

**Does the existence of evil provide compelling evidence to support the claim that
God does not exist?**

The existence of evil is perhaps the most common argument made by atheists to disprove the existence of God. If God is all-knowing, all-loving, and all-powerful, why doesn't he intervene and prevent evil? This question has been long debated in the field of philosophy, of which there are various views and theories offering explanations as to why evil might exist. The existence of evil is not sufficient evidence to entirely disprove the existence of God, and if evil exists it is logical that it must serve a purpose.

The concept of evil arose out of the necessity to describe and refer to cruel and abominable acts, such as murder and genocide, of which the gravity cannot be sufficiently expressed with words such as "bad" or "wrong". The concept is used in an attempt to understand such actions, however some argue that it lacks explanatory power and is consequently useless as it fails to reveal why such acts are committed (Calder, 2022). Evil is regarded as incomprehensible, and for this reason it is commonly accepted as an explanation that some people or actions are "simply evil" (Baron-Cohen, 2012). Evil can be divided into two categories: natural and moral evil. The former refers to evils which "do not result from the intentions or negligence of moral agents" (Calder, 2022), such as an earthquake or a headache. Moral evils are those which do result from the intentions or negligence of moral agents, such as violence or theft. Evil, when discussed in a philosophical or theological context, refers to such natural and moral evils.

Epicurus' inconsistent triad is perhaps the most common argument made against the existence of God. It claims that if God is all-powerful and all-loving, and should therefore possess the power and the desire to prevent evil, yet evil still exists, the logical conclusion is that God does not exist (Wilkinson, Wilcockson and Campbell, 2016). The validity of such an argument, however, relies entirely on the concept of an omnipotent and benevolent God. Deism is one example of the belief in a God who created the universe but does not intervene with human affairs. If God exists in a purely metaphysical manner, rather than as an entity possessing great power, knowledge, and benevolence, then there would be no relation between his existence and the existence of evil. However, it summons the question of why such a God would be a figure of religious attitudes and morality (Tooley, 2021). The argument does, however, apply to the God of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith who loves and cares for all his creation.

Skeptical theism is a concept which allows for human cognitive limitations in response to arguments about evil against the existence of God (Dougherty, 2022), and suggests that we lack the ability to discern God's reasoning for acting or refraining from acting in situations of evil. An analogy often used in favor of the existence of God is the parent-child analogy. Throughout the process of child-rearing, parents sometimes act in ways that the child may themselves consider cruel, such as being punished for bad behavior. The parent has benevolent intentions, and does what they consider to be best for the child, however the child is not always capable of understanding their parent's reasoning. The problem with this analogy is that mortal parents are not the same as an

omnipotent, omniscient, all-loving God. Parents certainly sometimes act in ways that, whilst well-intentioned, is not in the child's best interest. One could argue that if a parent were all-powerful, they would have the power to prevent their child from misbehaving in the first place.

The freedom to misbehave is a matter of free will. John Hick suggests that the freedom to hurt and be hurt is what gives us a meaningful relationship with God, and that suffering enables us to feel gratitude and adopt qualities such as tolerance, patience, and forgiveness (Wilkinson, Wilcockson and Campbell, 2016). Many theists argue that it is because of free will that evil exists, and that the freedom of choice is necessary to grow and improve as humans. Another argument made in favor of the existence of God is the cosmological argument, which relates to cause and effect theory. Simply put, the argument suggests that everything has a cause, and so in order for the world to exist, there must be an original cause, which theists believe to be God (Wilkinson, Wilcockson and Campbell, 2016). The problem with this argument is that there is a very basic contradiction. If the existence of the world requires a cause, then what caused that original cause? If God created the world, then who or what created God?

Ultimately, the existence of evil does contradict the notion of an omnipotent, omniscient, all-loving God. However, the concept of free will provides a possible argument for the existence of both evil and God. Skeptical theism suggests that we wouldn't always be able to see the good in evil occurrences, or understand God's reasoning for allowing such occurrences to transpire. However, to believe that bad things ultimately happen for

a good reason requires blind faith, which highlights perhaps the most compelling argument against the existence of God, that to believe in him is a matter of faith, not fact. Thus, the existence of evil alone does not provide a compelling argument against the existence of God, but rather the necessity to have blind faith that there is a reason for such evil.

References

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