you when you pay a fine it has imposed! It is only a waste of time chastening anybody if their sin is teaching the lesson and is the judge and is punishing them. It is only a waste of time promoting God or faith or religion if you hope that they can get people to re-think sin and its consequences. So what are you promoting them for then? The answer is you simply do not really think sin punishes itself or that it is right that that is all there should be to it. You want sin condemned - seeing it just punishing itself by backfiring will not be enough.

What does it mean to say you deserve punishment? It means you should not get some good things. The good things you lose should reflect the crime. For example, if you rob the poor you should know poverty in jail. Deserve means it is immoral to give you certain things for your actions have asked for and earned something different. But with religion you get punishments that clearly do not match the crime. You steal and get cancer instead of losing your wealth. You die when all you did in life was tell lies. Whether evil punishes you or God does, there is no justice in any of it. Its just people pretending that what would pass for revenge is justice!

The idea that God does not punish but he creates bad results to go with sin is odd. It means that sin does not hurt you much but what he tacked on to it does. Why does he do that? Why would he make you hate the punishment more than the sin? Is it to punish after all? Is it for spite? It is spiteful to say x must not be punished and then to sneak a punishment in as if it is something terrible to be ashamed off. Belief in God only leads to evil nonsense.

If evil inherently defeats itself or for some reason it always falls anyway then why does it eat itself into oblivion? It must have weaknesses. Good will either use its weakness or weaknessness to overcome it or it will not even have to. Perhaps evil fails for good hits it in the weak spots and the evil is weak anyway so it is a marriage of external and internal attack.

If evil eats itself then good does not conquer evil but evil ruins itself and leaves a vacuum and so good has to sweep in. It is not then my good intentions when I think I battle evil that deal with evil. The evil will vanish anyway. It does not matter what I intend. Evil does not care what I intend. It is arrogant to think that evil which is bigger than me or anything I think can be ruined by my intention! When you look at it this way, each person wishes to virtue signal and boast that they destroy evil with their good will!

If you see the problems if evil is vague then what might you do? Why do believers say they find that God's ways as in allowing evil and suffering and remaining a good God are beyond our comprehension? That is an attempt to get your attention to God so you don't see how vague you are making evil and suffering. They might say that evil and its servants are so clever and cunning that nobody can see the lovely purpose God has. So they end up back where they started. They say evil is vague despite trying not to think about it. This just makes it worse and means they are deliberately worshipping a God who harms us with making evil vague and suffering unclear. Or they are the ones doing it if anything they say about God is their own idea. If evil and suffering are vague anyway and then you adopt the God idea which gives you another reason to declare them vague then God is clearly a dark belief that cloaks its true nature. It is deception. God is deception.

Top Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga says that evil is terrible and vile but reminds us that it is a not just a foe but a defeated foe. This denies that evil defeats itself. God had to do something to it from outside to defeat it. So evil is inherently solid and stable. As it destroys things, it remains strong in itself. Evil then is a God in a way. God is able to deal with evil only because he is stronger. This refutes the Christian notion that God has all power and is so powerful that evil is only a lack and has no power of its own. Evil is not a challenge to God in this view. In the other it is. If you can challenge God for real then God is not much of a God. Jesus by claiming to defeat evil by his blood was giving it a backhanded endorsement.

People like Hegel think the universe is one, an ultimately harmonious whole. There is no way to show that never mind prove it. People like him think that bad things or evils including moral evil are too fragile and fleeting to be real or to matter much. If you hold that evil matters a lot then on some level you are treating it as a real force.

Surprisingly though saying evil ruins itself and dissipates sounds good if you want to discourage evil, it in fact is evil itself! Talk about how we may try to be good and wonder why we keep being bad!

