



Does challenging superstition or faith protect people?
 Is it mistaken to support organised religion in membership or donations?

If people do good because they are human, not because God prompts them,
 is it right to risk giving God any credit when they alone own their good?



Patrick H
Gormley

NATURAL EVIL OVER MORAL EVIL: How important?

Some say that natural evil such as plagues and earthquakes are not evil except when they affect people. Moral evil is about the bad things people do. Thus it must be us then who make natural evil evil for we are the ones that live in areas where plagues might erupt! Going to live in an unstable region then is taking a risk of evil so great that committing a murder would be more moral!

The religious doctrine of God as loving creator of all from nothing says creation is about how we exist and the universe exists when there in fact might have been nothing at all. Atheists detest human suffering above all things and that leaves them open to the accusation that they think it would have been better if the universe had never been created. Or worse they are accused of wishing that those whose lives are hell did not exist.

But that is a strawman argument. Atheists and believers should hate people suffering as much as each other and can do. The bottom line is we should hate suffering and evil more if there is a God for we should expect him to do something. Both atheists and believers can have that attitude. Who is there when people suffer makes a difference to how disgraceful and inexcusable their suffering is.

Anyway religion talks about natural evil - the things that nature does that hurt conscious creatures. And about moral evil in the evil we choose to do and make.

What is more relevant or important? Natural evil or moral evil?

If natural evil is a good objection to the love of God then how good is it?

Some say its not good for though it would be evil if I allowed earthquakes to happen it is different for God for God is not thing or a man but the supreme supernatural being. But it is about power, his power to help or hinder, not what he is so it not different. It does not matter what you are as long as you have the power to stop earthquakes wiping out children cruel and won't use it.

That aside, is natural evil being inconsistent with God's love the main objection?

To say it is not gives rise to the following consequences. If evil is so bad that nothing loving could tolerate it do not forget that it cannot be allowed simply because it is evil.

Evil means that which is intolerable and any theory that fits it with God denies this so it succumbs to evil by watering it down for religion. Evil cannot be handled correctly unless it is diagnosed properly.

The religious seem to find a problem with human evil but not natural evil which amounts to saying it is better to take terminal cancer than for a person to insult you. To say such an insane thing would be a moral evil. If that is what you have to do to defend God and natural evil then you need to learn about becoming a good person.

It is not up to you to say it is not the main objection when you cannot experience what everybody has experienced during natural evil. If you suffer all your life you will not know what it was like for them and have no right. The compassion of the believer is sentimentality while true compassion does not hold back in learning how vile and dreadful and intolerant it is for somebody to suffer and die.

An evil that is done by nature is worse than an evil done by a person. Why and how? Nature cannot control it or stop it and strictly speaking it is not controlled. The laws of nature are not laws as in control. They are laws in the sense that we know what to expect of nature. You don't know what it is going to do. A bad person does know what evil she will do and can change her mind. Better her controlled evil than random mindless uncontrolled.

The view that most evils are brought about by human beings is wrong. Most evils are natural. Even human evil has a natural element. Moral evil is a product of natural evil. So natural evil is the issue that needs concentration on.

We all experience suffering and death as terrible things and gross evils and worse than immoral stuff. We fear plagues more than a serial killer for the plagues will always do more harm than him or her. The attempts to solve the natural evil problem insult and violate our human nature and thus do violence to it for the sake of defending religion and God.

Finally, human caused evil is nothing compared to natural evil and natural evil seems to follow human evil. To care about moral evil so much is itself a moral evil.

IF THERE IS A GOD ITS JUST ANOTHER FORM OF MORAL EVIL OR POTENTIAL MORAL EVIL

Christian Assertion: God does not create the diseases and earthquakes miraculously so he is not directly responsible for any natural evil. He is not the direct but the indirect or the remote cause. God does not cause tragic deaths - he only refuses to do a miracle to prevent the death. He lets nature take its course. He has set up nature to be random as well as ruled by laws so it does not follow that he rigs the universe to produce natural disasters. God permitting evil means that God has not done a miracle, though able, to avert it. That is all it means.

God creates a thing - a first cause. The thing is said to do something itself which is a secondary cause. The Catholic Catechism says, "The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes" (CCC 308). So clearly if you are God and you create a car you create whatever the car does as well. So the secondary cause thing does not mean it is in anyway less dependent or further away from God as a primary cause directly created would be. It is just a way of describing how God creates a thing and creates what it does. In a sense the secondary cause is "more" created than the primary for there is no point in God creating anything that does nothing.

The Bible God's actions are always spoken of as direct. The Bible attributes "actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. This is not a 'primitive mode of speech,' but a profound way of recalling God's primacy and absolute Lordship over history and the world" (CCC 304). The Catholic Church then is saying that the idea of direct and indirect causes or primary and secondary causes is not saying there is any real difference - in reality there is no secondary cause for a secondary cause is just another primary cause - but just helps our understanding. It is a useful model for us to talk about it.

Answer: It's deliberate lies. The doctrine of creation says that each individual thing is a miracle made from nothing. Death is a miracle as much as its reverse would be.

If a being with power lets something terrible happen, then no matter how much this is justified or justifiable there is still the chance that the justifications could be misleading. There is still the niggling question: Maybe its immoral after all?

You cannot say that somebody taking a disease and dying is God permitting evil and not doing a secret or hidden miracle to them. A miracle can simulate natural law. You need proof before you can exonerate God. It is people's suffering you are talking about and where is your sense of justice? Believers habitually violate decency to defend their God of earthquakes and plagues and naturally violent urges in the human heart.

The transformation of the model into something that makes us feel less bad when two harmless viruses come together to make a dangerous one as if distancing the bad virus from God makes any difference is actually anti-God and manipulative and cruel. A murderer who uses hypnosis to get her friend to stab the enemy is not made better by the fact that she didn't handle the knife. She is made as bad or worse if you like. So it is with God. Indirect action by God makes no sense. Its just another form of direct action. When you make the tea, God does it.

Christian Assertion: Moral evil such as sin matters and natural evil is nothing in comparison.

Reply: How important is this idea to the Christian faith? Because God has to be portrayed as the innocent and Christians think that sin is the ultimate reason for suffering and death this idea is central. The Christian would be eager to say that any other reply is just an opinion but this one is something more. It is a lot more. But see what they are doing. They make out that natural evil is worse than direct moral evil. They see a random mechanical thing such as a plague that has nothing to do with any agent man or God as better than a sin. But the fact remains that judgementalism is bad for it looks for moral faults in people instead of the good and this is judgementalism. Judgementalism is itself a moral evil. So they use a moral evil to make a natural evil look better and reasonable. They water down the badness of death and horror and suffering in order and violate innocent until proven guilty to do it. To accuse Adam and Even for example of causing all this evil is vile. If you think those people existed and accused them you are no better than a person slandering your neighbour.

It is shocking that the God belief implies that sin is the worst evil and that a small sin is worse than a natural disaster like an earthquake. God allows natural evil to happen implying he prefers it to sin. But God should abhor sin and evil the same. Evil whether wilful or not should offend him infinitely.

We do not condone the actions of a tyrant who maims and butchers and say it was for an understandable but wrong purpose and we can see and feel the tyrant. We cannot be as sure there is a God the way we can be as sure that the tyrant exists so we condone the seemingly evil ways of a being who may not exist in preference to condoning the similar ways of a real person. But it is better to give a possible reason for God's actions than just to say, "Oh God knows what he is doing – but I cannot explain it", which is an unimpressive cop-out. So if a young mother is killed tragically you should say, "Perhaps if she had lived she would have turned into a monster that abuses her child so God did right to take her", if she had been showing signs of a bad temper before she died which has to be done if there is a God who comes first, whose honour matters more than the dead woman's. Do not forget that there is a perhaps there even if unspoken. Those perhaps should offend us more than the spoken ones.

Another problem is that to condemn a human being for doing something like slapping someone on the face and not to condemn God for making things like smallpox and flesh-eating bugs is terribly unjust. We can't reward and praise bad actions even when done by well-meaning people and God cannot be an exception. Its worse when the person will suffer from the condemnation and God cannot for he is out of reach and the Church says nobody can give him anything for he is perfect and is totally happy. It is certainly worse to hurt a person you can see and touch for something minor or fairly minor and let God off the hook for worse when you cannot be as sure that he is as real as the human person.

This is a bare assertion. Why should we agree with that? Just because you can say that does not say you morally should say it! The naturalistic fallacy - getting a moral ought from an is or something that is not about morality is present here!

Conclusion:

The excuses for natural evil and God letting them happen boil down to three.

One is that somehow it is impossible to make a non-dangerous universe.

Two that natural evil is not morally relevant or if it is then the suffering it causes is not as bad as the suffering caused by human beings.

Three evil spirits are using their free will to do the evil.

All of these are desperate.

Do not say natural evil possibly refutes God. It does more than that. It refutes it. Do not forget that if it refuted it that those who want to believe in God would say it possibly refutes God. They soften disproofs of God to portray them as opinions not disproofs and they don't want to look like callous people who won't see suffering for what it really is - intolerable. They even condemn the notion that "if evil ought not to happen then God cannot let it happen". Their numerous bad fruits, each of which alone is enough to show that ignoring God's role if he exists in natural evil is vile and inexcusable, add up to make a warped and poisonous broth. Make no mistake: to make excuses for natural evil is itself morally evil if we really do have free will to be moral or immoral.

With natural evil there is a lot of talk about it being indirect evil. Why not admit the truth? The truth is that the theory itself is at best indirectly cruel.

The Bible though it says God is good says he is also evil.

Isaiah 45:7 - "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these."

In Jeremiah 11:11 God threatens to send evil and ignore the pleas of the victims for help. It may say this is deserved but it is hardly something a good God would do. The praying victims know that part of the deal is that they say they will stop doing the evil things that made the divine chastisement needed.