

The Problem of Evil, and the Relation of Faith and Reason

- I. We see evil everywhere in our world; there's no denying it
- A. Now, does God cause evil? After all, we said that He's the cause of everything that exists... and evil exists... so does He make evil?
1. But God is totally good, so how could he cause evil? Aren't those opposites? Sounds like Fire making Water freeze... not going to happen.
 - b. So, either a good God exists, and evil doesn't, or evil exists, and a good God doesn't. The conclusion is obvious!

What do we say of the child dying of cancer? If it is done for a purpose—planned through all eternity—then this is the deepest evil! If God is this kind of actor, then He cannot justify His actions. In this His evil nature is revealed.'

c. This begs the question: what is evil?

1. Evil is the absence of a good that should be there; it is a *privation*.
 - a. It's not a thing, it's the lack of a good and proper thing.
 - 1) E.g., draw a face without one of the eyes: is this a good face? No, an eye is missing. Something that ought to be there is missing.
 - 2) Death: what makes death so terrible? Is it a thing? No, it's the end of Life.
 - 3) Now, let's look at moral evil (and moral evil is evil in our decisions and actions).
 - a) Fornication: is the sexual act bad? No, but it's missing the total commitment that ought to be there between the two persons
 2. So Evil isn't a thing... it's not positive, it's negative. It isn't something there, it's something that's not there.
 - a. Must always guard against dualism: the idea that there are two forces striving against each other in the universe: Force of Good and the Force of Evil---like Fire and Water
 - 1) Really, it's like fire and the absence of fire; water and the absence of water
 - 2) We've been talking about how everything is good, because really good is convertible with being.
 - a) So evil happens when a thing isn't as good as it should be.
 - b) And sin happens when we willingly and knowingly do something that detracts from the goodness of ourselves or others.

-1- Sin is a decision that causes evil

3. It's also important to see that sin is never committed for the sake of an evil, but for the sake of something good, in spite of the fact that we know it will ultimately harm us--- it will cause us ultimately to lessen in goodness.

a. So, for example, I steal in order to get someone's money. Money is a good thing, but I sacrifice my concern for neighbor and society, and so deprive myself of a much more important good.

4. So, since everything that exists is good, the real question we have to ask ourselves is, are we going to make ourselves more good or less good?

a. Which is interesting, because it means that really, the ultimate question will be: am I good enough for Heaven? Did I make the cut? Heaven has standards.

b. Also, it's important to see that there really is no force that can match God, or that can oppose Him.

1) It's not really a battle of Good vs. Evil

a) It's God or nothing.

-1- It's God saying: do you want to share fully in my goodness? Do you want to be as good as you can be? Or do you just want to be mediocre, a small, selfish little being? Either way, everything you have comes from me, so you might as well take it all!

5. Thus, God does not create evil. It is rather the result of free-willed beings rejecting His offer of union with Him. His absence leaves a void of goodness, joy, life, love, beauty, etc.

6. So where does evil come from, then? It is a mystery, but freedom is intoxicating, even to supernatural creatures like angels. It seems that Lucifer, before the fall, believed his freedom to be the key to overcome God, making himself God without God, which should sound like an absurdity, and it is. This imagined belief led him to exercise his freedom away from God. In this instance, then, God became his apparent foe instead of His real Father-Creator. Lucifer continues to tempt us with this same offer. In a sense, the devil is right in that sin makes us like God in that we can do something on our own: we can do nothing. This is the only thing that we can do on our own. This is an apparent attractive good, but, is, in the end, only an absurdity, a perversion.

7. Why does God allow it? The only reason is because He can bring a greater good out of it.

a. Physical death, then, is not the greatest evil. For the little child that dies of cancer, we can believe that a good God sees the union of suffering of this child with His Son, and rewards with the same crown of glory; a crown otherwise unattainable.

b. Suffering is the proper response to evil, and Jesus tells us “cast your cares upon me. My yoke is easy, my burden is light.”

8. God is still infinite goodness, and the world He’s made is still good... we just share in that goodness less. We just hurt ourselves.

B. That’s why the Good will always win!

- a) Because goodness grows, expands itself...
The whole point of Evil is to makes a thing smaller, less powerful, less being... so it’s not even like there’s any competition.

P.S.: point about the terminology: assuming evil is in the world, suffering is an appropriate response. So it's not the "problem of suffering, but the problem of evil" (E.g., if we feel a pin-prick, it's healthy and appropriate to feel pain; people who don't tend not to last very long).

P.P.S.: The three conditions for the suffering of the innocent are 1) created freedom; 2) communal interdependence; 3) the fact of sin