

Happiness and the Problem of Evil

HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS Peter Kreeft & Ronald Tacelli, Monarch, East Sussex, 1994.

Atheists are accused of expecting God to make us all happy instead of letting us suffer and die.

Christians say that is the fundamental error behind atheist arguments that God cannot exist because of the problem of evil.

They insist that happiness is not everything. But they teach ethics is about virtue. And all authorities agree that virtue is good because it brings happiness and is still worth doing for it is the only chance of happiness there is.

Aristotle taught that morality is about what will make you happy and about fulfilling yourself. Thomas Aquinas agreed but added that spiritual happiness is what matters most. Both argued that happiness is not about how you feel but about how you act. If you are miserable but doing the right thing by others and by God and yourself then you are happy. You are well in the way it counts. Spiritual happiness is just a scam - believers tell you you can be spiritually happy even when crippled by a dreadful sickness or depression. It is a way of redefining happiness so that it means nothing like what we understand by happiness.

The next astounding declaration of this Catholic book is that happiness is not feeling happy! How desperate of this book! It says you can be happy and feel nothing and that happiness is under your control and is permanent. This tells us we have a duty to be detached from feelings like love and hatred for suffering. That is just another trick to make us able and ready and willing to do whatever the Christian leaders want. It is abnormal to be happy when you feel nothing because you know it is better to be have a wonderful feeling of happiness. If you are happy without the feeling there is something wrong with you. Being happy implies having the best and enjoying it for happiness implies being true to your dignity. The book agrees with the latter part for it says that no matter how happy Nero felt when he set fire to Rome he was not happy. Page 141 admits that if we are to be happy in the true sense we have to lose the shallow happiness meaning the happiness we feel. This is an attack on falling in love and entertainment and so on. It says you can feel healthy without being healthy and so you can feel happy without being happy. But this analogy is deceptive. Happiness is in the mind and health is physical and so the analogy fails for you can know if you are happy but not if you are really healthy. You cannot be happy in any shape or form or in the way the book wants you to be happy without believing and seeing and understanding that you are a good person. But with the health thing you don't know you are unhealthy or at least the way you feel convinces you that you are healthy no matter what the doctors say. No proof at all is given that happiness is not a feeling which is what they are trying to prove which shows they support the traditional Heaven of joyless joy and happiness-free happiness which has nothing to offer except being better than Hell. We all feel something all the time so happiness has to be a feeling. In reality, this philosophy tells us that Christianity does not want to give this arid artificial happiness to people at all just as much as it does not want to give the warm happiness to them for Christianity says we are always sinning in some way so how could you think of yourself as a good person to experience that "happiness" then?

The book makes out that happiness is a choice and nothing more in fact blames the victim of the evil person and not the evil person for the unhappiness. It is as callous as the notorious book *The Secret* inferring that those who died in the Holocaust brought it on themselves by thinking negative thoughts.

Do we really want happiness without feeling happy? Of course not. We see the greater evil as being "happy" without feeling happy rather than being "unhappy" as Christians call it and having happy feelings and this is logical and right. Let Christianity preach the first kind of happiness if it wants for nobody will follow it then. We see then that the book only teaches that happiness is detachment from all feelings of well-being to convince us that suffering is not a bad thing for we are not meant to be happy as in feeling happy anyway. I wish the Church would be more openly anti-happiness so that it will be seen for the danger it really is but it gets its victims through public relations and deception for they think the Church really wants them to have happy feelings.

If you are unhappy when you are doing something sinful or anti-God and anti-Heaven no matter how happy you feel then it follows that you cannot be happy unless you know there is a life after death in which you will have eternal happiness as understood by the book. So the less sure you are the less happy you are. God wants faith so this means that you will not know for sure and he does not want you to be happy at all. You cannot be happy in any form if you cannot see that happiness for sure and see it as something permanent and if you are told not to trust yourself that you will stay true to God and die in his friendship. You get the picture from considering that when you are blissfully happy the realisation that it will

not last pains you and the greater the happiness the worse the pain will be. Buddha gave us this insight and it is right. Anybody that is happy in the sense meant by the book must have something wrong with them or be deceiving themselves. They might be mad or possessed.

If we cannot truly be happy on earth in sense that we feel happy and strive to do so then we cannot make others happy and there is no love in the world only emotional artificial love. God could not have made us and gave us free will just for that if the book is right.

One thing is for sure, if you are a believer in an all good God you have to agree that happiness is not a feeling because if it is then goodness is pleasure and God should have made us perfectly happy from the moment we were conceived. He did not so he does not exist. The redefinition of happiness is really the old idea that love is painful and agonising selfless sacrifice under different terminology for it is renouncing for when you turn away from emotional happiness to have sterile happiness that must cause pain for you would rather have the first. Better one minute of elation than two or more minutes of sterile happiness.

Theologians warn the world that Atheists have made the error of assuming that God should make us all happy and that atheists conclude from the reality of suffering that there is no God. But would that be an error?

The quick answer is that if God's love is perfect then when he loves a person that love is more important and valuable than any love that person could manage. For him to make a person so that that person could love would be crazy when his purpose is to make more love for his own love does the trick. If God makes people like us who according to him are not much good for anything but sinning then he is reducing his own love for loving the sinner and hating the sin is impossible. He can only do what increases love and making people who are so prone to sin is not doing that.

Theists say that love as in selflessly willing good is good and since love is not happiness love is better than happiness. This kind of love does not exist and is not possible so religion and God condemn everything we do when they say that. Love the emotion gives the reward of pleasure and satisfies some need in us so it is never selfless.

But is this selfless love better than happiness?

If it is then it is better to murder a baby than an adult for the baby can't love. To say the baby will be able to love if it is allowed to live is not an answer.

Happiness is self-evidently good and love is not. Even happiness that rejoices in evil is good and it is just the motives and circumstances that are bad. Love looks bad for it demands pain and suffering and seeks to be an example of such to the people "helped".

Love, as theists understand it, is not good just because it is sacrifice. God of course disagrees. So he could have a free being should be brought into existence just to be unhappy and sacrificial. That is a chilling idea and nobody likes it. Many find it impossible to believe. But love could be good for no other reason. God would not need to create if he is almighty for he could satisfy himself if he is lonely. And also, if he did, making one free person would do. Love must be good for it makes us happy. But it doesn't. Your feelings cannot be produced if they are not there. Feelings happen to you not because of you. You could love and the feelings not come. People assume that free will is for happiness. Free will would disprove the existence of a good God whether we assume love is for happiness or not.

If God wants us to be happy and we are able to be happy without free will then we should not have free will to threaten it. If we have free will it is a punishment for no reason but to satiate divine insanity and not a blessing. If God is good then we have to be completely misanthropic and heartless for he wants us to be like him.

Love in the religious sense is not helping others but struggling to do it. It is not the people that matter but the struggle for if helping was the most important God would do it himself the fast way for he has miracle powers. If it were the people you would be allowed to enjoy helping them and to do it for pleasure. Love under that understanding is evil and an unnecessary evil. We better hope that we do not have free will.

Religion says it is not enough to want to do good but you have to go out and do it and that that is the way it should be. But the truth is the world should be in such a state that we would want to suffer to help others if necessary but have no reason to and that would not make us inferior people in any sense. If we don't abuse children for example will God have to do it for us so that we can have the struggle of helping the victims? The suggestion of theists that good is good when it is only an intention or will to do good but not fully good until it is put into action assumes that we should be able to do good which is not clearly true. True a will to do good is better if it is carried out in the sense that it heals a bit of the world but we are saying the world should not need that healing and it is down to their God that it does. The free willists are saying you are

not as good a person unless you prove your good intention by carrying it out. Ideas like that suggest that the cripple is not as useful a person as a person who is not a cripple. The believers mean that healing is not important but what you do with the will is what is important. I could be as good as the person who can put their good into action only if I can't so it is wrong. Being able implies that others should have problems to enable you to help them which makes no sense so a good God would be happy enough with our good intention when it is the best we can do and it should be the best we can do for there should be no suffering or not much anyway.

If free will is a gift we have from God then that means that God wants us to make sacrifices for others by loving and wants us to be evil and do evil so that there will be plenty of opportunity for sacrifice and love when we repent. Free will implies that there should be mostly suffering and that it must come to pass one way or the other and suggests that if we scientifically come up with a way to prevent evil forever we should shelve it.

We would not need to be free if love were for happiness. If happiness is the goal for us and God approves then we can't have free will. That is because free will is not for happiness. It is not needed for it. If God is good, God would not give free will.

Sacrifices for ourselves are not real sacrifices because we will benefit from them. That's what we are performing them for. What about sacrifices for ourselves and others as well? But then you avoid any sacrificing simply by doing the things you like that will benefit others and get the same results. For example, you could get praise and help the sick to get better if you don't want to do it but pretend that you do. You can get the same results by doing it because you want to and are only doing it to make yourself feel good in which case it is not sacrifice. It is motive that determines if an act is a sacrifice or not. God does not want this: he wants sacrifice so God made us to freely sacrifice ourselves for others selflessly.

The sacrifice doctrine is not worth the sin it causes. God would have to do without the sacrifice. He should have made us as happy robots when we cannot sacrifice.

Unhappiness must always be a vindictive and corrupting punishment not mere retribution for sin if you believe in God. How else could you explain it then? It cannot be a sin to do harm in that case or if the harm is permitted by justice. When you cannot sin by doing harm then God should not let us be able to harm at all if he is just worried about free will.

Many think that you should not suffer for its own sake but for some good that is worth it. Suppose you accept your sufferings for God's will. When you are not as sure that you will live to see the results but are sure you suffer now for something that means you are willing to suffer and put a greater certainty before a lesser one. That means you should suffer for its own sake and degrade yourself by suffering. But that is only if you have free will. This argument proves that God could not give free will even if he wanted to and that we should all be conscious robots.

God claims to be perfect goodness and therefore the being to be loved above all things. Free will then would be given so that we can make the choice between loving God alone or something else in his place. When God implants reason in all mankind and does not implant the truth that he alone is to be loved and others for his sake only what is the use of the free will defence when only Christians and Jews know it? Perhaps everybody should be robots except Christians and Jews.

Suppose we had no method of proving that love is better than happiness. We would not be able to prove that it is worse either. The free will defence would not be a defence at all in that case. There would then be absolutely no evidence at all for it and therefore for God. Even the greatest miracle would not be evidence because there is no evidence for the free will defence which would be the only thing that could declare it possible for God to exist for even miracles prove nothing if free will cannot exist or be believed in.

We should all be happy instead of being free. We see then that if happiness is good and holy the unhappiness refutes the existence of God.

Why is sacrifice for love good? Because it makes others happy? But then what about your own happiness? It forbids you and every other person to be interested in your and their own. It is contradictory to say that you should forget about your happiness in order to give it to another person for why them and not you? If you should avoid making yourself happy then it is hate to make another happy. Therefore happiness is more important than love and the free will defence is wrong for saying otherwise and certainly cannot be interpreted as being pro-happiness. Yet the fact that unhappiness is seen as an evil is the reason the defence was made up in the first place. It is all very confusing and very hypocritical and very incoherent.

It is the way people are made that makes them happy. Nobody can just reach out and grab happiness. It happens to them not because of them. Sacrifice is done for its own sake. It is done for the sake of suffering.

When I am more sure that I exist than that anybody else does then to suffer for others in such a way that I am putting them first and not me is to refuse to love myself especially when I cannot tell if it is I or they who are suffering most. I only

know what is in my mind. Love as in free-willed self-sacrifice for others could not be better than happiness and un-free will when it is impossible in such a situation. It is impossible because you are asking others not to love you when you try to love them. If they loved you they would not let you help them. I want to make them evil so my love is fake. That is evil. God could not give us free will if he were good. However, it is possible to suffer for others in such a way that you can still put yourself first but you have to believe that you come first and not God and so it contradicts the free will defence which says that God or good comes first. All martyrs put themselves first anyway except when they are crazy.

We conclude that the only objection Christians can come up with against the atheist argument that unhappiness shows there is no God is an utter failure. They denigrate happiness in order to make God and evil seem to fit together.