

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

A theodicy is showing how a God who has the power to stop evil is doing the best thing by letting it happen. The rule is a theodicy must not give into evil by watering it down. The theodicy is supposed to show how terrible evil is and that it is bad for it happens in defiance of such a loving and good God. It is meant to inspire us to understand what evil is and that God stands with us against it. It is not merely about making God look good but about helping us be good.

THE TWO ESSENTIAL THEODICIES

THE FIRST THEODICY: We have the gift of free will and it is our responsibility and we misuse it. That is where personal evil, the evil that people do comes from. Its not God. God gives us free will so we can be his children willingly.

This one cheats for it presupposes there is a free will that is about doing God's will. We can have free will just to be free making morality just another choice but not what free will is about.

Free will is not justified in this theodicy unless it is about God. Let's face it. God has to be of supreme importance. Compassion and love are important for they connect us to him for he is compassionate and loving.

What if God is left out and/or there is no God and love and compassion are all about humankind? An equalisation happens. If John has cancer I can develop compassion by looking after him. I am equal to John so John should not suffer just for my spiritual benefit. So I help John for I am to relieve suffering not because I want to be more good and loving in helping him.

If God is real then God would just cure him if he did not agree with anybody suffering but clearly God lets it happen so the love and compassion may grow. If John suffers for God is perfect and good and God uses it to bring me and John to him my work has an ultimate value. But that is evil. I am looking for some kind of approval and ultimate value. John's need is not enough for me.

If there is no God for John and I are equal and so there is no possibility of suggesting he should suffer for me to find my compassionate side. I am not forced to use John for that reason.

THE SECOND THEODICY: Evil is not made by God for it is not a thing but an abuse of good. There is no evil power as such for God to make.

Evil poses as good and so will do a good job so how do we know that faith in a God who lets evil happen is not evil deceiving us?

THE LESSER THEODICIES ----- [the need for further defences shows the believers suspect that the ones we have seen already are not enough on their own!]

THE THIRD THEODICY: "Suffering and evil are for disciplining us or to make us grow in holiness."

This theodicy is so important that it deserves a chapter on its own. It implies that God is only concerned with our moral qualities and not with the harm we do or endure. The harm is good in the long-term for it disciplines in the best way the greatest number. This is a very dangerous view and implies if you get cancer it is somehow your fault.

THE FOURTH THEODICY: "There is no love without sacrifice and we have to suffer to love so God is right to allow suffering. If there were no suffering there would be no good works such as giving your life to save others or feeding the poor. In other words, we have to suffer as a sacrifice so that good might be done."

The notion that without evil and suffering there would be nobody giving their lives to save others is interesting. It assumes that evil and suffering is worth those painful choices. And it assumes that the risk of it going wrong is worth it. If God is very in control then there is no real risk. If God is all-mighty then risk does not really exist. And if there is a risk it makes more sense to be atheist and do good.

The argument denies that happiness comes first. So why make people happy then?

Are people assuming that it is worth it to suffer terribly for the sake of others because it is worth it or because it happens? It is the latter. We see people doing it and we think it is right even it is hard or impossible to say if it was worth it. That is not

a religious view. It does not justify involving God. Why would you involve the God idea where it is not wanted or needed?

The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil says that we do not love because we suffer but we suffer because we love whenever we sacrifice out of love (page 167). This is true but it has nothing to do with refuting the idea that love is sacrifice. The Church says that the person who goes walking about in crazy weather conditions to get a doctor for a sick stranger is showing more charity than a person who gets in a car to do it in normal weather. Jesus said that if you love your loved ones, you deserve no praise for any sinner can manage that. If you love and then seek to suffer to show that love, that solves the dilemma. Then you are indeed suffering because you love. The love starts the minute you choose to accept the suffering so that it is true that you suffer because you love and that love is sacrifice.

It is simply a lie that there is no good work unless sin and evil exist. We can freely do good and never sin. When you do good you often forget about the existence of evil and sin.

This theodicy is simply the free will defence for it says we have to choose between self and God. To not choose self is to sacrifice.

THE FIFTH THEODICY: "Without suffering we cannot know what happiness is."

This is a truly strange cliché. Religion likes to promote it knowing fine well that it is untrue. While we are happy we forget our suffering so we can be just as happy if it never happened. We even forget that suffering exists. If experience of suffering enhances our joy when we are happy then that does not have to be the way. It is just the way we are and we could have been made another way in which it could have been done without. If the answer were true it would be God's fault that it is true.

The theodicy is a wilful lie because we know we cannot focus on more than one thing at a time and we are still happy. When you are happy this moment you are unconscious of the unhappiness of the past.

The less you suffer now, the theodicy says, the less happy you will be in the future. This doctrine commands cruelty like the rest do.

You should hurt yourself really badly now to enable yourself to be happier later. You should neglect the sick and try to worsen them for this is really helping them.

Incidentally, people should not be saying that happiness cannot be defined. It is simply an emotion. They only get away with it for religion likes to make people unrealistic in many things so that mystical Gospel truths are seen where they are not present.

God belief and religion tend to make out happiness is vague but as happiness is a consideration when working out what is moral this turns morality if not into opinion then as good as. Vagueness leads to moral relativism.

The argument fails to justify the suffering of babies and animals and the pain of the insane. Also, only a tiny piece of pain would be necessary for us to get some idea of the importance and meaning of happiness assuming it is necessary at all which it is not.

And if pain is necessary for pleasure then pleasure is necessary for pain and why then are people who have suffered nothing but pain from birth able to be happy and find some enjoyment?

Happiness is not something you can cause - you just have to open the door and hope it comes in. It eludes you if you work for it for working for it means you are not happy. It is trying to force happiness so it backfires. Suffering has nothing to do with it.

But if God has arranged such a strange way of giving happiness it indicates he has a spiteful side. It is like, "I don't want to give you happiness so let it in the back door and if it comes in it comes it."

Being happy cannot be really less important than knowing what happiness is. Happiness tells you itself what it is - suffering does not tell you at all. To teach such a thing is just to try to make people mistake acceptance or contentment for happiness. Its evil.

THE SIXTH THEODICY: "God is right to hurt us as long as he makes it up to us later."

This is ascribing acts of gratuitous savagery to God. The only way one can make up for having done evil or let it happen is to undo the past. One can do all the good in the world but the crime is not undone or really made up for. The victim feeling

that it is does not mean that it is.

If God is allowed to harm people as long as he makes "atonement" then it is bigotry and hypocrisy to declare this behaviour out of bounds for human beings. It is no answer to say that it is wrong for God forbids it for we have rights too and that is arbitrary. If God is all-powerful he will see that it does work for the best.

The thought that God can see to it that if somebody hurts you badly that you will get compensation in Heaven has to be the reason believers in God find comfort in their faith. But they are clearly delusional for there should be no comfort in thinking somebody is doing you a favour by knocking your teeth out as long as they offer you a million dollars in a month's time. There is no self-respect.

The general outlook of the New Testament is captured in a line given by St Paul which says that sufferings on earth are nothing at all compared to the glory that will come. That is an evil statement. The truly good person sees suffering as an abomination and any good future is not a consideration. It is not right to use a good future - especially one that may not be real such as Heaven, to try and trivialise suffering. If there is a problem of evil, Christianity adds to the problem and is an evil religion with a smile on its face.

Is it safe to assume that most or all believers act as if they hate evil and then condone what they see as God's part in it because they are obsessed not with the now but the future when the supposedly good purpose for evil and the rewards for enduring it patiently unfold. Hitler's monsters were monsters simply because they did what they did seeing it as an evil but kept their focus on the future "good" results of the evil - the pure race that would exist when "subhumans" were out of the way!

Believers in God show remarkable endurance when in times of persecution - again this is vile if the attitude is, "God is putting me through hell now but its the future that counts." You cannot hold such a position alone - you need others to inspire you to keep it up for it is toxic and terrifying - missionary groups for example are like a hotbed. You are evilly making others feel they should do that to themselves for the sake of a reward that may never happen. No worse - its for a reward that will not happen.

THE SEVENTH THEODICY: "God allows suffering for a greater material good. Plagues, for example, urge science to cure diseases. Famine leads to people taking better care in the future."

This implies that evils are useless and are to be fought when God wants them all fixed. Then why didn't he make everything right in the first place?

The theory implies that disaster is our fault for not being determined enough to make others happy and take precautions. If so, God agrees that everything should be right and everybody should be happy. The suffering caused by famine and earthquakes is not intended by him. So who made famines and earthquakes - us, the Devil? It is all so wrong for God could have kept the power we or the Devil have used to destroy the creation.

The theodicy is callous - it is telling a sick person that an all-good God wants them to get well and won't make them well though he should and is still a nice God!

Why would God want us to make mistakes and struggle to correct them? Clearly because it disciplines us. This theodicy harbours the notorious discipline defence in the background.

The theodicy is accepted by the Catholic Church as I found in the booklet, God and the Problem of Suffering.

If this theodicy had any force then the absurd idea that God makes the good happiest and the bad unhappiest would be true. But the idea is so outrageous that nobody needs even to start a statistical check.

THE EIGHTH THEODICY: "Suffering and our weakness in the face of temptation are God's way of getting back at us for sinning."

Believers have no choice but to accept this. They cannot blame all suffering and weakness directly on how we use our free will. But they can blame it all indirectly on our free will IF our free will is so badly used that it draws retribution on us. No theodicy works so if you want to believe in God and in free will you have to say that all evil is punishment from God. Believers in God may not realise it always, but they are siding with a notion that implies that sufferers deserve all they get. It may imply it by a process of elimination but it is still implying it.

If the theodicy were true then sick people who repent their crimes and get God's forgiveness would be instantly cured.

It cannot be right to help a person when God wants them to pay for their sins. This is a lethal theodicy.

THE NINTH THEODICY: “God allows evil and suffering to warn us about the horrors and ugliness of sin. They tell us what will happen if we will continue to sin and give bad example.”

Then why won't he let us do evil for the same reason? You may say that the thought of God using our evil to warn others makes no sense for the point is he wants rid of evil. So we must say it is up to God to do the warning instead of us taking his law into our own hands. But he is in control - if we can do the evil then it is part of his plan. And the evil need not be malicious. It is enough to do it while feeling that God needs it. You are a criminal with a heart.

It is no reply to say that it is up to God to do the warning not us for he could use our evil for that purpose for he pulls all the strings in world affairs.

He could warn without causing any suffering and by force for lessons like that have to be forced on us anyway. A few nightmarish visions would suffice if suffering were required at all. He could warn us by mouth.

If suffering is blackmail then why does God not try harder to stop us doing wrong?

This theodicy is saying that God is vindictive in spite of itself for how could a sin that causes little or no pain be worse than suffering? Sin should be bad for it causes suffering which implies that God hates suffering more than sin. But God denies that. If sin is bad because it causes suffering then private and harmless sin is not bad and suffering would refute God for God regards it as the number one candidate for destruction.

Another problem is that suffering and evil turn people off belief in a good God. It diminishes the fervour in many believers. Many believers who are not that religious may find God creepy. Evil is the reason why many become atheists.

How rife implicitly and explicitly the theodicy is is disturbing.

THE TENTH THEODICY: “God lets us sin and suffer to teach us the lesson that we cannot do without him and to teach us what love is. God wants us to love him alone and others just for him so that is the only lesson that suffering can be meant to teach us”.

First of all, this tell us that God is more interested in proving himself right than in making us right. If we think that God is not right then that is our problem and not his and so he should not degrade himself to prove a point. God's inability to accept this shows he thinks it is better for us to be let loose and do all the evil we wish than for God to be thought wrong. To be misunderstood is better than to be maligned and rebelled against. We cannot accept this.

Secondly, we are not all free to do the evil we wish.

Thirdly, most of us die before we can see the awful results in full.

THE ELEVENTH THEODICY: “Evil does not exist – it is an illusion. When an all-powerful God of love exists evil cannot exist”.

Advocated by the Christian Science cult and the Unity School of Christianity the fact that the illusion of evil, if that is what evil is, is a painful or evil one is forgotten. It is real to us. If evil does not exist then there is no illusion so what are they doing talking about an illusion? Whoever can look at a sick baby and deny that baby is suffering is mentally sick and twisted.

If God is thought to create the illusion then you still have a God creating evil and he is evil for trying to use "but its not real!" as a pathetic excuse. So you can assume that we are blamed not God for the illusion. But the fact remains that we do not deliberately create the illusion! There is a hardness and cruelty in the person who thinks that the only "evil" is thinking evil is real!

THE TWELFTH THEODICY: “God cannot protect us against all suffering for that would mean turning bullets into paper and sending angels to catch anybody that falls off a cliff. It is better for things to be as they are instead of having endless miracles that turn life and the universe into chaos.”

A protective force field around the body is the only miracle God needs to do. How anybody who watches science fiction movies could equate protection from harm with chaos is mind-boggling or is it just plain untruthfulness? The theory shows a lack of compassion for others when it says they should be allowed to suffer for chaos must be avoided when it is obvious that they should not.

God should have made earthquakes and volcanoes and plagues impossible in the first place. If God does not have the power to correct his creation now without doing constant miracles but by just doing one big renovating miracle then he is not a God. He shouldn't have wasted his power making the stars and the planets but devoted all his energy to helping us.

THE THIRTEENTH THEODICY: "A creature is not God and so is limited and always will be. This makes us prone to temptation and evil and making mistakes. There is no limit to the level of goodness that we can obtain. For example, if we suffer a countless million centuries to save some person from eternal torment we can suffer more and more than that and more than that and so on and on forever. We will always be imperfect for God alone is infinitely or fully perfect. God cannot stop us from sinning or suffering for it is logically impossible for him to make us literally perfect. Better some evil than no evil for no evil means nobody exists."

This rules out the Christian doctrine of permanent and eternal salvation from sin and suffering and makes such a doctrine sinful.

If you suppose the goal is for us to be perfectly happy then it does not justify excessive or prolonged suffering. So it rules it out as acceptable!

What if you argue that it is about us becoming good if not happy beings? Then why is temptation so severe?

Excessive and prolonged suffering and brutal temptation are realities. Thus you would reason, "I don't know why things seemingly so inconsistent with the principle are allowed and allowed to wreak such devastation. So if I cause them they are the problem not me. It is not me who gives suffering and temptation to evil their power."

THE FOURTEENTH THEODICY: "Evil is good when God does it."

Few accept that view for it amounts to saying that if God could become man then that man has the right to rape and murder little girls for fun. It is desperation when you would condone human suffering with an excuse like that. What does it say about you? A theodicy that shows you have no moral compass at all is not a theodicy.

FINALLY

Religion may say that beauty shows you God exists and is there. It says, "You either see this or you do not." The ugliness of suffering should be treated similarly. "You either see God is disproved by it or you do not."

The failure of reasons for why God may allow evil show us we should not want to believe in God. We cannot take refuge in mystery for that is just denying that there is nothing left when the process of elimination has been done. That is not faith but desperation. Faith would be if enough of the answers worked and could inspire us to be better. They cannot for it is not a matter of just not working. It is a matter of making toxic excuses. Evil and suffering refute God. Case closed.