

If you risk condoning evil by saying God is right to let it happen, then why is the risk worth it? The religious answer is that if you deny the existence of God you deny the existence of goodness. If so then refusing to take the risk is only making things worse. And the other answer is that we have free will and God respects it. And the other answer is that it is best to believe that terrible things serve a good plan. None of these answers justify the risk. In fact each one is a further risk. Those who deny there is a risk at all do not care enough about suffering. We all accept that it is not enough to believe certain terrible actions are absolutely necessary and what would fit more in that category than: "God has a good reason for allowing all this evil and temptation and suffering"? You need to know why. The doctrine smoothes it for evil people who dress up their schemes as good or serving a good purpose. When religion says God has a plan it really means the people have this plan whether they realise it or not and it is them who will bring it about. God's plan is a plan about people so it ends up being about the people. The notion that evil leads to good or can do is where tyranny starts. It is safer to reject the concept until you see proof.

To declare God responsible or even blameworthy for the evil and suffering we endure and are at risk of seems to say that we are controlled by him and are puppets though we feel we are not. If it is not saying that then it is not far off saying it. To say God is working out a plan denies that in the past, if something bad happened to one in the past, it happened because God was protecting you from the RISK of the other evils that could have happened instead. Thus you cannot say that Hitler really risked doing worse to the Jews. Such a view makes a mockery of how we need to learn from the past and that learning is about assessing risks taken in the past. Condoning is bad enough but adding that in makes it worse. It is piling callous on callous.

BUT TO DENY GOD IS TO DENY GOODNESS EXISTS!

If God and evil are compatible that only means we think they are or that they might be. That means there might be a God and there might not be. Evil and God being compatible does not mean there is a God. Many believers accept that. Their attitude is, "We risk saying that the unjustifiable is justified in the divine plan. But we do not argue that evil proves God only that it allows for the possibility of God's existence."

Why would you take that risk? Only if you thought that belief in God was a sufficient way to promote and serve goodness. And what do you mean by goodness? Is it what is best for us or God? If it is about what is best for us then clearly God only matters as long as we think we need him to. Man is the real god. And if you help a sick person for God's sake and not their own you may behave well but you are being inhuman in your attitude. So to think you need God to be good is an error at best.

Let us pretend we need God to be good. God would need to be necessary. But he is not. It makes no sense to say that belief in God is probably useful for believing in good. Why? Because if you just want God as a utility that is actually evil - God is the being who deserves to be the final end for which we live and is not a trinket. He is the end not the means. The argument supposes that goodness is independent of God. Belief in God then would not justify saying that evil is probably okay in the final analysis and scheme. Why not just centre on good and be done with it? Only evidence not faith or theory can tell you if the risk is worth it which means you need to know why evil happens and see how good overcomes it. But you cannot see that. The argument is just an excuse for divine indolence as people suffer.

Many do not stop with saying that God and evil are compatible. No they go further.

They go as far as to make out that evil is an argument for God's existence. "Evil exists therefore there is a God. Evil is merely good in the wrong place so the goodness of evil reflects the goodness of God. And our concept of justice comes from God. If there is no God we cannot call any amount of torture bad or unfair. If we are wrong and saying the intolerable is tolerable then so be it!" Those faith-addicts take an insanely mammoth risk of condoning evil in order to believe in God. That is the bottom line.

The view that evil actually proves God, takes the biggest risk. It ignores the fact that if hypothetically there were nothing at all then it is good and fair that nobody is around to suffer. Thus it does not want to see good if good is independent of God. In that sense it is evil. Justice and goodness are independent of God or anything else. They just are. The argument is evil for it denies that good is default and thus does not really understand good. It understands something like it but what use is that? And how can it be good to say that it is all right if the universe goes totally bad as long as there is a God! That too defies any useful understanding of good that we would desire or consider to be of use.

WHY GOD LETTING US ROAM FREE IS DEMEANING

The wiser and the more powerful a person is, the worse they become if they stand by and let somebody suffer. They can

easily help. The notion that God has a purpose for letting us suffer makes no sense. They say he respects our free will but what about his own? If you have a choice between respecting the will of a profligate and a wise and kind person whose will should be put first?

Nobody wants to believe that God honours our free will enough so that the purpose is simply that we might be free to do good or evil. That would make it a sin to be in the police. Perhaps if you get the opportunity to be in the police then it is God's will. It would mean that anything that is done be it letting criminals roam free or being in the police is God's will or it would not be happening. This would mean that all that matters is God's will. But the atheist in each one of us says it is not fine. We will not accept an anarchic world run by terrorists just because God lets it happen. We are against it on principle.

Believers do believe that God does let us roam free so that we might be free to do evil or good but for many of them this is the main, not sole, reason. Among other reasons are his divine plan to bring about good out of our mistakes.

So they think that God letting you commit murder mainly for the sake of letting you be free is what matters. That is a horrendous and unfeeling idea. And the notion that he does it only for your freedom is far worse.

What about the notion that he lets you do evil if it fits the divine good plan so it mostly about the plan not the freedom? This is downgrading the importance of freedom. If freedom doesn't matter that much then what is God doing using it to bring about his plan? Why not just do the plan right now? Why put us through centuries of torture for a plan that could be rolled out in seconds?

It is believed that God only respects our free will up to a point. He draws the line at letting us do enough evil if the evil can be used to bring about a good that is worth it. This is the notorious doctrine of a divine plan. We are often told this plan is wonderful. But if God lets evil exist and he is right to, it follows that the plan for me could be to suffer for love of others for all eternity. It would be arrogant and selfish to want the plan for the pleasant side. It is a bad fruit of faith in God when most believers only care about the benefits they think they are going to get.

The doctrine that free will excuses God implies that even if free will is always abused it is worth it. In other words, as free will is permitted to be abused and is therefore this freedom is planned by God any evil done is not that bad under the circumstances. Then looking for other reasons why God might let us do evil - eg to help us learn - makes it even less bad under the circumstances! If you suffer, you are failing to see that the bad things that happen to you are really not that bad and are to blame for how powerful your pain is. If a believer has enough compassion to help the stranger then it is down to luck not faith that it is enough.

WHY ARGUING THAT GOD LETS US HURT FOR ITS FOR A PURPOSE IS DEMEANING

The argument that you must believe in God to get a sense that you should help the stranger, or any person at all, is very common. But it is a deliberate lie. It is told because religion needs to sell the God concept on the basis that it allegedly makes us happier and kinder to think we are part of a divine and benevolent plan.

The argument implies that if there is no God you shouldn't bother or it does not matter one way or the other. You neither should or shouldn't. But if you are helping because you believe in God you are not helping for the person's sake. If you link God and humanitarianism you are very much mistaken. If you want to be good over having God, then this is self-defeating. It is BECAUSE there is no God that we have to look after the person. Period.

Suppose for the sake of argument that it is true that only if there is a God you should help people.

There is a starving child on the street. You can give her your loaf of bread. You assume that it is God's plan that you do this. But is it really? Who are you to decide that it is God's plan? Do you see into God's mind?

Religion denies that the girl is starving just because God wants to test if you will help her. It however says that part of God's plan is about testing us. Is it the biggest part? If God can send cancer to your baby because in some way it is going to make most people better off in the scheme of things that implies that those people must co-operate enough with the plan to let it work. So it is mostly a test.

To adore God who hurts your family to test you is putting great value on your virtue! It is extremism.

Religion believes in small plans worked by God but these are part of an overall plan. He lets evil things be done and good things be done for the sake of the plan. So the good you do is not the goal but a means to the goal. The good you do is not the plan but at most it is a part of it and it is a means to implementing the overall plan.

You are not doing real good unless you do it for God's will and his plan.

You are not doing real good unless it is about the overall goal and not about helping the person as a goal.

You cannot do good unless you believe in God and in his plan.

So your good is counterfeit and about looking good and not about being good.

In short, if you do little acts of goodness every day and see them as goals in themselves it is a sin. This is a disgraceful insinuation.

The believer's goodness is intrinsically and implicitly judgmental and vindictive towards the atheist. The atheist helps her and does good for her because for her or him this good IS the goal.

If you cannot do good and make it the goal and have to glorify the good as part of a universal good plan then you are acting like, "Nothing good is worth doing unless it is for a greater good." This shows that your empathy for others is weak.

There are many things in life that degrade people without them feeling degraded. Or perhaps they are afraid to admit it. Saying to suffering people that they are in God's lovely plan risks being another degradation in that way. But that aside, it is intrinsically degrading. And believers have no right to get away with it. Challenge them!

THE MEANING OF SUFFERING AND LIFE

Religion manipulates people to feel they need an ultimate reason for life and that they will find this reason in God. That is the sledgehammer that is often used to get them to be okay with God's evil in principle and in practice.

How can God be called good when people suffer? He is able to stop it but refuses. He makes the brain and nerves that have the power to create suffering - and one person who is tortured the same as the next person may be made in such a way that the torture is more agonising for her. It is nonsense that God does all he can to help us have an ultimate reason for living. One person who believes life has no meaning may still be reasonably happy. Another reacts a different way. The feeling of despair takes its grip. The reaction then totally depends on how the person's brain and nerves are. It is not the belief that life is useless that does it. If God makes all things then God is to blame.

If God is what gives your life meaning then surely you crave being with him? Thus your suffering will only be worsened by belief in God. You will feel like a bigger failure than ever for you will think it must be your fault that you feel such a way when God is there trying to help you. The believers think that the more you suffer the more you will want him and to be with him. But encouraging them to believe is encouraging them to feel worse. If they crave happiness they are being encouraged to add to their problems by craving God! To tell a sufferer that God loves them and has a purpose for them is cruel and fanatical for these reasons.

There is another. If a person experiences meaningless existence it is harassment to tell them their life has meaning and that God cares. It is virtually dismissing their experience. Suffering would be a stronger experience that there is no God than any alleged religious experience that seems more benevolent and desirable and which conveys that there probably is a God. What gives you the right to claim that suffering can agree with the loving care of an all-powerful God? You can't know how another person suffers so how dare you say their suffering does not refute God. If you said, "Annie was abused by her father. But she should see this does not disprove his love for her" you would rightly be seen as a do-gooder and a hypocrite. Why? Because you don't know what it was like for her. And so it is with God and suffering people.

Most people do not need belief in God enough to say, "This belief gives me a purpose and that overrides any concern about why God allows evil to happen to me." If belief in God is that important to you that you will still worship God even if he sends you a billion years of Hell then your psychology is abnormal or you are kidding yourself and everybody else.

The good side of unbelief in God is how the unbeliever does not have to risk accepting and approving a God who is to blame for evil. Even if we believe that if there is a God then he is good we only believe it meaning we admit we could be wrong. So believers risk worshipping a God who is evil or partly evil. Taking such a risk is evil for the reason vowing unconditional obedience to somebody who sometimes lets bad things happen would be bad. And if God does not care that makes him in fact worse than a bad God for all bad people have to do some good and they mix evil and good together. So an evil God could seem likeable to some. The risk is incompatible with the believer's doctrine that complete opposition to evil is necessary in order to love a perfect God.

The sense that your suffering has a purpose is really a misperception. We are confusing this-too-shall-pass with a purpose. We try to heal the memory of the terrible suffering and how inexcusable it was by telling ourselves that we are so important that we had to be tragically hurt in order to bring about some wonderful good. We want to feel we are bigger than the

suffering. Feeling that is okay if we are indeed bigger but there is a chance we might not be. And what right to I have to condone the suffering of those who suffer with me like that? What right do I have to turn my or anybody's suffering as evidence of my indispensability?

We conclude that we should not risk condoning God doing evil for we might be praising an unworthy God or praising a God who is not the real one but one in our heads. To invent a God and condone his ways would be terrible. No justification for taking the risk works. A risk taken with no justification is not a risk but foolishness.