

(c) Assess whether there is a solution to the problem of evil.

Thomas Aquinas admits that the problem of evil is one of the major challenges to the existence of God. The problems mainly are due to incoherence in God's definition of being a perfect being and issues with the teleological argument for the existence of God.

The first problem of evil is known as logical or aporetic. It picks at elements defined within the word God and plays upon any incoherence's. It says God is Omnibenevolent and thus wants the best for mankind. God is Omnipotent and can therefore provide this for mankind. However there is evil in the world of Natural and Moral origin. This means there is a contradiction between the statements God is Omnipotent or Omnibenevolent. Either way God is not God in the definition of the term. The thrust of the argument is to show that God and Evil cannot exist together.

The Second argument of evil is known as the evidential problem. There is considerable evidence of Evil in this world; we see it every day and in major disasters such as Tsunamis or even wars. There is very little to no evidence of a God existing. It is therefore implausible to accept that there is a God that exists. Evil and God cannot exist together according to language and definitions which means either one or the other exists. It is far more likely and we have much more evidence that there is only evil in the world and that God fails to exist.

Pike suggests the "Best Possible World" argument in defense to these attacks. He denies that God would eliminate evil as the suffering and pain are a necessary part of the development process. The "Second Order goods" would not be possible without the first order evil. This can be true as there are elements of a human's character which develop through misfortunate events and suffering. For example Compassion is developed through another's suffering and endurance is developed through physical pain. So although Prima Facie the existence of evil is inconsistent, it is not as God has created the best possible world for us to live in.

This argument is similar to Irenaean theodicy. A theodicy however attempts to prove its own argument where as Pikes Best possible world merely sets up a logical possibility.

According to Irenaeus, man was not man perfect from the beginning. He says "Man is made in the image of God, but as he is not perfect, he does not yet possess the likeness of God". Man is born naïve and immature. Irenaeus sees the trials and difficulties of life as a testing ground in which humans struggle but strive to gain perfection that would mean they possessed the likeness of God.

John Hick takes this theory to a more advanced level and names the 'Vale of Soul-making'. The basic idea is similar to the Irenaean that the trials and tribulations of life exist to help us develop from immaturity to maturity. Hick suggests that it is a mistake if Gods concern for us as his creation would be to make the world as cosy and comfortable. For example if a mother concerns and looks after their child so he only experience pleasure and no difficulties the child would never become ethically mature or posses moral integrity. According to Hick, God has arranged the world in such a way that humans can develop through overcoming obstacles and frustrations. He says their "Souls can grow and they can move towards God".

This argument like Pikes cannot account for many instances of Evil, it does not account for Dysteleological acts. Acts of evil that serve no purpose, which are wholly destructive and produce no benefits to anyone. For example, an individual who is without contact to a community whose existence is unknown by any other human, is killed by a falling tree in a forest. This serves no purpose and nothing is developed or gained from this happening.

Hick accepts that Dysteleological suffering remains a mystery. However Hick suggests that the Soul making process goes on past death. The soul is continued to be built in a metaphysical world continuing to strive to become the perfect likeness of God.

Although moving into the metaphysical world, a further problem can be seen to arise from this. The theory suggests that is heaven enough to compensate some of the terrible sufferings such as Hitler's extermination camps that that soul has endured in their previous life. This metaphysical argument is more a hypothesis than an argument to conflict with Hicks Vale of Soul Making.

A second theodicy is suggested by Augustine. The theodicy follows the Genesis story of Adam and Eve and it attempts to shift the blame off God, The creator on to mankind, the creation. It suggests that evil was created by the result of mans disobedience. It suggests man is created perfect and free. Perfect humanity existing in a perfect environment. Man then falls due to disobedience. Natural and moral evil are a result of this fall. The punishment is to both man and his environment. Augustine suggests that evil is primitive and is not a positive force in the face of God but is a word meaning the lacking of 'Goodness'. As blindness is the absence of sight, evil is the absence of good. Man therefore is responsible for the problem of evil and not god. God is therefore absolved from the cause of Evil.

However this theodicy has one major contradiction within it which is pointed out by Schleirmacher. The initial premiss suggests that Humans are contingently perfect. He suggests that if this was the case, they would not have disobeyed God or chosen the wrong option and a perfectly good being would not do this as it is a contradictory to say so. Even if though they are free to sin, they never actually would do so. If they did fall, there must be a flaw in their character, a flaw that God created. God must therefore share some part of the blame and God is still ultimately responsible for the creation of Evil.

Alvin Platinga suggests an argument for God he calls the "Free Will Defense". It does not try to prove that either God or Evil exist or don't exist, but attempts to show that evil and god are both logically possible. He does this because if Evil and God are not contradictory and can logically exist together then the problem of evil is abolished. He suggests to be genuine human beings we must be free to make our own choices. God is omnipotent and has power to stop us doing evil but if he did so he would be taking away our freedom to choose making us glorified robots. Inevitably, some make incorrect choices and in an objective environment it may produce a result of pain and suffering. God feels it is better to have freedom with pain and suffering rather than Robotic Utopia.