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Adapted by Jeremy Stephens

Problem of Evil

What do you do with the problem of suffering, of evil and pain? Why does it exist if God is so good and powerful?

SG: respond to this question.

If God is all good, all powerful and all loving why does he allow suffering and evil to continue?

Basic Atheist Argument

1. If God exists, gratuitous evil does not exist (**gratuitous evil = pointless, unnecessary evil with no moral justification**)
 - a. Evil/pain/suffering that can be justified is not really evil: going to dentist to get tooth pulled...I don't hold dentist responsible for the "evil of pain" inflicted upon me because it will later avoid greater pain.
2. Gratuitous evil does exist
3. God does not exist

2 ways to deal with this problem:

1. Existentially mourn with the person- sometimes people don't want an answer they want a friend and someone to sit with them, agree with them and say, "this sucks!"
2. Intellectually- through logic and evidence we can deal with the problem of evil.

Tonight we will deal with the problem intellectually...

- a. Most of the time we must cry alongside those suffering before we begin to deal intellectually with the problem of evil.

Necessary to go through this argument to look at some of the assumptions made...

Rather than attacking it directly we will ask questions to deconstruct this problem...

Asking questions allows for us to remain sensitive to the pain/ache of people's hearts as a result of suffering while still removing barriers to their understanding of God.

We must not rely solely on argumentation for the conversion of an individual...our role is to point towards Jesus as our hope and salvation not win people's minds. We only argue to remove barriers keeping people from considering the love of God for their lives. Prayer and love must guide us even as we engage in logical discussions.

3 Questions form from this argument.

Initial Argument

1. If God exists, gratuitous evil does not exist
2. **Gratuitous evil does exist**
3. God does not exist

Question one: focuses on part 2

Given there is apparent gratuitous evil in the world

Is there really gratuitous evil? How do we know the evil is truly unjustified?

It assumes we should know all the reasons for allowing evil...

Cognitive Limitations

We have no way of knowing gratuitous evil really exists

Given our limits in time, space, intelligence and insight...we should not expect to know or understand the reasons behind allowing evil.

It requires all knowledge to definitively say an evil occurrence is gratuitously evil.

Remember gratuitous evil = pointless, unnecessary evil with no moral justification

It is impossible for us to comprehend the positive ripple effects put into motion by an act of evil.

Example historical Limit

The murder of an innocent man...the Moral justification might appear much later in time or in different country.

Ex. Even with our limited cognitive knowledge we see the ripple effects justifying apparent gratuitous evil.

Countless missionary stories...Ecuador Elliott team brutally died in forest...years later whole tribe converted...story of their death inspired thousands to join as missionaries to the unreached people groups.

Must add to this argument the other questions to avoid sounding trite and simple..."well, God knows why this suffering occurred..." and brushing past people's real pain.

Initial Argument

1. If God exists, **gratuitous evil does not exist**
2. Gratuitous evil does exist
3. God does not exist

Question two: focuses on part 1b

Does evil really contradict/exclude God's existence?

Christians are not shocked by the appearance of suffering or evil, therefore it does not disprove God.

In fact the opposite is true...**our understanding increases probability of the co-existence of God and apparently gratuitous evil.**

Ex. Are we shocked when people are selfish, proud, murderous, lazy or arrogant?

We know we ourselves are broken and need Jesus...evil resides in us

Yet we still worship Jesus without contradiction.

Christian Doctrines

Someone would have to refute these doctrines **to show evil really is a problem for God.**

1. Purpose of life is not human happiness...but **knowing God**
 - a. Many assume God's purpose is to make us happy
 - b. Christians do not believe this...knowing God gives us ultimate fulfillment
 - i. Many evils are gratuitous for creating happiness but not gratuitous for creating knowledge of God...**some evil produces/increases the knowledge of God.**
 - ii. This can be seen in countless testimonies
 1. Sociological fact most people in the world come to faith in the midst of great suffering
 - c. **To show evil is a problem for God one must show that it's possible to have same knowledge of God with less evil**
 - i. (based on sociological fact we might even conclude...evil might be necessary to produce knowledge of God)
2. Man is in **rebellion** against God
 - a. Evils testify to this free will rebellion
 - i. **We have chosen to do evil rather than good**
 1. We know this in our hearts...
 - b. God has given man over to his rebellion to heighten man's responsibility and need for forgiveness
 - i. **Ex.** Like a child who pulls away thinking they can walk on their own...until you let them try and fail they will continue to believe they can do it by themselves.
3. This life spills over into **eternal life**
 - a. This life is not all there is for the Christian...eternal compensation
 - i. Resurrection from the dead...God views death differently from us...there is an option he offers that defeats death
 - b. Slight momentary afflictions are the evils of this life.
 - c. Given prospect of eternal life...some evils could not be justified by this temporal life but only in light of eternity.
4. The incarnation & the **Cross**
 - a. Jesus enters into our pain
 - b. Does not leave us alone, did not abandon us to our chaos

SG: How might asking these 2 questions help bring understanding to the problem of evil?

Remember the initial argument

1. **If God exists**, gratuitous evil does not exist
2. Gratuitous evil does exist
3. God does not exist

Question three: focuses on part 1a

Does God really exist?

1. **If God exists**, gratuitous evil does not exist
2. God exists
3. Therefore gratuitous evil does not exist (the appearance of gratuitous evil is not really gratuitous)

The ultimate Question is “does God exist?” ...from this point we gain understanding into the current sufferings of our world.

SG: Why do you think God exists?

Existence of God

1. Origin of Universe
 - a. Big Bang...it had a beginning...out of nothing 15 billion years ago
 - i. If there is a beginning there must be an unmoved mover, one who began it all, who began the motion but unaffected by that motion...this being would be God.
2. Fine tuning of universe for life
 - a. Know our existence is highly improbable even from the beginning of the bang
 - b. Change in the weak force of gravity by one part in 10 to the 100th power would prevent life giving universe...
 - c. There are 50 more properties...thus making it more reasonable to believe in God than we exist by chance.
 - d. There is no physical reason for these properties to hold their values does not exist
3. Objective Moral Values
 - a. Values hold even if anyone does not believe in them
 - b. If they do not exist...then it is all subjective
 - c. Without transcendent God there is no anchor or any true right and wrong
 - d. **If we are naturalist**
 - i. Animal kingdom acts of murder/rape occur but are natural and neutral
 - ii. Why then for humans do these acts become “evil” if we are only advanced primates
 - iii. Where did the sense of “right/wrong & good/evil” evolve from?

Evil seems to challenge the existence of God but in reality proves his existence because without God evil could not exist or be identified.

Provides us a proof of God from the question of evil.

1. If God does not exist then objective moral values do not exist
2. Evil exists
3. Therefore objective moral values exist
4. Therefore God exists

Summary

Why is evil allowed?

Need multiple solutions to justify an evil.

(limited knowledge)

(Christian Doctrines...knowing God is ultimate concern, free will of man, eternal compensation, cross)

(Existence of God)

Go through the three scenario questions and answer them using our three basic responses to the problem of evil.

Case studies:

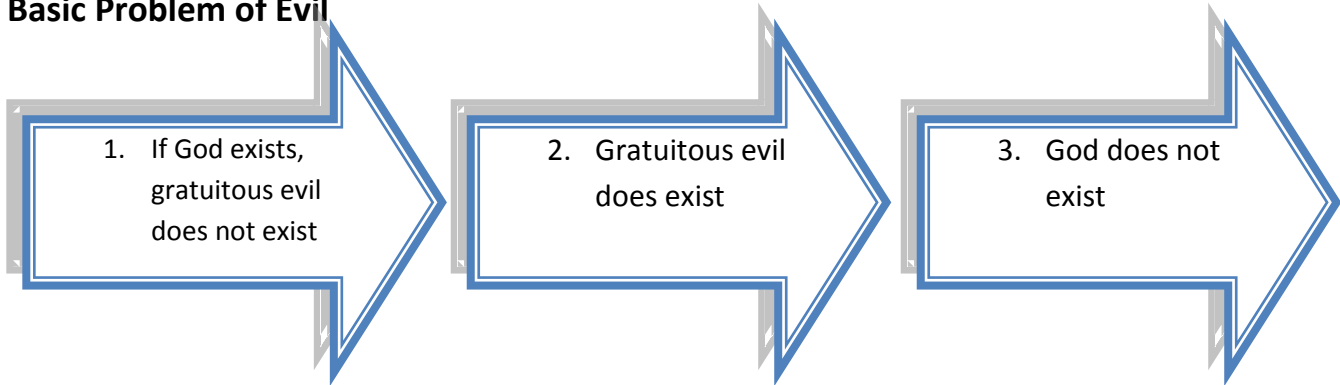
Examples:

Child allowed to suffer and die

1. Need multiple solutions to justify an evil.
 - a. (limited perspective) Justified affect with respect to the knowledge of God for the relatives or later historical ripple affect
 - b. (Eternal Compensation) child has eternal compensation
2. Atheist argues:
 - a. **Why need suffering to gain knowledge of God...**couldn't he prove himself in other ways.
 - i. Burden of proof is on atheist to show a world with equal amount of knowledge of God without suffering.
 - ii. Sociological fact...many people come to faith through suffering.
 - b. **Think of negligent neighbor...**seems they are not a good person
 - i. But neighbor is not all knowing, unable to see ripple affects so they must stop the evil according to the knowledge they do have and are held accountable accordingly.
 - ii. God is totally unlike a negligent neighbor because of his scope of knowledge.
 - c. **Why does God not respond to the question "Why?"**
 - i. Is that reasonable to demand God to answer "why?"
 - ii. It may be too complicated according to our limitations for him to even answer
 - iii. He has given us enough to trust Him.
 - iv. As soon as he communicates the providential plan...it changes the plan (any sci-fi fan understands this)

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Basic Problem of Evil



3 Questions

Is there really gratuitous evil? How do we know the evil is truly unjustified?

Cognitive Limitations

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Does evil really contradict/exclude God's existence?

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 - a. must show it's possible to have same knowledge of God with less evil
2. Man is in **rebellion** against God
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Does God really exist?

Existence of God

1. **Origin of Universe**
 - a. Big Bang...it had a beginning...out of nothing 15 billion years ago
2. **Fine tuned for life**
 - a. Know our existence is highly improbable even from the beginning of the bang
3. **Objective Moral Values**
 - a. Without transcendent God there is no anchor or any true right and wrong
 - b. Where did the sense of evil evolve from?

3 Scenarios

Why child has to suffer and die?

What about God being like a negligent neighbor?

Why does God not answer the question 'why' if he has good reasons?

Basic Problem of Evil

1.

2.

3.

3 Questions

How do we know the evil is truly

_____?

Cognitive _____

Does evil really

_____ God's
existence?

Christian _____

1. Purpose of life is not human
happiness...but

a.

2. Man is in _____

3. This life spills over into

Does God really _____?

_____ of God

1.

a.

2.

a.

3.

a.

b.

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negligent neighbor?

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