

goodness means that He, at least, respects the order which He put into His creatures. With men, that order includes free will, and that will is capable of disordering itself, and thus becoming evil. That free will is, in itself, good; it is good because it enables man, by himself and freely, to choose the good. So God *must* allow men to exercise that will; otherwise He is removing the good which ought to be in man's spiritual soul, and would thus Himself be causing evil. So God must allow man to cause evil lest He Himself cause evil in His creatures.

So far from disproving the goodness (and therefore the existence) of God, this objection further proves it.

Conclusion

A pamphlet this size cannot, of course, pretend to provide the definitive answer to this most difficult question. The problem of evil has occupied philosophers for many centuries. However, it does demonstrate that using this issue to attempt to disprove God's existence is misguided, and ultimately fails. God exists; He is good; and we must all come to know Him as best we can.

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The
Problem
of
Evil

Doubters have, for thousands of years, brought up the “problem of evil” as an objection to the essential goodness of the universe, or to the goodness of the God Who made it. Often, they have even brought up this problem to object to the very existence of that God. Is there any substance to this objection? Or can the “problem of evil” be explained in another way?

The Problem

The problem of evil which has been the cause of so much contention over the centuries is surprisingly simple. Essentially, it goes thus:

If there is a God, He must be perfectly good, since He would unite all perfections in Himself. Furthermore, He must have created everything. Yet there is evil in the world. This means that God must have created the evil, and therefore that God would have evil in Himself; this is contrary to the nature of God, and therefore God cannot exist.

Does this argument hold any water?

The Nature of Evil

The problem arises, as so many problems do, from a failure to make proper distinctions. Evils exists; all things which exist are created by God; therefore, God created evil. Therefore, God is Himself evil; or God cannot exist. It seems the simplest argument in the world.

But what if one of those statements is overbroad? What if one statement includes more than is true, and thus throws off the syllogism? That is precisely what has happened here, and that is why the syllogism fails. It is certainly true that all things which exist are created by God; it does not follow, however, that evil was created by God. The reason lies in the nature of evil.

It is true that evil "exists," in the sense that some things are evil. However, it is not true that evil "exists" in the same way that a man or a horse exists. A thing can be evil; but evil can't itself be, any more than "green" can be outside of light waves. This provides the first step in explaining why saying "evil exists" in the above syllogism doesn't really say enough. Green exists, too; but did God make my fence green, or did I? In other words, evil could exist in a thing not because God put it there, but because men put it there.

However, one other step still remains. Man cannot make something out of nothing. If man makes a thing evil, that evil must have been somewhere already; therefore we are back to the syllogism, and God cannot exist. But if evil isn't really a thing, like green, but really the *absence* of a thing,

this problem simply does not exist.

When we identify something as evil, we do not really ascribe a given quality to it. Often, this ascription is explicit in our language; for example, we describe the *absence* of a quality, as when we call a man "merciless" or "without pity." Sometimes, however, it seems as though we are ascribing an actual quality to the thing, as when we say, "He is full of hate." This way of speaking is, of course, perfectly legitimate, and it makes daily speech much easier. However, it is misleading concerning this question.

Every thing has, or should have, certain perfections. Let us take a man, for instance. A man should be strong; patient; kind. When a man is weak, or cruel, we say that these are evils in him. However, we are not saying that "weakness" resides in him, the same way that "brownness" resides in his hair. Rather, we are saying that he *lacks strength*, which he ought to have.

When we say that a man is cruel, we do not mean that "cruelty" is part of his personality in the same way that muscles are part of his body; rather, we mean that he *lacks kindness*, which a good man ought to have. Thus, evil doesn't really "exist" the way that I or you exist. Rather, evil is the absence of something which ought to be there. We have already observed that the evil in the world may have been put there by man, not by God, except that man cannot create something out of nothing. This is true; but he *can* create nothing where something ought to be. In other words, man can, and all too often does, remove the goodness which ought to be in something.

That removal we call "evil"; man and other creatures are the cause of its existence, not God. Evil exists; but not the same way as the things which God created exist. Saying that evil exists in the same way as, for example, men exist is equivalent to saying that evil might be gathered up and put into a bucket, just as water or sand can be so gathered; or that an inanimate object could be evil simply because someone painted some evil on it, just as someone might have painted some green on it. Obviously, evil does not exist in this way; that is "evil" which lacks some good which it ought to have.

Permitting Evil

So God certainly does exist; He created all things, including man, and they are all good. But sometimes those creatures remove the good which He put in them, and thus become evil. This evil was not created by God; it was not created by anyone, but rather brought about by removing what was created by God and destroying the proper order which exists in it.

However, does not God still allow such things? How can God be all good when He permits such evil to exist? Even if God does not create evil things, He still allows evil things to become evil and to do evil. Therefore, He is not all good, which is a contradiction; therefore, God does not exist. So the argument goes. However, this argument turns out to hold just as little water as the last. God's