

Phil 2301 Intro to Philosophy

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

"Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"

—Epicurus (341-270 BC)

"For few are the goods of human life, and many are the evils, and the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him."

—Plato, *Republic II*

I. Evil as a Philosophical Objection and as a Personal Question

A. Evil as a personal question/concern

B. Evil as a philosophical problem

1. If God is all-knowing, then He is aware of evil and human suffering.
2. If God is all-powerful, then He could do something to alleviate evil and human suffering.
3. If God is all-loving, then He would want to do something about evil and human suffering.
4. If God is just, then He will not permit evil and human suffering to go unrequited.
5. However, evil and human suffering persists, seemingly unrequited, and radically so.
6. Therefore, God does not exist at all, only evil.

II. Three Sources or Types of Evil

A. Natural evil (also non-moral evil/ surd evil):

B. Moral evil

C. Demonic evil

III. Two Types of Philosophical Arguments from Evil

A. Logical form: God and evil are logically incompatible

B. Evidential form: God's existence is logically compatible with evil, but highly unlikely in light of the evidence from evil.

III. Two Types of Theistic Responses to the Philosophical Arguments from Evil

A. Theodicy:

B. Defense:

IV. Three Responses to the Problem of Evil

A. Denial of the reality of evil

B. Denial of God (or the power or goodness of God)

1. Denial of God (atheism)

2. Denial of the goodness or power of God.

C. Reconciling God and evil

1. Free will theodicy: St. Augustine

2. Soul making theodicy: St. Irenaeus