

### **'A belief in the life after death solves the problem of evil' Discuss**

The word evil has a broad definition. There are two main types of evil; Moral evil and Natural evil. Moral evil covers the willful acts of human beings such as murder and rape. Natural evil refers to natural disasters such as famines and floods. We can divide these two types further into another two types of evil; Physical evil and metaphysical evil. Physical evil means bodily pain or mental anguish for example fear, illness, grief and war. Metaphysical evil refers to such things as imperfection and chance for instance criminals going unpunished and deformities. But how does this problem get solved by a belief in the life after death. The problem of evil comes about because of certain qualities that religious people believe God to have. A religious believer would not want to deny God of being Omni benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient. To say that there is evil in the world is to doubt that God is Omni benevolent; omnipotent and omniscient as God create the world.

Irenaeus proposed that God did not create a perfect world. He chose not to create a perfect world because he knew we had to choose to do good in order to become a flawless human being. He had to give us the potential to disobey him. Evil is only temporary. God is using evil as a teaching tool until humanity is perfect. God cannot logically compromise our freedom in order to get rid of evil. The Irenaen Theodicy relies heavily on the importance of human freedom. Irenaeus suggests that human goodness comes from it's response to moral decisions made in an imperfect world, when temptation is resisted it is a great deal more valuable a lesson learnt than if it had been an inherent part of the being. The idea being that the human race was not created in a state of perfection but in a state of imperfection but leading to a state of perfection. In order for us to develop morally toward God we had to be created and exist at a distance from him, therefore there had to be horrid things in the world.

We know need to concentrate on the problem of pain and suffering in the world. The normal assumption is that God has supposedly created a perfect world and that if there is suffering in it which must mean that God is either a nasty or weak character or God does not exist. For Irenaeus this problem is overcome by the idea that the world is not finished, we are moving towards perfect but we are not there yet. God's purpose was not to construct a paradise where the world was free of pain and suffering, but as a place where soul-development can take place, where mankind may become 'children of God'.

St Augustine said it is logically impossible for God to have created evil. It is logical that there is evil in the world as it is created. God is not created, so is therefore perfect. He went on to say that everyone is seminally present in Adam. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve so we are all suffering because we are part of Adam. Suffering is a product of our actions, so God does not intervene,

however God does have mercy. An example of God's mercy would be Jesus. Augustine believed that evil comes from angels and humans who choose deliberately to turn away from God. The problem of evil in a created world is necessary. Only the uncreated God himself can be perfect; perfect things are susceptible to change. God cannot be blamed for created evil, since evil is not a substance but a deprivation, and it makes no sense to say that God created deprivation.

John Hick would be an example of a soft materialist. He said that the soul and body are one. If the body dies then the soul dies. He accepts that there is a possibility for a life after death to exist. He says that somehow after death there will be a physical representation that will make us, who we are. A materialist would say our sense of personality is nothing but chemical reactions in the brain. However John Hick says we are more than chemical. He does not believe in a separate soul. Have to have both the body and the personality to be me. He does suggest a way in which we can survive death The 'Replica' theory. When we die a replica body will be created and our personality would be transferred to that body. The replica would have memories of dying. The only difference would be that the replica would have new experiences of what will happen. We will have memory and psychological continuation, not physical continuation. For this to happen there must be a minimum of two worlds. The universal conscious God sees both. I only see one, the one I am in. There could be more than two worlds. John Hick also goes onto say that we are all recreated in heaven and hell. If we are good we will go to heaven and if we are bad then we will go to hell.

John Hick shares a similar view to the Christian View. Christians believe that there is a heaven and hell. When we die Christians believe that there will be a judgment. In this, everyone's life will be evaluated. We will either go to heaven or hell. Hell, in Christian beliefs is a place in which the soul suffers the consequences of sin. Hell is defined as the place or state of punishment. Christianity views hell as a place of eternal torment. Hell is for those who have been bad in this life. Heaven is the opposite of hell. It is the place where all to people who have not sinned and have been good in this life go to. They are rewarded and not punished.

Richard Dawkins had quite the opposite opinion to John Hick and Christianity. The question for Richard Dawkins is why you think any God, good or evil or indifferent, exists at all. He said there is no God and therefore no problem of evil to solve.

Life after death comes in many different ways. Reanimation is where at the end of time the dead will be resurrected from their graves by a special divine act. Otherworldly embodiment is when the soul leaves the body after death and goes onto a spiritual body in another world. Disembodied survival is where the soul survives death without the earthly body or a new body. These forms of life after death do solve the problem of evil because people will know that to move on to

better things after this life they will have to be good in this life in order to receive the rewards of the after life. If they have been bad in this life they will not be rewarded as well as they can be.

Reincarnation is when the soul moves to another body after death. People who believe in reincarnation don't fear death as they know they will move from body to body. The soul crosses over from one body to another body. The soul can never die. Death is not the end but a momentary separation. There is proof that there is reincarnation because people have past life experiences. Evidence that points towards past life experiences would be in child prodigies. This constitutes as evidence of reincarnation because the abilities that are learned in former lives. E.g. a slave boy has not been taught any geometry and knows the right answer, learned the truth in a previous life. Individuals also claim to remember their past lives. Such claims are divided into two categories; hypnotic regression and spontaneous recalls. However people can argue against past life experiences because the slave boy does not need to know the right answer. All that is required is that he had the intelligence and the ability to apply his intelligence. Some abilities may even be hereditary. Modern psychologists also do not believe that humans have innate abilities, but skills that have been learnt in this life.

A belief in the life after death can solve the problem of evil in some ways because people who believe in a life after death will know that they will have been good in this life in order to be rewarded in the next life. The better they are in this life the better the reward. This therefore means that the person will have to commit little evil in order to get the rewards. This will consequently mean that evil will be reduced. Reincarnation can solve the problem of evil because if people have a means where by the problem of evil is solved. They know they have to be good in order to move to another good body. If they have been good in life they will move on to other better bodies and if they have been punished they will be reborn into evil. You will learn from your mistakes and will try achieving goodness in the next life. For Irenaeus, us, ourselves will eventually solve the problem of evil, therefore a life after death will not solve the problem of evil. We just live in an imperfect world that we will have to work towards making a perfect world. A belief in the life after death can solve the problem of evil in some ways because people who believe in a life after death will know that they will have been good in this life in order to be rewarded in the next life. The better they are in this life the better the reward. This therefore means that the person will have to commit little evil in order to get the rewards. This will consequently mean that evil will be reduced. Also Christianity will solve the problem of evil because Christians believe in heaven and hell. If you are good in this life you will have a good after life. If you are bad in this life you will be punished and sent to hell in the after life. The idea of heaven and hell also solves the problem of evil for John Hick as he also believes that you are recreated in heaven and hell. Richard Dawkins said that there is no God and therefore there is no problem. This is the world. We should help the world and create a stronger world.

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