



EVOLUTION ILLUSION

EVIL & SUFFERING

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A. EVIDENCE FOR GOD

Evil and suffering provide good evidence FOR the existence of God. However, the problem of evil and suffering has been called the atheist's argument against God's existence. Donald A. Wells argued,

“There is too much evil in the world to warrant the inference that there is a Providence or even Architect who has human interests at heart.”

An earthquake rocks a region and kills thousands. Terrorists attack a city and strike fear into the hearts of millions.

The atheist shouts, “There is too much evil for God to exist!” How can the Christian honestly respond to such a statement?

But when closely considered, the thought of this statement also argues the exact opposite of what it is supposed to affirm. Here's why. There is too much good in the world for God NOT to exist.

If there were no God, there would be no good or evil. The fact that we label events as “good” or “evil” is powerful evidence for the existence of a God who has given us a conscience that defines something as either “good” or “evil.”

If there is no God, then the atheist needs to explain from where our conscience comes that defines something as either good or evil.



B. EVIL, PAIN AND SUFFERING EXAMINED

Before we begin, we need to emphasize that there is a difference between evil, and the pain and suffering.

Evil refers to man’s bad choices he makes in reference to his fellow man. Pain and suffering refer to our relationship with the environment in which we live. When our fellow man does evil, we suffer bad consequences. When the physical environment in which we live seems to go wrong, we often endure pain and suffering. Our evil choices may result in suffering bad consequences when we violate natural laws. But the primary reason for the existence of evil in the world is the result of evil choices on the part of man.

1. NATURAL LAWS

When God created the universe, He instituted natural laws to regulate it. The law of gravity, for example, was created for many good reasons. However, if this law is broken, pain and suffering result.

Tornadoes and hurricanes destroy much life and property every year. However, these natural catastrophes are the result of the heating of the atmosphere by a sun that is necessary for the sustenance of our lives. In order to stop such natural catastrophes, we might build for ourselves a space canopy to block the sun’s heat. In doing so, we might guard ourselves from the ill effects of the sun, but at the same time, we would also lose the benefits of the sun. The point is, we must accept the consequences of the ill effects or violation of natural laws in order to benefit from the advantages of the laws.

God is all-powerful. He thus has the power to suspend the laws of nature. Jesus manifested this when He calmed the storm for His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. However, imagine for a moment, if God chose to suspend the laws of nature every time someone was about to experience pain or suffering, then we would live in a supernatural world. Natural laws would not really exist. We would thus live in an unpredictable world, not knowing if we would be subject to a natural law or a supernatural act of God. But our God is a God of order and consistency who has created the best of all possible environments in which to live.

B. FREEDOM OF CHOICE: MAN BRINGS ON MUCH OF HIS OWN SUFFERING

The Bible teaches that spiritually, we are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). One of the attributes of God’s image is the freedom to make choices. From the very beginning of creation, Adam and Eve had the freedom to choose. God said,

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16).

But why did God give man this choice? We know the result of what happened. Adam ate of the forbidden fruit. And now, we suffer. If he had not eaten, the world would be a better place in which to live.

When we see the entire picture, however, we understand that it was necessary for man to be placed in an environment in which we had to make the choices, to eat or not to eat.

In order for us to be truly free, we must be able to choose between right and wrong. Now this explains why the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was placed in the Garden of Eden. If Adam had no choice ... to eat or not to eat ... then he would not have been truly free.

Bernard Ramm stated,

“Freedom, to be real freedom, must be freedom to opposites. A restricted or hedged-in or confined freedom may well exist, as perhaps with an animal, but this cannot be true of man in the image of God. Freedom must be freedom to radical opposites, that is, to sin or to holiness, to good or to evil, to the devil or to God. If one puts shackles on man’s freedom, he has destroyed any real sense of man being in the image of God. Therefore, evil must be a real possibility for man, for only in this radical possibility is he really free; and only as he is really free is he in the image of God”

God has made us truly free to choose between either hate or love. This is our free choice. However, the instant God intervenes to make the choices for us, is the instant we lose our freedom.

God knew that Adam and Eve would eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He could have stopped them before they ate. But then, they would not have been truly free.

Now think for a moment. How much pain and suffering is in this world because men abuse their freedom of choice?

The Bible teaches in Ephesians 5:25 that husbands must love their wives as their own bodies. Unfortunately, some men freely choose to ignore God’s command, and thus abuse their wives.

Consider also that God forbids killing. And yet, there are mothers who will choose to have their unborn babies killed in abortion.

Much evil and suffering is caused directly by man’s abuse of his freedom of choice. We cannot hold God responsible for man’s bad choices. Man will be held responsible for his own choices. The Bible states:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

How you choose to live your life is totally up to you. God has granted you this gift of free choice. Though there are those who abuse this gift, it is still better than being created a robot with no freedom of choice whatsoever.



C. THE BLESSINGS OF SUFFERING

Man has suffered greatly over the years. A common accusation that is made to God is: “Why did You allow this to happen?”

Even the great Biblical prophets were not immune to questioning God for the existence of suffering. Gideon questioned, “But sir... if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13).

Elijah complained, “O Lord my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?” (1 Kings 17: 20).

Sometimes we complain. But we complain about our predicament because we do not see the whole picture.

1. SUFFERING MOLDS OUR CHARACTERS

We all experience pain and suffering. And, we know that we are stronger when we endure. Therefore, in his wisdom, God uses pain and suffering for our good, to build our characters.

Discipline is often associated with punishment, but it is also an essential characteristic for anyone who wishes to develop a character that will achieve great things. Athletes use strict disciplined training schedules in order to win in their competitions. They drive their bodies to painful breaking points in order to increase their speed and endurance.

In the same way, God uses suffering to build the character of His people in order to prepare them for eternal dwelling in heaven.

The apostle Paul explained that suffering produces patience in Christians. This perseverance produces strong characters. Without hardships, therefore, Christians would never develop strong characters.

“And not only this, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” Romans 5:3-5

Peter wrote that trials refine a Christian’s faith, just as fire refines gold. With this purifying of our characters, God refines us as individuals who can eternally dwell with others in heaven.

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been distressed by many trials, so that the proof of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested with fire, might be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6,7)

All Christians, therefore, should desire to be what God made them to be. The Lord uses the hardships of this world to mold our characters so we can be the best we can be in this life. In our trials, we must keep in mind that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We must keep in mind that God is molding our characters for eternal dwelling. It is with this knowledge that Christians can rejoice in their trials. The Bible states,

“... count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience” (James 1:2,3).

By understanding the necessity for the pain and suffering of this environment, Christians can count it with all joy in time of trial because they know that this world is not their final home.

2. EVIL IN THE WORLD MAKES US APPRECIATE THE GOOD Bernard Ramm wrote:

“Man would never know good if he did not know evil. A man created in goodness, eternally protected from evil, would have no appreciation of goodness. Therefore evil is introduced into the universe so that man may experience evil, and in so doing, come to know good. He is therefore eternally better for having experienced evil, for he now knows the real character of the good”

Just as a bright star is beautifully revealed by its contrast with the darkness of space, so evil exemplifies good. The evil deeds of unrighteous people makes us appreciate the good of those who seek to do good.

3. EVIL AND SUFFERING MAKES US DESIRE HEAVEN

When the Lord created the world, it was first “very good” (Genesis 1:31). However, when man sinned, the Lord cursed the earth (Genesis 3:17). He cursed man. Mankind was separated from the Tree of Life, and subsequently, physical death came into the world (Genesis 3: 22-24).

Since the time of man’s separation from the Tree of Life, he has suffered greatly because of the consequences of his own sin. Therefore, in our struggles with evil and suffering in this present world, our minds are focused on the fact that this world is not our final home. We seek a heavenly home wherein God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.



D. MORALITY

1. RIGHT & WRONG

Has anyone ever pushed in front of you in a shopping line? What is the first thought that goes through your mind? “Hey, that’s not fair!” Most people are too timid to say what they think. But those who pursue the matter usually find that there are others who agree with their point of view. The other shoppers, the person behind the counter, and yes, even the person who shoved in front of you, may eventually admit that what he did was not right.

The question here is who initially set the rules for right and wrong? Did all these people go to the same school? Are they all part of the same family? Certainly not. If we interviewed all these people, we would find great differences in culture, nationality and religion. So who determines morality? Who first decided what was right or wrong?

According to the philosopher Michael Ruse, no one made the decision of what was right or wrong. It just happened. Ruse wrote,

“Morality is a biological adaptation no less than are hands and feet and teeth.” He continued, that it is “just an aid to survival and reproduction . . . any deeper meaning is illusory.”

If Mr. Ruse is correct about morality being simply a “biological adaptation,” then there is no unchanging standard of what is morally right; we are therefore no different from animals. But are we as animals? Let’s take a look at the animal world. Do animals have a system of morality?

Survival of the Fittest

In the wild, the lion is said to be the king of beasts. It is on top of the food chain due to its diet and strength. A sick lion, however, will not survive long. The same is the case with a herd of deer. A sick or slower deer will not be helped or protected by the rest of the herd. When predators attack it's every animal for itself.

Are humans the same? Granted, there are terrible situations like the Holocaust, where Hitler set out to destroy all so called "inferior" races. But since that time, the world has reacted strongly against such oppression by the establishment of human rights organizations. Billions are spent annually in providing for the aged, weak and sick of most societies. Animals do not do these things.

Furthermore, if morality is simply an "aid to survival" as described by Mr. Ruse, then why does our morality so often threaten our survival?

Why does a fireman risk his own life to save others from a burning building? Why do millions of people choose to be nurses, missionaries and teachers in third world countries? Why do people risk their own lives when stopping their cars on the roadside to help a stranger in need? Why do rescue workers climb over burning and dangerously unstable rubble in search of survivors?

If we were only evolved animals, then would it not be easier just to let the sick and distressed die?

When we witness tragedy strike a nation, why do we feel compelled to help? Surely it would be easier just to simply change channels on the TV? But deep inside, we have a desire to help the weak, to help those who have suffered senseless tragedy. We want to see things made right.

Just as in the shopping line, we want situations to be fair and just.

If we don't help when we know we can, we find ourselves struggling with guilt. But if we are only evolved animals, the result of "biological adaptations", then why do we struggle with guilt when we do not do good?

After the kill, the rest of the deer do not mournfully look around for their missing member. The stronger buck do not suffer from a guilt complex for not responding to the needs of the unfortunate deer. But we do. Unlike animals, we have a conscience. We have a conscience because we have been created in the image of God.

We feel "bad" when we do something wrong, and we feel "good" when we do right. These are facts that no philosopher or psychiatrist will ever be able to explain if we are only evolved animals. We are moral people. We are such because God has made us this way.

2. GOOD AND BAD

Some have defined something to be good if it feels good or brings pleasure. They define that which is "evil", as something that feels bad. Some live by the belief, "If it feels good, DO IT." But is this a fair definition of good and evil?

Consider alcohol and drug abuse. Those who abuse such substances do so because it is pleasurable. It feels good. But is it good? The result of drug abuse and alcoholism damage and destroy bodies and lives. It may feel good, but in reality, it is far from good.

"Going under the knife" is a phrase that frightens many.

Surgery can result in long and extremely painful recovery. It feels bad, yet people willingly subject themselves to it. Why? Because it is actually good. The surgeon works in order to solve a problem with the body. Surgery is therefore good.

Obviously, we cannot trust our feelings to determine right and wrong. We need a greater source of authority.

The Psalmist wrote, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

When requiring direction in your life, read the manufacturer's manual - the Bible.

3. THE ATHEISTS CREED

H.G. Wells wrote a book called, "The Time Machine." In this book, an illustrious inventor hurtles far into the future to discover what happens to mankind. He arrives at a time when the earth and sun are dying. The only living things are moss growing on the side of the rocks. The only sound is that of the wind and the ocean. Wells writes,

"Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of men, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives - all that was over..."

Whether you like it or not, this is way the world will end if there is no God. All of man's great achievements will amount to nothing.

T.S. Elliot wrote:

"This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang, but a whimper."

The atheist believes that there is no God.

He believes that we are alone in the midst of millions and millions of CURVING comets, SHIMMERING stars, that are part of a cold, empty and purposeless space. The atheist believes that all life, including himself, was created by blind chance by a mindless and nonliving evolutionary process. All life, therefore, has no purpose or worth. We are a godless and goalless result of spontaneous generation.

ATHEISTS believe that the universe will eventually turn against man, leaving all his achievements, hopes and dreams shattered. No purpose.

No hope. No future. If all this is true, then there is no reason to continue living.

On the other hand, the Bible teaches that God made each of us as special individuals for a special purpose. God said,

"For I know the plans I have for you. Plans to prosper you, to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to Me and I will listen to you" (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

If we are the result of spontaneously generated life, then where did the concept of such a wonderful God originate? If we are simply a higher state of animal evolution, they why did man come up with the idea of God?

Our Creator placed within us a desire to seek Him. It is only natural, therefore, to believe, to believe that we are the product of a Higher Force who is greater than this material universe. And since we are the product of

God, we are special. We are headed for an eternal heavenly dwelling with our Creator. And to get there, we must endure the present afflictions of the best of all possible environments in which truly free moral individuals can be molded into characters who are worthy of eternal dwelling.



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