

## The Evidentialist Argument Against God - That Suffering Probably if not Definitely Refutes God probably refutes God

The philosopher Michael Tooley did a bit of thinking about how an all-good God who has infinite power could allow suffering and concluded that he probably couldn't. He offers what he calls the evidential argument against the existence of God. It does not say that evil disproves God but makes it very unlikely that there is a God who he defines as a morally perfect and all-knowing and all-powerful person. A logical argument would mean that evil definitely disproves God. It would be illogical or contradictory then to say that evil and God can co-exist. An evidential argument does not disprove God but warns that he PROBABLY does not exist. It warns that if there is something then it is probably dangerous and unworthy of worship. Evil and suffering especially the worst kind that there is no point in trying to console, are witnesses against God even if not disproofs.

Surely if evil does not necessarily disprove God that cannot be applied to every evil! There has to be an evil that is too intolerable to be allowed even by God. If God is good then that is necessarily true. It is evil to disagree with this argument.

The interesting thing is that the evidential argument for atheism is an evidential argument one way but a logical one in another. There is room for thinking, "They do not disprove God by themselves. But a loving God would not allow such good witnesses against his love so indirectly they do disprove God."

You could say that too much evil probably shows there is no God. But that the fact that God is improbable proves he does not want us to believe in him if he does exist. It is not good for us then to believe that God exists - that contradicts the notion of an all-loving God. It is directly an evidential argument opposing God and indirectly a logical one.

The evidential argument could be ditched for a logical argument that says that too much evil definitely disproves God.

The logical argument for atheism is an evidential argument too in a sense. To say that evil definitely refutes God is to say that any evil that is not too bad disproves God in itself and also in the fact that it is still too much evil.

Tooley simply argues that some beings suffering too much makes God unlikely. A good example would be a mental patient who was a harmless soul but was plagued night and day with dreadful visions and delusions of dying from a terrible agonising disease. The suffering does that person no good for he is insane and it is pure evil for a God to use him to make others better people. One might answer that God does this for a purpose but you can't go too far with that. It would leave you saying your father molested you for a good purpose. I would add that it would be better to say that about your father than to excuse the seeming cruelty of God for you are more sure he made you than that God made you and who is provable comes first.

Christians say you only see a tiny bit of human suffering no matter how much good you do for others or how much time you spend educating yourself on the subject of human misery. They say that if you say it is unlikely that God is letting all that happen for a good reason and it's for the best then you are being judgmental. You would need to see a bigger picture to make a declaration on how likely it is or isn't that God is working out his plan. They say you are like a two year old trying to do a top physician's job that takes decades to train for. You see that if the Christians are wrong their argument is evil - it attacks those who suspect or see that the evidence makes God's love unlikely.

Tooley correctly observed in his *The Argument From Evil and the Existence of God* that God himself not clearly explaining why he allows evil shows that the idea and worship of God is immoral. We are the ones that bleed and cry and we have a right to know why.

Religion says that God didn't need to make cancer but he did. So his purpose in allowing evil is to make us all holier and kinder.

Tooley observed that to agree that God allows evil for a purpose means that it is better for a man to find a way to rid the world of cancer than for say nature to accidentally make an anti-cancer virus. God allows evil so that we will be better people and because he is trying to change us through it. So it is not really about ridding the world of cancer but making man more disciplined and kinder.

But what use is discipline and kindness if they matter and the blessings they bring do not?

If it is good for chance to destroy cancer - and if you are sane you will say that it is - then it is good for God to destroy it and therefore he should.

Tooley says that God's plan to send suffering to make us better people is an impossibility for we are at best equally likely to go wrong and at worst more likely. I would add that if God could have made a world in which things were simpler it would be easier to work out good and evil and give a good example that ensures that good will triumph over evil. For example, it would be easier to be good if we had no sex distinctions and babies were made by planting seeds in the ground. That would relieve us from the evils of abortion and sexual sin. But life is infinitely complicated.

Tooley argues that since it is easier for things to go wrong than for what is right to come about that it makes no sense to say God is right to allow pain and suffering for a purpose. If there is a purpose here it is the intention to shoot in the dark. That is not a proper purpose!

People say that killing a person to make others happy is wrong is bad for human life is the most important thing. If human life is the absolute value, then that is the same as saying that human death is the worst evil. Accordingly, even God has no right to take a human life. He can expand the world so that we don't need to die to make room for others. Most evils he has allowed to happen in the world have led to most people dying and so are not justified. To say God has a purpose is to trample on their graves and to offend the instincts everybody has about right and wrong – God is something you are conditioned to think will satisfy your desires and the other side of him is hidden from you. To serve God is the biggest possible evil for it puts the absolute value of human life second to a being that might not exist. It is in what you will that shows if you are good or evil and you can be more evil than Hitler just by willing yourself to be.

Tooley concluded that the existence of God was extremely unlikely. It is certainly indecent to worship God. There is nothing unlikely about that. It is indecent to reverence a king who hurts people for a good reason nobody can guess at even if he is not really bad. The point is you can only go so far with excusing behaviour that looks bad. If a baby suffers then God is entitled to be condemned even if he has a purpose.

The other problem is that even if there is a God, the God man worships is still man's creation. Man worships what he thinks God is but God is not what you think God is for God is God. If some people do connect with the real God there is no way to know specifically who they are. You have to assume they are just worshipping their perception of God. They adore god not God. You are entitled to get angry when people say that it is probably God's will for a baby to suffer horrendously.

To say a human being who nobody knows exists and who is totally alone and who suffers terribly and dies is loved by God is insulting. That is a clear example of suffering that has no hope of benefiting anybody. Religion might say that God likes to act at times as if he is not there but is hiding really worth more than doing something?

The only answer religion has to the assertion that, "Evil and suffering probably show that there is no loving and all-powerful God" is that if there is no God then ideas such as goodness and justice and kindness make no sense. They say that if there is no God there is no good and we can't even talk about evil then. But it is obvious that many people do not really care about or understand that argument and are still able to be good and fair. The argument is offensive nonsense. Also, it suggests that if we had nothing in the universe only people suffering to the extreme for all eternity that would not undermine belief in God at all. The argument leads to a refusal in principle to admit that evil matters in terms of deciding if there is a God or not. The struggle of trying to be glad that God loves you despite being unable to do anything for you would be asking for more suffering. That is hypothetical but the hypothetical still shows you what kind of person you are and speaks of what kind of principles you have. The argument that evil may indicate that there is a God or the worse one that evil proves God is itself evil.

Religion works out how God can be good despite the existence of evil. But if these answers make sense of that, that does not mean they are right. It does not mean they are the answers. They are still only assumptions. Unless you have knowledge of all existence and can plainly see the evidence for how the evil that happened served a worthwhile good you have no right to say that God is right to allow evil. It is an evidence question not a theory question. It is too serious of a matter to simply theorise about. The theories let you say there might be a good God but they do not entitle you to believe there is or create or follow religions that say there is.

The argument that if there is no God there is no morality for justice and love do not matter actually seems to say that suffering no matter how unjust or extreme or prevalent does not matter as much as love and justice does. It is more accurate to say that it claims that principles matter and not suffering. If there is a choice between suffering terribly and having no basis for justice then choose to suffer. The principle of justice matters not suffering. This idea of a God who is about principles and if we are happy it is through chance and luck for he will sacrifice our happiness for the sake of morally bettering us is extremely unattractive. But it shows the Churches with a happier view of God are manipulative and inducing wishful thinking in you.

It is objectively good to say that evil probably shows there is no God. The evidential problem of evil is supposedly solved by saying that there can be no evil unless it stands on good and is parasitic on good. So that overrides the goodness of saying there probably is no God. But we want goodness to benefit us. The assertion that evil is just a distortion of good

claims that even if the universe is a total torture chamber it has nothing to do with disproving God or making his existence unlikely. We have to repudiate our human needs to accept this terrible doctrine. We have to pretend that goodness is not about our benefit.

Notice the contradiction. The argument says the evidential argument has a point. That is why it needs another argument to be bigger than it and override it. Then it says it does not have a point. It is clear that it has to have a point thus the notion that there is no goodness if there is no God is nonsense and cruel nonsense at that. It is suffering people we are talking about.

Tooley was right that God's existence is unlikely. An all-good God will give an explanation for innocent and extreme suffering instead of using men as the messenger boys which is no good for many of the messenger boys are lying that they got a message.

It is not just that God is unlikely to love us when we suffer so terribly. It is that it is indecent to assert divine love. And anyway why respect that love if it is not doing any good?

It is said, "Never judge God by isolated disasters". What we should do is reason, "It may be an isolated disaster. Or it might not because what looks isolated has complex natural causes and there is more to it than just a particular event." The argument that an evil is an isolated thing and thus that God should not be judged is callous both because it lies about the event and ignores the harm caused to people. It does not matter if an event is isolated or what it is when people suffer and die.

"Never judge God by isolated disasters" is dismissing the FACT not THE possibility that we should keep an open mind which means we sort of judge and don't judge but just don't know which side to choose. It is doing as much judging as you can and doing as much not-judging as you can. To refer to this issue as a possibility is insulting as well.

Do we have the right to assume a natural evil event is wanton and another evil is not? That is the bottom line. We don't. Acting as if we do is responding to gratuitous evil with one we create - another gratuitous evil!

All evil is gratuitous in the sense that you have to treat it like it is when it is happening. You have to believe it is gratuitous. You cannot wait to you see the good or bad results before you decide if it should happen or not. It is odd how believers in God can claim their good works spring from their faith!

Conclusion: The existence of evil and suffering can be seen as not being about contradicting God's goodness (we will leave aside the question if people should see it that way). But you can see them as witnesses or evidences that there is no loving God. What is the difference? Logic may not prove that John committed a crime but empirical evidence can. Saying the witness is to be ignored is not an option. You have to use evidence against the witness and prove the evil is really not bad at all. That cannot be done so the evidence has to be taken at face value as saying, "Do not believe in the love of God!"

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