

The Problem of Evil



Types of Evil

Natural Evil - Naturally occurring e.g. earthquakes

Moral Evil - Wilfully perpetrated by people



The Logical Problem of Evil

The Problem of Evil is a problem of logical inconsistency

J.L. Mackie

Mackie, J.L., 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind*, Vol. 64, No. 254 (Apr., 1955)



1917-1981

Rational Theism - There are rational reasons to believe that God exists

Arational Theism - Believing in the existence of God without supporting evidence

Irrational Theism - Believing in the existence of God in spite of evidence that God does not exist

‘God is omnipotent; God is wholly good; and yet evil exists. There seems to be some contradiction between these three propositions, so that if any two of them were true the third would be false. But at the same time all three are essential parts of most theological positions: the theologian, it seems, at once must adhere and cannot consistently adhere to all.’

- Mackie, J.L., 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind*, Vol. 64, No. 254 (Apr., 1955), p.200

The Logical Inconsistency of God's Existence

1. God Exists
2. God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent
3. An omniscient being knows how to prevent all evil
4. An omnipotent being has the power to prevent all evil
5. An omnibenevolent being would want to prevent all evil
6. A being that knows how to prevent all evil, has the power to prevent all evil and wants to prevent all evil will prevent all evil
7. As God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent no evil exists
8. Evil exists

The Logical Argument Against the Existence of God

1. If God exists then he is omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent
2. If God is omniscient then he will know how to prevent evil
3. If God is omnipotent then he will have the power to prevent evil
4. If God is omnibenevolent then God will want to prevent evil
5. If God is omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent then there will be no evil
6. There is evil
7. Therefore, God does not exist

The Evidential Problem of Evil

Once we consider the evidence it appears unlikely that the world was created by an omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent being.

An inductive argument

Evil provides evidence that God does not exist

David Hume - Evidential Problem

- A stranger is dropped into this world and shown its misery.
- Someone is shown a house and are told that all the imperfection prevent a much larger structural problem.
- Would we think it unlikely that either were made by a perfect creator



1711-1776

Theodicy

Arguments that seek to explain why God would allow for the presence of evil

Augustinian Theodicy

- Classified by John Hick (*Evil and the God of Love*, 1966)
- God is perfectly good
- The world is created out of nothing
- The world is good



Augustine of Hippo
(354-430)

Augustinian Theodicy

- Evil does not exist in itself but is the privation of good.
- God did not create evil and therefore is not responsible for it.
- God created the world without sin or suffering
- Sin is the result of the abuse of free will
- Evil is a justified punishment for sin



Thomas Aquinas

- God's creation is good and lacking in nothing
- Evil is a privation of good and we can only understand evil in terms of good
- Evil cannot be desired in itself, as it does not exist in itself
- Pursuit of evil is desiring something which in itself is good but is not good for humans
- Evil is intentionally doing something which prevents the agent or someone else from fulfilling their potential



1225 - 1274

Thomas Aquinas

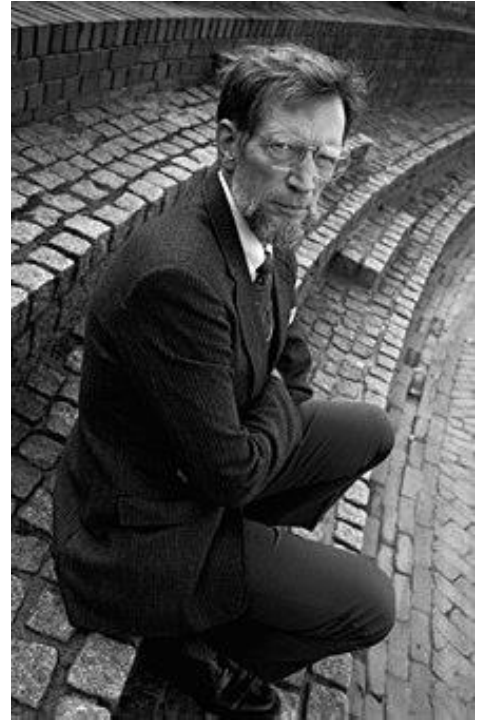
- Punishment is an evil which is required by justice
- Evil can be a tool used to heal, as the surgeon cuts of the infected limb
- This form of evil contributes to the good of the world
- Humans learn right and wrong and how to endure



1225 - 1274

Alvin Plantinga - The Free Will Defence

- Presents a defence against the logical problem of evil
- Evil is the result of free, rational and fallible human beings
- There are some limits on what an omnipotent God can do (he cannot create a world in which he does not exist)
- Even with free will human actions are predictable
- If moral agents make at least one bad moral decision in any possible world then God cannot create a world without evil



1932 -

Irenaean Theodicy

- Humans are made first in the image (the potential to achieve moral perfection) and then in likeness of God (achieving moral perfection)
- To achieve moral perfection humans must have free will
- In order to have free will humans must experience some suffering and God must maintain an epistemic distance
- Evil must exist in order for humans to achieve moral perfection



Irenaeus
(103 - 202)

John Hick

- 'Vale of soul-making'



1922 - 2012

Summary

- Free will defence
- Soul Making Defence
- Justice Defence