

PLATO AND SPINOZA ON EVIL - THE GREAT PHILOSOPHERS

PLATONIC DUALISM

Plato believed that the ultimate reality, that which exists by and of itself or is not caused by anything to exist except by itself is two: God and matter. This was his answer to the problem of evil. Matter is far away from God and it is stuff which is unsuitable for the divine purpose. But he has to use it all the same. The imperfections of matter are blamed for sin and evil. But when matter is able to bring happiness to some it can to all. God could tell us how to scientifically make ourselves happier.

The solution is unsuccessful.

Also, when matter can exist without being created why suppose that this great spirit God exists? There is no need for the spirit theory. We cannot prove that spirit exists which would be necessary before we can say it is a rational or meaningful concept. We have to avoid any outlandish hypothesis of which there is no need.

SPINOZA AND EVIL

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was a Jew who converted to Pantheism. He believed that God was perfectly good.

He said that evil only seems evil to us but is really good when you see the whole picture.

It is like a picture that you look at so closely that you only see the brush strokes and which are evil in the sense that they have no great beauty or artistic merit. But when you retreat a few feet you see a vision of great beauty – a masterpiece landscape which inebriates you with its splendour.

This image says that good is made up of evil which is not true for we could be perfectly happy without evil. When a person forgets all about suffering and is enraptured in unending bliss there is no evil there. The picture can be made up of evil and be good but it is different. Evil is not brush-strokes. Life is not a painting. Spinoza is attacking the obvious fact that we should all be in a universe in which no sorrow is known.