

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY



LAST TIME

➤ Properly Basic Belief in God

NATURAL THEOLOGY

- The evidence of God through observable, natural processes and understanding.

ATHEISTIC ARGUMENTS

- The vast majority of atheist will simply say “There’s no evidence that God exists.”
- No matter what proofs you give, they often give the same argument.
- We have studying five good arguments for the proof of the existence of God.

PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AND EVIL

The principal argument in favor of atheism
towed sis the argument from the suffering the in
world.

PROBLEM OF EVIL

- We are no longer looking at proofs for the existence of God and are now shifting to disarming an atheistic argument against God.

BASIC PROBLEM OF EVIL

- When you look at the suffering in the world, much of it seems to be utterly pointless and unnecessary that is hard to believe that there is an all-loving and all-powerful God.

IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

- There are two primary distinctions to make:
 - Intellectual Problem of Evil
 - Emotional Problem of Evil

INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

- Whether or not it is plausible to think that God and suffering in the world can coexist.
- Is it impossible or improbable that there is a God, given the suffering in the world?
- Those who hold to this do not like the idea of an emotional answer.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

- This concerns people's dislike of a God who would permit the pain and suffering in the world.
- People who hold to this find the intellectual argument very dry and uncaring.

THE DIFFERENCES

- Responses to the two are very different.
- For most people, the issues is not an intellectual problem.
- Their unbelief is not borne out of regulation of God's existence, but out of repudiation of God's existence.

THE INTELLECTUAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

- A word of advice...
- Who has the burden of proof?
- If the argument is FOR atheism, then the burden of proof is on the atheist.
- If the atheist is asking for a good reason for why God would allow evil... then he is shifting the burden of proof to us.

TWO VERSIONS - INTELLECTUAL

- Logical
 - The existence of God and suffering in the world are logically impossible.
- Probabilistic
 - It is possible they coexist but highly improbable.
- Important to find out which version a person is arguing.

LOGICAL VERSION

- Statement of the problem
 - 1. God is all-powerful and all good.
 - 2. Suffering exists.
 - 3. If God is all-powerful, then he can create any world that he wants.
 - 4. If God is all-loving, then he would prefer a world without suffering.
 - 5. Suffering exists, therefore God does not.

SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

- Question is...
 - Are they each necessarily true?
 - Do they have to be true?
 - Is it impossible for them to not be true?

SOLUTION

- There is no proven inconsistency between God and evil.
- #3- If God is all-powerful, then he can create any world that he wants.
- Free will- God cannot create any world that he wants, if humanity is given free will.
- Therefore, not necessarily true.

SOLUTION CONT.

- If the unbeliever continues to hold that God does have the power to do the logically impossible, the the whole problem of evil argument falls apart.
- He most certainly could be all-powerful, all-loving and allow suffering, even if it is logically impossible.

CONT.

- If it is possible that people have free will then #3 is not necessarily true because there may be possible worlds in which the people don't freely do the things that God would prefer them to do.
- There is no guarantee that in some other world of free will there would be more good and less suffering?

CONT.

- Remember that in order to defeat this argument, none of the conjectures have to be true, only possible. If they are possible, then the premise cannot be necessarily true. It is then logically invalid.

CONT.

- #4- If God is all-loving he prefers a world without suffering.
- Is this statement necessarily true?
- There are times when God permits suffering in order to bring about a better good.

C.S. LEWIS

“What do people mean when they say ‘I am not afraid of God because I know he is good?’ Have they never even been to a dentist?”

CONT.

- There are some goods, like moral virtues, that require free will.
- They cannot be simply created in a puppet or a robot. They must be free creatures.
- It may be that a world with some suffering is better than a world with no suffering.
- If that is possible, then #4 cannot be necessary.

CONCLUSION OF LOGICAL

- Since #3 and #4 cannot be necessarily true, we can prove no contradiction or inconsistency between God being all-powerful and all-good and the existence of suffering in the world.

PROBABILISTIC VERSION

- Most philosophers today acknowledge the failure of the logical version.
- The probabilistic problem states that it is improbable that God could have good reasons for permitting so much suffering in the world.

SOLUTION TO PROBABILISTIC VERSION

- 1. We are not in any sort of position to say with any confidence whether or not it is improbable that God has sufficient reasons for permitting suffering.
- Just because it appears to be unjustified, does not mean that it is.
- Appearance does not equal reality.
- We are limited in our view, God is not.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Chaos Theory- Butterfly Effect
 - We have no way of knowing how even a minor alteration of events will impact the world.

REASONS

“...given the dizzying complexity of life, and the incomprehensible way in which events are intertwined with one another, it is simply beyond our capacity, when some incident of suffering enters our life, to say with any confidence that it is improbable that God has a morally sufficient reason for allowing that to occur. Every event which occurs sends a ripple effect through history so that God’s morally sufficient reasons for permitting it might not emerge until hundreds of years from now or maybe in another country. Only an all-knowing God could comprehend the infinite complexities of directing a world of free people toward his ultimate ends for human history. “

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION

- WWII
- Nuclear Bomb- Nagasaki & Hiroshima- 70,000 dead
- Estimated to have saved 500,000 American troops as well as many hundreds of thousands of Japanese citizens.

SOLUTIONS

- 2. Relative to the full scope of the evidence, God's existence is probable.
- Probability is relative to background information.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION EXAMPLE

- Joe is a college student.
- 90% of college students drink beer.
 - Therefore it is highly probably that Joe drinks beer.
- Unless more background
 - Joe attends Biola University.
 - 90% of Biola students do not drink beer.
 - Therefore it is probably does does not drink beer.

SO...

- When an atheist states that God's existence is improbable...
- You have to push them to answer "Improbably relative to what?"
- What background information? Proofs of God's existence? The existence of suffering?

MORAL ARGUMENT

1. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.
(If there is no God, then everything becomes socio-culturally relative.)
2. Evil exists. (This is what the atheist says – there is evil in the world that we observe around us.)
3. Therefore, objective moral values exist (namely, evil exists – some things are really evil and therefore objective moral values exist).
4. Therefore, God exists.

MORAL ARGUMENT CONCLUSION

“...when the atheist says that the suffering in the world is bad or ought not to be or that it would be wrong for God to permit it, he is making moral judgements which themselves cannot be true unless God exists.”

SOLUTIONS

- 3. Christian doctrines increase the probability that God and evil co-exist.
- The problem of suffering is actually easier to deal with from a Christian point of view than other monotheistic views.

XIAN DOCTRINES

- 1. The chief purpose of life is not happiness but the knowledge of God.
- Suffering gives us a deeper dependence on God.
- Persecuted churches are often the fastest growing.

XIAN DOCTRINES CONT.

- 2. Mankind is in a state of rebellion against God and his purpose.
- We should not be surprised at the evil and suffering, we should expect it.
- Romans 1- “God gave them up.”

XIAN DOCTRINES CONT.

- 3. God's purpose is not restricted to this life but spills over beyond the grave into eternal life.
- Example- Paul's suffering.
- It is entirely possible that some suffering on this earth has no earthly purpose.

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

ESV

XIAN DOCTRINES CONT.

- 4. The knowledge of God is an incommensurable good.
- (Incomparable)
- Knowing and following God is far greater than any pain or suffering.

XIAN DOCTRINES CONT.

- These four Christians doctrines, if true and accurate, significantly increase the probability of God coexisting with evil, pain, and suffering in the world.

PROBABILISTIC CONCLUSION

- Fails- especially when looking at the full scope of evidence.
- Neither the logical or probabilistic are successful.
- The intellectual problem of suffering fails.

THE EMOTIONAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

- When we say that it fails we mean from an intellectual point of view.
- The actual anger, bitterness, anguish still remain.

THE EMOTIONAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

- What does Christianity offer for those people?
- Hope!
- Christ was innocent, yet suffered greater than anyone... why?
- Because of his great love for us.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

“Paradoxically, even though the problem of suffering is the greatest obstacle to believing in God, at the end of the day, God is the only solution to the problem of suffering. If God does not exist, then we are locked without hope in a world filled with gratuitous and unredeemed suffering. God is the final answer to the problem of suffering because he redeems us from evil and take us into the fellowship of an incommensurable good for eternity, with is fellowship with himself.”

NEXT TIME

➤ Read:

➤ The Doctrine of God- The Trinity- pp. 1-20

QUESTIONS?