

Philosophy of Religion Problem of Evil: Handout 2

The Argument:

- 1) Evil exists
- 2) If God exists, He would want to prevent all evil.
- 3) If God exists, He would be able to prevent all evil.
- 4) If (2) and (3) then, if God exists, there would be no evil.
- 5) Therefore, if God exists, there would be no evil.
- 6) Therefore, God does not exist.

The Free Will Defense:

(2) is false because there are good states of affairs that God cannot bring about without permitting the existence of evil.

Being *free with respect to an action* means you can perform or not perform an action; causal or metaphysical laws do not determine what you will do. Being *significantly free* means being free with respect to a morally significant action.

“A world containing creatures who are significantly free... is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all.” (p. 328)

God could only prevent free creatures from performing morally evil acts by also preventing them from performing morally good acts.

God cannot create some worlds; He cannot create a world where I would freely perform action X in some circumstance C, C obtains, but I do not do X

(God can't make a world where I would freely eat waffles for breakfast, but instead eat pancakes – even though this isn't a logical contradiction!)

Imagine it's true that, if you pay me \$20, I'll freely give you an A. (It's not.) Then, God *could not* make a world where you give me \$20 and I freely refuse the bribe.

Evil (in this case, bribery) exists as a necessary consequence of creating creatures who are significantly free.

- 1) Why did God make me such that I would accept bribes?
- 2) How can we make sense of causation on this account, if I'm free to accept or not accept bribes?

How does this help with natural evil? Maybe other supernatural creatures also have free will, and they cause diseases, earthquakes, etc.

Rowe and the Evidential Argument from Evil

Theist Response to Mackie: We can describe a possibility where God exists, yet evil also exists. Example: the free will response, Plantinga, demons, etc.

An Atheist Reply: Maybe there are some possibilities according to which both God and evils exist. Those are all cases in which God permits evil to allow for a greater good or avoid a greater evil. But, that's not how things *actually* are! Look around, our evils don't seem to be of that sort.

NEE (for No-Excuse-Evil): an instance of intense human or animal suffering which God could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.

Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil (restated and (hopefully) simplified).

- R1. NEEs exist.
- R2. If God exists, then no NEEs exist.
- R3. Therefore, God does not exist.

Rowe: even though we cannot deductively prove the truth of R1 we have rational grounds for believing it to be true.

"It seems quite unlikely that all the instances of intense suffering occurring daily in our world are intimately related to the occurrence of greater goods or the prevention of evils at least as bad" (Rowe 358).

The Theist's Response:

The Direct Attack: Provide evidence for the falsity of (R1).

The Indirect Attack: The G. E. Moore Shift:

- M1. God does exist.
- M2. If God exists, then no NEEs exist.
- M3. Therefore, no NEEs exist.