BRUCE RUSSELL

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL
Why Is There So Much Suffering?

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I. BACKGROUND

Any discussion of the problem of evil should start with examples of unspeakable cruelty or unbearable suffering. That is not because my version of the argument proceeds by claiming that God would not allow *any* such suffering but because the argument is that God would not allow so much terrible suffering *of that sort.*[1] The examples help us focus on the type of suffering at issue.

One such example involves two-year-old Ariana Swinson. On September 6, 2000 Edward Swinson and Linda Paling pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and first degree child abuse involving their daughter, two-year-old Ariana. Jack Kresnak, a writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, wrote the following on September 26, 2000:

> St. Clair County Assistant Prosecutor Jean Sturtridge asked for long prison terms based on Ariana's many bruises, broken right elbow, 4-inch skull fracture, brain hemorrhaging, ears that showed signs of tearing and sharp blows to the girl's mouth that tore the small piece of skin that holds the upper lip to the gum.

On January 31, 2000, the couple killed Ariana after throwing her to the floor for not eating properly and "then pouring water into the mouth of the unconscious child, causing her to drown." Ariana was malnourished, dehydrated, and had lost more than half her blood on the day of her death. The parents waited nearly an hour after Ariana's death to call police, using the time to coach their other two young children to take the fall for Ariana's death. Ariana had been raised for eighteen months by Paling's sister and brother-in-law, Valerie and Barney McDaniel, but was returned to her parents over their protests, and the protests of other members of Paling's family, following a dispute between the McDaniels and a foster care worker.

This is a case of pointless suffering in the sense that anyone who knew about what was happening to Ariana and could easily have prevented it should have. In other words, it is a case where it would be wrong for people who knew about the situation and easily could have changed things to fail to intervene. Surely, at the very least, anyone who could easily have stopped Swinson and Paling from *murdering* Ariana on January 31, 2000 should have prevented the murder.

The Swinson case is just one particularly brutal example of adults causing harm to children. We have all read of the Catholic priests who molested young boys in their charge. On a single day in July in 2002 the newspapers carried stories of the recent kidnapping, rape, and killing of 5-year-old Samantha Runnion in Orange County, CA; the 1998 kidnapping and slaying of 13-year-old Christina Williams of Seattle, WA; the rape, beating, and sodomizing of a 94-year-old woman in Palo Alto, CA; the death of Chandra Levy; and Dr. Harold Shipman, of Hyde, England, who is suspected of killing 215 of his patients over 23 years. Of course, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Many, many more acts of brutality that would make you cringe or cry if you knew the details occur everyday all over the world. And we should not forget Hitler, Pol Pot, the genocide in Rwanda, and all the terrible suffering that results from natural disasters and disease.

II. THE ARGUMENT

There are several versions of the argument from evil against the existence of God. One given by William Rowe goes like this:

1. An all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering he could, unless he could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. Not all such suffering has been prevented.
3. Therefore, there is no all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly good being.[2]

Peter van Inwagen has criticized the moral premise, premise 1, on the grounds that a good being could cause, or allow, more evil than is necessary to bring about some good because there may be no minimum amount of evil that will bring about that good. For instance, there may be no minimum parking fine that will deter people from parking illegally or, even if there is, it may be permissible for a good person to impose a fine anywhere between, say, $50 and $55 to deter illegal parking. In another scenario van Inwagen asks us to imagine that Atlantis is sinking and that 1,000 people will drown if they are not rescued by ship. If the captain of the ship puts none on board he is certain to reach port safely; if he puts all 1,000 on board the ship will definitely sink and all will drown. For each person he puts on board, the likelihood of the ship's sinking is increased by 0.1%. Van Inwagen says that the captain must put at least a handful on board and not take aboard all but a handful. In between those extremes, everything is permitted. So it would be permissible for the captain to put, say, 100 on board, thereby leaving 900 to drown as Atlantis goes under, even though he *could* prevent more from dying by taking more aboard. According to van Inwagen, it is not wrong for him to take 100 aboard when he could have taken 125, even though taking 100 means at least 25 will needlessly drown on Atlantis. So it can be permissible for a good being to cause, or allow, needless suffering.[3]

However, van Inwagen recognizes that a good being would not allow *much more* evil than is needed to bring about some greater good or to prevent something equally bad or worse. For instance, a good captain would not put, say, only 10 aboard and allow 990 people to go down with Atlantis since he stands a good chance of getting to shore if, say, only 900 are allowed to drown and 100 put on board. And it would be wrong to assign a parking fine of $1,000 when one between $50 and $55 will achieve the sought after deterrent effect.

Against van Inwagen, someone might say that there must always be some least amount of evil that must be allowed to bring about a certain amount of good, or to prevent even more evil. There must be some lowest fine, say, $48.75, that will achieve the level of deterrence that is sought. We just do not know what it is, though God would if he existed. There must be some number of people such that if that number

were left on Atlantis the ship would make it safely to port but if one more were taken aboard, it would sink. We just do not know what that number is, though God would if he existed.

Van Inwagen could reply that even if that is true *we* will not be able to judge that there is more terrible suffering than God would allow because *we* do not know what the least amount of suffering needed to bring about the relevant amount of good is. We are in no position to judge what the lowest fine is that would yield the desired deterrent effect, nor what the maximum number of people is that the ship can carry and safely reach shore. All we can say is that some fines are too small to achieve the desired deterrent effect, and some too large to be just. All we can say is that the captain must take at least a handful of people and must not take all but a handful. Except at the extremes, we are in no position to judge that the relevant action is required or wrong.

Does something similar hold with respect to the amount of evil in the world? I believe it does: we do not know what the least amount of evil is that would have to be allowed to bring about a certain amount of good, either because there is no such least amount or, even if there is, our capacities are not adequate for determining what it is. But contra van Inwagen, I believe that we are justified in believing that there is an *extreme* amount of suffering, *way more* than is needed to bring about any relevant good or to prevent some comparable evil. To allow all that horrible suffering is both unnecessary and *excessive*, just as a fine of $1,000 for illegal parking or letting 995 drown on Atlantis would be. And allowing excessive and unnecessary suffering is wrong, even if it is not always wrong to allow unnecessary suffering.

Now the issue becomes whether we are *justified in believing* that there is excessive suffering. There certainly appears to be. It seems that we could let people exercise their freedom and allow them to develop compassion, perseverance, and generosity with much, much less suffering.

Does the fact that we do not see a reason why God would allow so much suffering justify us in believing that there is no such reason? Some would argue that it does not since failure to see something (an elephant, a person, a reason) gives us reason to believe it is not there *only if* we are justified in believing that if it were there we would see it. But we are not justified in believing that we would see God's reasons for allowing so much suffering even if those reasons existed. So not seeing any does not justify us in believing there are none.

Sometimes we argue in this way, and rightly so. For instance, the reason we are justified in believing there are no elephants in the room upon seeing none is that we have reason to believe that if there were any we would see them. The reason chess-grandmaster Kasparov is justified in believing that some novice player cannot get out of check, upon seeing no way for him to get out, is that Kasparov has reason to believe if there were a way he would see it. On the other hand, the reason we are *not justified* in believing that, say, a field mouse is not in a distant pasture, on the basis of failing to see any, is that we *do not* have reason to believe we would see such a mouse if one were there.

These examples seem to support the view that we are justified in believing that something is not there if *and only if* we have reason to believe that we would see that thing if it were there.

But I do not believe that this claim is true. *One way* for you to be justified in believing that something is not there is for you to fail to see it and to be justified in believing that if it were there you would see it. However, we are justified in believing that we are *not* in The Matrix (as in the film of that name) even though we *do not* have reason to believe that if we were in The Matrix we would see it, that is, would realize we were in it. Here, what justifies us in believing that we are in a world of real buildings, chairs, and people, and not in The Matrix, is that the hypothesis that we are in the real world better explains our sensations and experiences than the Matrix hypothesis that says we are being made to falsely believe we are in the real world through the activities of some supercomputers. Other things being equal, a simpler hypothesis is better than a more complex one that contains hidden causal mechanisms, or ones whose causal nature is obscure. And the simpler hypothesis to explain our perceptual sensations is that there are real buildings, people, and chairs that cause them, not some hidden supercomputers whose methods of caus-

ing them are obscure. So we can be justified in believing that something is not there, say, in believing that supercomputers *are not* causing our perceptual sensations, even though *it is false* that we have reason to believe we would "see" the supercomputers and their activities if they were there.

This opens up the possibility that we can be justified in believing that God "is not there," that is, does not exist, even though we *do not* have reason to believe that if he were there, that is, did exist, we would "see" the reason. More specifically, it opens up the possibility that we can be justified in believing there is no point to so much terrible suffering even though we *do not* have reason to believe that we would see the point if there were one. There are two possible explanations of the fact that we do not see why there is so much horrible suffering. The first is simply that there is no point; it is genuinely pointless suffering. The second is that there is a point that God sees, but we do not.

These explanations are similar to two explanations of our not seeing, say, a black leather sofa in our room. One explanation is that there is no such sofa in our room. Another is that we are in The Matrix and the supercomputers have not programmed an image of a black leather sofa into our experiences. Clearly, the simplest explanation of why we do not see a black leather sofa in the room is that there is none, not that the supercomputers have just failed to program such an experience in us. Barring evidence to the contrary, we should accept the simplest hypothesis, namely, the one that says there is no black leather sofa in the room. Similarly, barring evidence for the existence of God, we should accept the simplest hypothesis to explain why we see no sufficient moral reason to justify the existence of so much horrible suffering. The simplest hypothesis is that there is no such reason, not the hypothesis that God knows of such a reason but it is beyond our ken. Other things being equal, it is better to explain things by hypotheses that do not posit hidden entities whose plans and ways of making things happen are obscure (like The Matrix and God hypotheses) than hypotheses that do.

Suppose some people are not convinced. They still think that failing to see a reason why God would allow so much horrible suffering does not justify us in thinking there is no such reason. After all, failing to make sense of what some eminent physicists say does not give us reason to believe that what they say is nonsense, for we have no reason to believe that it would make sense *to us* if it really did make sense.

What could *these* people say to someone who maintains that the earth was created 100 years ago by God, with all its signs of age, that is, with deep river valleys, fossil remains, old books and newspapers, etc., for reasons beyond our ken? They might say that God is no deceiver so we have reason to believe he would not create the earth 100 years ago with all its signs of age. But while it is *prima facie* wrong to deceive another, sometimes it is morally permitted, even required. A favorite example of philosophers is one where someone is trusted by the Nazis but also hiding Jews. If the Nazis ask this person if she is hiding Jews, she should lie and say "no," provided she has good reason to believe she will not be caught. So the defender of the 100 year-old earth can reply that, for all we know, God has reasons beyond our ken for deceiving us and creating the earth 100 years ago while making it look much older. Sometimes deception is not wrong. So the believer in God must hold that when it comes to a 100 year-old earth, we *do* have reason to believe that God would not deceive us into thinking that the earth is well over 100 years old. But then we must have reason to believe that there are no weighty reasons beyond our ken that God might have for deceiving us about the age of the earth. Because the cases are parallel, the believer should also hold that we are justified in believing that there are *no* reasons beyond our grasp weighty enough to justify God in allowing all the horrible suffering we observe.

My argument that God does not exist is that the best explanation of all the apparently pointless suffering we see is that it has no point, not that it has one beyond our ken. It is a better explanation because it does not introduce hidden entities to explain what we observe, and the other explanation leads to skepticism about whether God created the earth a short time ago. Because the best explanation of apparently pointless suffering is the existence of pointless suffering, we are justified in believing that God does not exist. Even if he could allow unnecessary suffering, he

cannot allow excessive unnecessary suffering for that would be to allow morally indefensible suffering.

II. OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

A. *We are too ignorant to judge*

Many critics of the argument from evil charge that we are in no position to judge that there is gratuitous evil since we are ignorant of too many things. William Alston argues that we are ignorant of whether there is an afterlife, of what sort of alternative worlds are metaphysically possible, of all the possibilities that are metaphysically possible, and of whether there are "modes of value beyond those of which we are aware."[4] And having justified beliefs about what the alternatives to preventing horrific evil are and what goods can only be realized, or what worse evils can only be prevented, by allowing those evils, would seem to be required for us to have justified beliefs about the existence of gratuitous evil.

Kirk Durston argues that to judge that some evil is gratuitous we must judge that the consequences of some alternative are better or that allowing the evil to occur involves unfairness because it involves uncompensated harm to some individual. He thinks that we are in no position to judge those consequences, or that any apparent unfairness really does involve *uncompensated* harm. Durston argues that "an event can lead to an exponentially increasing number of consequences, affecting an increasing number of causal chains."[5] If Lady Randolph Churchill had not slept with her husband on the night that she did, and had not slept in the very position she had, Winston Churchill would not have been conceived. If he had not been conceived, then World War II might have gone very differently. So little things can make big differences. Thus, for all we know, if God had intervened to prevent some horrific evil, things would have been much worse on balance, and, for all we know, innocent children and animals that suffer terribly will be justly compensated in an afterlife.

The problem with these arguments that claim we are too ignorant for our judgments about gratuitous evil to be justified is that they can be used to show that we are in no position to judge that the earth is more than 100-years old. Perhaps God wants us to think that the world is older because he wants us to believe that natural disasters, wars, slavery and other horrible things have happened but also to have some idea of how they, or their consequences, can be overcome by examples of what we think are actual cases where they have been overcome. But it is better for us to have this information without, rather than with, the relevant suffering and injustice. So, for all we know, God deceives us about the age of the earth for our own good. So we are in no position to judge that the earth is over 100-years old. We should remain agnostic about whether it is.

Of course, this conclusion is absurd. But the arguments that conclude that we are too ignorant to be in a position to judge that there is gratuitous evil are the basis of this parallel argument with this absurd conclusion. Hence, we should reject objections to the argument from evil that rest on arguments that conclude we are too ignorant to judge whether there is gratuitous evil.

B. *On the total evidence, it is not unreasonable to believe that God exists*

Suppose you grant me that if there were no evidence for God's existence, the amount of terrible suffering experienced by innocents would require us to believe that God does not exist. Still, you might object, when all the evidence is considered we are not required to believe that God does not exist. Rather, we are either required to believe he does, or at least to suspend judgment on his existence.

The only traditional argument that concludes that a perfect, and so an all-knowing, all-powerful, wholly good being exists is the ontological argument, and it has been greatly criticized. The design and cosmological arguments at most argue to the existence of an intelligent cause of the universe or the order in it. And these arguments have also been severely criticized.

But I think most non-philosophers do not depend on any of these arguments anyway for their belief in God. I believe that more often than not they implicitly believe that the best explanation of events that they have observed in life involves the existence and activity of God. About a week after the newspapers carried

stories of the kidnapping, rapes, and killings of girls and old women that I mentioned earlier, there was a story about how nine miners in Pennsylvania were saved in the summer of 2002. Without knowing where the trapped miners were in an area of about a square mile, rescuers drilled a 6-inch air pipe that broke through to the miners who were huddled in a 20 by 50 foot air pocket 24 stories below the surface of the earth. In addition, a drill broke, and drilling was stopped for 18 hours, when rescuers were drilling a 36-inch rescue shaft. During that time water rose in the 20 by 50 foot compartment. If the drill had not broken, rescuers may have pierced the compartment at a time when it was full of water, concluded that all the miners had drowned, and stopped the rescue effort.

Francis X. Clines of the *New York Times* wrote,

> This blue-collar, Bible-friendly town did not hesitate to use the word "miracle" in describing the intricate, roll-of-the-dice rescue operation that recovered the men.[6]

Is the best explanation of the rescue of the miners that God intervened to aid the effort? I do not think so. The rescuers did check mine maps to see what the points of highest elevation were before drilling the air-shaft. Furthermore, to make a rational judgment on this case you have to consider what has happened in similar cases. There are many cases where people died because rescuers were unable to reach them in time. You would expect by chance that some victims of disaster get saved and many others do not, and that is what we find. So it seems that luck is a better explanation of the rescue of the miners than God's intervention.

Because there is so much relevant evidence, it is hard to be certain that the best explanation of both so much horrible suffering and some remarkable and beneficial events is that there is no God, but that people are sometimes lucky. Such an explanation seems better than one that says that God intervenes and sometimes helps bring about good outcomes and other times allows bad outcomes for reasons beyond our ken. That theistic explanation has two strikes against it in that we cannot understand how an immaterial being can act on the material world, and it posits the existence of hidden reasons, those beyond our ken. Whether it has three strikes against it depends on whether luck is an adequate explanation of events like the saving of the nine miners in Pennsylvania, the so-called Quecreek miracle. I think luck is an adequate explanation, but this is where I predict people will disagree, just as they sometimes disagree on whether a batter has checked his swing or gone around—especially if it involves a possible third strike in the late innings of a very important game.

NOTES

1. Earlier versions of the argument from evil have maintained the following: necessarily, if God exists, then he does not allow *any* suffering or evil. Against this claim people have rightly argued that it is possible for God to allow *necessary evils, or suffering*, that is, evils or suffering that God must allow in order to bring about a greater good or to prevent a greater evil. God might allow some suffering so that people can develop compassion, and he might allow some people to sometimes exercise their free wills in ways that harm others because it would be better for them to exercise their wills and to have the resultant harm than to have neither. My version of the argument allows that God *can allow some* suffering and evil. It just says that he cannot allow *a lot of horrible* suffering.
2. See Rowe, p. 2. I have switched premises 1 and 2 around, and I refer to an *all-powerful*, all-knowing, wholly good being whereas Rowe leaves out (I'm sure by oversight) reference to omnipotence in his formulation of the premise in his argument that corresponds to my 1.
3. Van Inwagen gives the Atlantis example in "Reflections on the Chapters by Draper, Russell, and Gale" in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, p. 234. His point about their being no sharp cut off line between a penalty that is an effective deterrent and one that is not is made in his "The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil: A Theodicy," *Philosophical Topics* 16 (1988), pp. 161–87, esp., pp. 167–68; and in "The Problems of Evil, Air, and Silence" in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, pp. 172–73, note 11.
4. In "The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, p. 120.

5. Kirk Durston, "The consequential complexity of history and gratuitous evil," *Religious Studies* 36 (2000), pp. 65–80.
6. *The Press Democrat*, July 29, 2002, p. A11.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Could Russell's argument against the existence of God be answered by bringing in free will or the idea that the world is a place of "soul making"?
2. Even if the problem of evil gives us some reason to believe that God does not exist, aren't there lots of good reasons to believe He does that Russell does not consider?
3. To be justified in believing that there are no goods that are good enough to justify allowing all the horrible suffering Russell refers to, wouldn't he have to be justified in believing that the goods we are aware of are a "representative sample" of all the goods there are? And how can he know that?
4. Even if Russell has shown that there is no all-powerful, all-knowing, wholly good being, he has not shown that there is no God of any sort. Why aren't we justified in believing in a "lesser" God?
5. Suppose someone objects to the way the problem of evil is set forth, arguing that the problem is unjustifiably anthropomorphic. As one person wrote me, "Who put human beings at the center of the definition of evil?" Should we take a more global view of evil, considering the harm done to animals and the environment? Is it a self-serving bias (sometimes called *speciesism*) that makes humanity the ultimate object of concern here?

RICHARD SWINBURNE

A THEISTIC RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Richard Swinburne is Nolloth Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Oxford University. He is one of the leading philosophers of religion in the Western world, having written several important works in this area, including *The Existence of God* (1979), *Faith and Reason* (1981), and *Evolution of the Soul* (1986). In this essay, he distinguishes two major types of evil: active and passive. He uses the free-will defense to account for active evil (that caused by humans directly) and the notion of a lawlike universe to explain evil that either is caused by human acts, indirectly, or by nature itself.

God is, by definition, omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good. By "omniscient" I understand "one who knows all true propositions." By "omnipotent" I understand "able to do anything logically possible."

By "perfectly good" I understand "one who does no morally bad action," and I include among actions omissions to perform some action. The problem of evil is then often stated as the problem whether the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil. Against the suggestion of compatibility, an atheist often suggests that the existence of evil entails the nonexistence of God. For, he argues, if God exists, then being omniscient, he knows under what circumstances evil will occur, if he does not act; and being omnipotent, he is able to prevent its occurrence. Hence, being perfectly good, he will prevent its occurrence and so evil will not exist. Hence the existence of God entails the nonexistence of evil. Theists have usually attacked this argument by denying the claim that necessarily a perfectly good being, foreseeing the occurrence of evil and able to prevent it, will prevent it. And indeed, if evil is understood in the very wide way in which it normally is understood in this context, to include physical pain of however slight a degree, the cited claim is somewhat implausible. For it implies that if through my neglecting frequent warnings to go to the dentist, I find myself one morning with a slight toothache, then necessarily, there does not exist a perfectly good being who foresaw the evil and was able to have prevented it. Yet it seems fairly obvious that such a being might well choose to allow me to suffer some mild consequences of my folly—as a lesson for the future which would do me real harm.

The threat to theism seems to come, not from the existence of evil as such, but rather from the existence of evil of certain kinds and degrees—severe undeserved physical pain or mental anguish, for example. I shall therefore list briefly the kinds of evil which are evident in our world, and ask whether their existence in the degrees in which we find them is compatible with the existence of God. I shall call the man who argues for compatibility the theodicist, and his opponent the antitheodicist. The theodicist will claim that it is not morally wrong for God to create or permit the various evils, normally on the grounds that doing so is providing the logically necessary conditions of greater goods. The antitheodicist denies these claims by putting forward moral principles which have as consequences that a good God would not under any circumstances create or permit the evils in question. I shall argue that these moral principles are not, when carefully examined, at all obvious, and indeed that there is a lot to be said for their negations. Hence I shall conclude that it is plausible to suppose that the existence of these evils is compatible with the existence of God.

Since I am discussing only the compatibility of various evils with the existence of God, I am perfectly entitled to make occasionally some (non-self-contradictory) assumption, and argue that if it was true, the compatibility would hold. For if p is compatible with q, given r (where r is not self-contradictory), then p is compatible with q simpliciter. It is irrelevant to the issue of compatibility whether these assumptions are true. If, however, the assumptions which I make are clearly false, and if also it looks as if the existence of God is compatible with the existence of evil *only* given those assumptions, the formal proof of compatibility will lose much of interest. To avoid this danger, I shall make only such assumptions as are not clearly false—and also in fact the ones which I shall make will be ones to which many theists are already committed for entirely different reasons.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL: TYPES

What then is wrong with the world? First, there are painful sensations, felt both by men, and, to a lesser extent, by animals. Second, there are painful emotions, which do not involve pain in the literal sense of this word—for example, feelings of loss and failure and frustration. Such suffering exists mainly among men, but also, I suppose, to some small extent among animals too. Third, there are evil and undesirable states of affairs, mainly states of men's minds, which do not involve suffering. For example, there are the states of mind of hatred and envy; and such states of the world as rubbish tipped over a beauty spot. And fourth, there are the evil actions of men, mainly actions having as foreseeable consequences evils of the first three types, but perhaps other actions as well—such as lying and promise breaking with no such foreseeable consequences. As before, I include

among actions, omissions to perform some actions. If there are rational agents other than men and God (if he exists), such as angels or devils or strange beings on distant planets, who suffer and perform evil actions, then their evil feelings, states, and actions must be added to the list of evils.

I propose to call evil of the first type physical evil, evil of the second type mental evil, evil of the third type state evil, and evil of the fourth type moral evil. Since there is a clear contrast between evils of the first three types, which are evils that happen to men or animals or the world, and evils of the fourth type, which are evils that men do, there is an advantage in having one name for evils of any of the first three types—I shall call these passive evils. I distinguish evil from mere absence of good. Pain is not simply the absence of pleasure. A headache is a pain, whereas not having the sensation of drinking whiskey is, for many people, mere absence of pleasure. Likewise, the feeling of loss in bereavement is an evil involving suffering, to be contrasted with the mere absence of the pleasure of companionship. Some thinkers have, of course, claimed that a good God would create a "best of all (logically) possible worlds" (i.e., a world than which no better is logically possible), and for them the mere absence of good creates a problem since it looks as if a world would be a better world if it had that good. For most of us, however, the mere absence of good seems less of a threat to theism than the presence of evil, partly because it is not at all clear whether any sense can be given to the concept of a best of all possible worlds (and if it cannot then of logical necessity there will be a better world than any creatable world) and partly because even if sense can be given to this concept it is not at all obvious that God has an obligation to create such a world—to whom would he be doing an injustice if he did not? My concern is with the threat to theism posed by the existence of evil.

OBJECTION 1: GOD OUGHT NOT TO CREATE EVILDOERS

Now much of the evil in the world consists of the evil actions of men and the passive evils brought about by those actions. (These include the evils brought about intentionally by men, and also the evils which result from long years of slackness by many generations of men. Many of the evils of 1975 are in the latter category, and among them many state evils. The hatred and jealousy which many men and groups feel today result from an upbringing consequent on generations of neglected opportunities for reconciliations.) The antitheodicist suggests as a moral principle ($P1$) that a creator able to do so ought to create only creatures such that necessarily they do not do evil actions. From this it follows that God would not have made men who do evil actions. Against this suggestion the theodicist naturally deploys the free-will defense, elegantly expounded in recent years by Alvin Plantinga. This runs roughly as follows: it is not logically possible for an agent to make another agent such that necessarily he freely does only good actions. Hence if a being G creates a free agent, he gives to the agent power of choice between alternative actions, and how he will exercise that power is something which G cannot control while the agent remains free. It is a good thing that there exist free agents, but a logically necessary consequence of their existence is that their power to choose to do evil actions may sometimes be realized. The price is worth paying, however, for the existence of agents performing free actions remains a good thing even if they sometimes do evil. Hence it is not logically possible that a creator create free creatures "such that necessarily they do not do evil actions." But it is not a morally bad thing that he create free creatures, even with the possibility of their doing evil. Hence the cited moral principle is implausible.

The free-will defense as stated needs a little filling out. For surely there could be free agents who did not have the power of moral choice, agents whose only opportunities for choice were between morally indifferent alternatives—between jam and marmalade for breakfast, between watching the news on BBC 1 or the news on ITV. They might lack this power either because they lacked the power of making moral judgments (i.e., lacked moral discrimination); or because all their actions which were morally assessable were caused by factors outside their control; or because they saw with complete clarity what was right and

wrong and had no temptation to do anything except the right. The free-will defense must claim, however, that it is a good thing that there exist free agents with the power and opportunity of choosing between morally good and morally evil actions, agents with sufficient moral discrimination to have some idea of the difference and some (though not overwhelming) temptation to do other than the morally good. Let us call such agents humanly free agents. The defense must then go on to claim that it is not logically possible to create humanly free agents such that necessarily they do not do morally evil actions. Unfortunately, this latter claim is highly debatable, and I have no space to debate it. I propose therefore to circumvent this issue as follows. I shall add to the definition of humanly free agents, that they are agents whose choices do not have fully deterministic precedent causes. Clearly then it will not be logically possible to create humanly free agents whose choices go one way rather than another, and so not logically possible to create humanly free agents such that necessarily they do not do evil actions. Then the free-will defense claims that ($P1$) is not universally true; it is not morally wrong to create humanly free agents—despite the real possibility that they will do evil. Like many others who have discussed this issue, I find this a highly plausible suggestion. Surely as parents we regard it as a good thing that our children have power to do free actions of moral significance—even if the consequence is that they sometimes do evil actions. This conviction is likely to be stronger, not weaker, if we hold that the free actions with which we are concerned are ones which do not have fully deterministic precedent causes. In this way we show the existence of God to be compatible with the existence of moral evil—but only subject to a very big assumption—that men are humanly free agents. If they are not, the compatibility shown by the free-will defense is of little interest. For the agreed exception to ($P1$) would not then justify a creator making men who did evil actions; we should need a different exception to avoid incompatibility. The assumption seems to me not clearly false, and is also one which most theists affirm for quite other reasons. Needless to say, there is no space to discuss the assumption here.

OBJECTION 2: AGAINST PASSIVE EVIL

All that the free-will defense has shown so far, however (and all that Plantinga seems to show), is grounds for supposing that the existence of moral evil is compatible with the existence of God. It has not given grounds for supposing that the existence of evil consequences of moral evils is compatible with the existence of God. In an attempt to show an incompatibility, the antitheodicist may suggest instead of ($P1$), ($P2$)—that a creator able to do so ought always to ensure that any creature whom he creates does not cause passive evils, or at any rate passive evils which hurt creatures other than himself. For could not God have made a world where there are humanly free creatures, men with the power to do evil actions, but where those actions do not have evil consequences, or at any rate evil consequences which affect others—e.g., a world where men cannot cause pain and distress to other men? Men might well do actions which are evil either because they were actions which they believed would have evil consequences or because they were evil for some other reason (e.g., actions which involved promise breaking) without them in fact having any passive evils as consequences. Agents in such a world would be like men in a simulator training to be pilots. They can make mistakes, but no one suffers through those mistakes. Or men might do evil actions which did have the evil consequences which were foreseen but which damaged only themselves. . . .

I do not find ($P2$) a very plausible moral principle. A world in which no one except the agent was affected by his evil actions might be a world in which men had freedom but it would not be a world in which men had responsibility. The theodicist claims that it would not be wrong for God to create interdependent humanly free agents, a society of such agents responsible for each other's well-being, able to make or mar each other.

Fair enough, the antitheodicist may again say. It is not wrong to create a world where creatures have responsibilities for each other. But might not those responsibilities simply be that creatures had the opportunity to benefit or to withhold benefit from

each other, not a world in which they had also the opportunity to cause each other pain? One answer to this is that if creatures have only the power to benefit and not the power to hurt each other, they obviously lack any very strong responsibility for each other. To bring out the point by a caricature—a world in which I could choose whether or not to give you sweets, but not whether or not to break your leg or make you unpopular, is not a world in which I have a very strong influence on your destiny, and so not a world in which I have a very full responsibility for you. Further, however, there is a point which will depend on an argument which I will give further on. In the actual world very often a man's withholding benefits from another is correlated with the latter's suffering some passive evil, either physical or mental. Thus if I withhold from you certain vitamins, you will suffer disease. Or if I deprive you of your wife by persuading her to live with me instead, you will suffer grief at the loss. Now it seems to me that a world in which such correlations did not hold would not necessarily be a better world than the world in which they do. The appropriateness of pain to bodily disease or deprivation, and of mental evils to various losses or lacks of a more spiritual kind, is something for which I shall argue in detail a little later.

So then the theodicist objects to ($P2$) on the grounds that the price of possible passive evils for other creatures is a price worth paying for agents to have great responsibilities for each other. It is a price which (logically) must be paid if they are to have those responsibilities. Here again a reasonable antitheodicist may see the point. In bringing up our own children, in order to give them responsibility, we try not to interfere too quickly in their quarrels—even at the price, sometimes, of younger children getting hurt physically. We try not to interfere, first, in order to train our children for responsibility in later life and second, because responsibility here and now is a good thing in itself. True, with respect to the first reason, whatever the effects on character produced by training, God could produce without training. But if he did so by imposing a full character on a humanly free creature, this would be giving him a character which he had not in any way chosen or adopted for himself. Yet it would seem a good thing that a creator should allow humanly free creatures to influence by their own choices the sort of creatures they are to be, the kind of character they are to have. That means that the creator must create them immature, and allow them gradually to make decisions which affect the sort of beings they will be. And one of the greatest privileges which a creator can give to a creature is to allow him to help in the process of education, in putting alternatives before his fellows.

OBJECTION 3: THE QUANTITY OF EVIL

Yet though the antitheodicist may see the point, in theory, he may well react to it rather like this. "Certainly some independence is a good thing. But surely a father ought to interfere if his younger son is really getting badly hurt. The ideal of making men free and responsible is a good one, but there are limits to the amount of responsibility which it is good that men should have, and in our world men have too much responsibility. A good God would certainly have intervened long ago to stop some of the things which happen in our world." Here, I believe, lies the crux—it is simply a matter of quantity. The theodicist says that a good God could allow men to do to each other the hurt they do, in order to allow them to be free and responsible. But against him the antitheodicist puts forward as a moral principle ($P3$) that a creator able to do so ought to ensure that any creature whom he creates does not cause passive evils as many and as evil as those in our world. He says that in our world freedom and responsibility have gone too far—produced too much physical and mental hurt. God might well tolerate a boy hitting his younger brothers, but not Belsen.

The theodicist is in no way committed to saying that a good God will not stop things getting too bad. Indeed, if God made our world, he has clearly done so. There are limits to the amount and degree of evil which are possible in our world. Thus there are limits to the amount of pain which a person can suffer—persons live in our world only so many years and the

amount which they can suffer at any given time (if mental goings-on are in any way correlated with bodily ones) is limited by their physiology. Further, theists often claim that from time to time God intervenes in the natural order which he has made to prevent evil which would otherwise occur. So the theodicist can certainly claim that a good God stops too much sufferings—it is just that he and his opponent draw the line in different places. The issue as regards the passive evils caused by men turns ultimately to the quantity of evil. To this crucial matter I shall return toward the end of the paper.

THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF GOOD AND EVIL

We shall have to turn next to the issue of passive evils not apparently caused by men. But, first, I must consider a further argument by the theodicist in support of the free-will defense and also an argument of the antitheodicist against it. The first is the argument that various evils are logically necessary conditions for the occurrence of actions of certain especially good kinds. Thus for a man to bear his suffering cheerfully there has to be suffering for him to bear. There have to be acts which irritate for another to show tolerance of them. Likewise, it is often said, acts of forgiveness, courage, self-sacrifice, compassion, overcoming temptation, etc., can be performed only if there are evils of various kinds. Here, however, we must be careful. One might reasonably claim that all that is necessary for some of these good acts (or acts as good as these) to be performed is belief in the existence of certain evils, not their actual existence. You can show compassion toward someone who appears to be suffering, but is not really; you can forgive someone who only appeared to insult you, but did not really. But if the world is to be populated with imaginary evils of the kind needed to enable creatures to perform acts of the above specially good kinds, it would have to be a world in which creatures are generally and systematically deceived about the feelings of their fellows—in which the behavior of creatures generally and unavoidably belies their feelings and intentions. I suggest, in the tradition of Descartes (*Meditations* 4, 5 and 6), that it would be a morally wrong act of a creator to create such a deceptive world. In that case, given a creator, then, without an immoral act on his part, for acts of courage, compassion, etc., to be acts open to men to perform, there have to be various evils. Evils give men the opportunity to perform those acts which show men at their best. A world without evils would be a world in which men could show no forgiveness, no compassion, no self-sacrifice. And men without that opportunity are deprived of the opportunity to show themselves at their noblest. For this reason God might well allow some of his creatures to perform evil acts with passive evils as consequences, since these provide the opportunity for especially noble acts.

Against the suggestion of the developed free-will defense that it would be justifiable for God to permit a creature to hurt another for the good of his or the other's soul, there is one natural objection which will surely be made. This is that it is generally supposed to be the duty of men to stop other men hurting each other badly. So why is it not God's duty to stop men hurting each other badly? Now the theodicist does not have to maintain that it is never God's duty to stop men hurting each other; but he does have to maintain that it is not God's duty in circumstances where it clearly is our duty to stop such hurt if we can—e.g., when men are torturing each other in mind or body in some of the ways in which they do this in our world and when, if God exists, he does not step in.

Now different views might be taken about the extent of our duty to interfere in the quarrels of others. But the most which could reasonably be claimed is surely this—that we have a duty to interfere in three kinds of circumstances—(1) if an oppressed person asks us to interfere and it is probable that he will suffer considerably if we do not, (2) if the participants are children or not of sane mind and it is probable that one or other will suffer considerably if we do not interfere, or (3) if it is probable that considerable harm will be done to others if we do not interfere. It is not very plausible to suppose that we have any duty to interfere in the quarrels of grown sane men who do not wish us to do so, unless it is probable that the harm will spread. Now note that in the characterization of each of the circumstances in which we would have a duty

to interfere there occurs the word "probable," and it is being used in the "epistemic" sense—as "made probable by the total available evidence." But then the "probability" of an occurrence varies crucially with which community or individual is assessing it, and the amount of evidence which they have at the time in question. What is probable relative to your knowledge at t_1 may not be at all probable relative to my knowledge at t_2. Hence a person's duty to interfere in quarrels will depend on their probable consequences relative to that person's knowledge. Hence it follows that one who knows much more about the probable consequences of a quarrel may have no duty to interfere where another with less knowledge does have such a duty—and conversely. Hence a God who sees far more clearly than we do the consequences of quarrels may have duties very different from ours with respect to particular such quarrels. He may know that the suffering that A will cause B is not nearly as great as B's screams might suggest to us and will provide (unknown to us) an opportunity to C to help B recover and will thus give C a deep responsibility which he would not otherwise have. God may very well have reason for allowing particular evils which it is our bounden duty to attempt to stop at all costs simply because he knows so much more about them than we do. And this is no ad hoc hypothesis—it follows directly from the characterization of the kind of circumstances in which persons have a duty to interfere in quarrels.

We may have a duty to interfere in quarrels when God does not for a very different kind of reason. God, being our creator, the source of our beginning and continuation of existence, has rights over us which we do not have over our fellow-men. To allow a man to suffer for the good of his or someone else's soul one has to stand in some kind of parental relationship toward him. I don't have the right to let some stranger Joe Bloggs suffer for the good of his soul or of the soul of Bill Snoggs, but I do have *some* right of this kind in respect of my own children. I may let the younger son suffer *somewhat* for the good of his and his brother's soul. I have this right because in small part I am responsible for his existence, its beginning and continuance. If this is correct, then a fortiori, God who is, ex hypothesi, so much more the author of our being than are our parents, has so many more rights in this respect. God has rights to allow others to suffer, while I do not have those rights and hence have a duty to interfere instead. In these two ways the theodicist can rebut the objection that if we have a duty to stop certain particular evils which men do to others, God must have this duty too.

OBJECTION 4: PASSIVE EVIL NOT DUE TO HUMAN ACTION

In the free-will defense, as elaborated above, the theist seems to me to have an adequate answer to the suggestion that necessarily a good God would prevent the occurrence of the evil which men cause—if we ignore the question of the quantity of evil, to which I will return at the end of my paper. But what of the passive evil apparently not due to human action? What of the pain caused to men by disease or earthquake or cyclone, and what too of animal pain which existed before there were men? There are two additional assumptions, each of which has been put forward to allow the free-will defense to show the compatibility of the existence of God and the existence of such evil. The first is that, despite appearances, men are ultimately responsible for disease, earthquake, cyclone, and much animal pain. There seem to be traces of this view in Genesis 3:16–20. One might claim that God ties the goodness of man to the well-being of the world and that a failure of one leads to a failure of the other. Lack of prayer, concern, and simple goodness lead to the evils in nature. This assumption, though it may do some service for the free-will defense, would seem unable to account for the animal pain which existed before there were men. The other assumption is that there exist humanly free creatures other than men, which we may call fallen angels, who have chosen to do evil, and have brought about the passive evils not brought about by men. These were given the care of much of the material world and have abused that care. For reasons already given, however, it is not God's moral duty to interfere to prevent the passive evils caused by such creatures. This defense has recently been used by, among others, Plantinga. This assumption, it seems to me, will do the job, and is not

clearly false. It is also an assumption which was part of the Christian tradition long before the free-will defense was put forward in any logically rigorous form. I believe that this assumption may indeed be indispensable if the theist is to reconcile with the existence of God the existence of passive evils of certain kinds, e.g., certain animal pain. But I do not think that the theodicist need deploy it to deal with the central cases of passive evils not caused by men—mental evils and the human pain that is a sign of bodily malfunctioning. Note, however, that if he does not attribute such passive evils to the free choice of some other agent, the theodicist must attribute them to the direct action of God himself, or rather, what he must say is that God created a universe in which passive evils must necessarily occur in certain circumstances, the occurrence of which is necessary or at any rate not within the power of a humanly free agent to prevent. The antitheodicist then naturally claims, that although a creator might be justified in allowing free creatures to produce various evils, nevertheless (*P*4) a creator is never justified in creating a world in which evil results except by the action of a humanly free agent. Against this the theodicist tries to sketch reasons which a good creator might have for creating a world in which there is evil not brought about by humanly free agents. One reason which he produces is one which we have already considered earlier in the development of the free-will defense. This is the reason that various evils are logically necessary conditions for the occurrence of actions of certain especially noble kinds. This was adduced earlier as a reason why a creator might allow creatures to perform evil acts with passive evils as consequences. It can also be adduced as a reason why he might himself bring about passive evils—to give further opportunities for courage, patience, and tolerance. I shall consider here one further reason that, the theodicist may suggest, a good creator might have for creating a world in which various passive evils were implanted, which is another reason for rejecting (*P*4). It is, I think, a reason which is closely connected with some of the other reasons which we have been considering why a good creator might permit the existence of evil.

A creator who is going to create humanly free agents and place them in a universe has a choice of the kind of universe to create. First, he can create a finished universe in which nothing needs improving. Humanly free agents know what is right, and pursue it; and they achieve their purposes without hindrance. Second, he can create a basically evil universe, in which everything needs improving, and nothing can be improved. Or, third, he can create a basically good but half-finished universe—one in which many things need improving, humanly free agents do not altogether know what is right, and their purposes are often frustrated; but one in which agents can come to know what is right and can overcome the obstacles to the achievement of their purposes. In such a universe the bodies of creatures may work imperfectly and last only a short time; and creatures may be morally ill-educated, and set their affections on things and persons which are taken from them. The universe might be such that it requires long generations of cooperative effort between creatures to make perfect. While not wishing to deny the goodness of a universe of the first kind, I suggest that to create a universe of the third kind would be no bad thing, for it gives to creatures the privilege of making their own universe. Genesis 1 in telling of a God who tells men to "subdue" the earth pictures the creator as creating a universe of this third kind; and fairly evidently—given that men are humanly free agents—our universe is of this kind.

Now a creator who creates a half-finished universe of this third kind has a further choice as to how he molds the humanly free agents which it contains. Clearly he will have to give them a nature of some kind, that is, certain narrow purposes which they have a natural inclination to pursue until they choose or are forced to pursue others—e.g., the immediate attainment of food, sleep, and sex. There could hardly be humanly free agents without some such initial purposes. But what is he to do about their knowledge of their duty to improve the world—e.g., to repair their bodies when they go wrong, so that they can realize long-term purposes, to help others who cannot get food to do so, etc.? He could just give them a formal hazy knowledge that they had such reasons for action without giving them any strong inclination to pursue them. Such a policy might well seem an excessively laissez-faire one. We tend to think that parents who give their children no help toward taking the right

path are less than perfect parents. So a good creator might well help agents toward taking steps to improve the universe. We shall see that he can do this in one of two ways.

An action is something done for a reason. A good creator, we supposed, will give to agents some reasons for doing right actions—e.g., that they are right, that they will improve the universe. These reasons are ones of which men can be aware and then either act on or not act on. The creator could help agents toward doing right actions by making these reasons more effective causally; that is, he could make agents so that by nature they were inclined (though not perhaps compelled) to pursue what is good. But this would be to impose a moral character on agents, to give them wide general purposes which they naturally pursue, to make them naturally altruistic, tenacious of purpose, or strong-willed. But to impose a character on creatures might well seem to take away from creatures the privilege of developing their own characters and those of their fellows. We tend to think that parents who try too forcibly to impose a character, however good a character, on their children, are less than perfect parents.

The alternative way in which a creator could help creatures to perform right actions is by sometimes providing additional reasons for creatures to do what is right, reasons which by their very nature have a strong causal influence. Reasons such as improving the universe or doing one's duty do not necessarily have a strong causal influence, for as we have seen creatures may be little influenced by them. Giving a creature reasons which by their nature were strongly causally influential on a particular occasion on any creature whatever his character, would not impose a particular character on a creature. It would, however, incline him to do what is right on that occasion and maybe subsequently too. Now if a reason is by its nature to be strongly causally influential it must be something of which the agent is aware which causally inclines him (whatever his character) to perform some action, to bring about some kind of change. What kind of reason could this be except the existence of an unpleasant feeling, either a sensation such as pain or an emotion such as a feeling of loss or deprivation? Such feelings are things of which agents are conscious, which cause them to do whatever action will get rid of those feelings, and which provide reason for performing such action. An itch causally inclines a man to do whatever will cause the itch to cease, e.g., scratch, and provides a reason for doing that action. Its causal influence is quite independent of the agent—saint or sinner, strong-willed or weak-willed, will all be strongly inclined to get rid of their pains (though some may learn to resist the inclination). Hence a creator who wished to give agents some inclination to improve the world without giving them a character, a wide set of general purposes which they naturally pursue, would tie some of the imperfections of the world to physical or mental evils.

To tie desirable states of affairs to pleasant feelings would not have the same effect. Only an existing feeling can be causally efficacious. An agent could be moved to action by a pleasant feeling only when he had it, and the only action to which he could be moved would be to keep the world as it is, not to improve it. For men to have reasons which move men of any character to actions of perfecting the world, a creator needs to tie its imperfections to unpleasant feelings, that is, physical and mental evils.

There is to some considerable extent such tie-up in our universe. Pain normally occurs when something goes wrong with the working of our body which is going to lead to further limitation on the purposes which we can achieve; and the pain ends when the body is repaired. The existence of the pain spurs the sufferer, and others through the sympathetic suffering which arises when they learn of the sufferer's pain, to do something about the bodily malfunctioning. Yet giving men such feelings which they are inclined to end involves the imposition of no character. A man who is inclined to end his toothache by a visit to the dentist may be saint or sinner, strong-willed or weak-willed, rational or irrational. Any other way of which I can conceive of giving men an inclination to correct what goes wrong, and generally to improve the universe, would seem to involve imposing a character. A creator could, for example, have operated exclusively by threats and promises, whispering in men's ears, "unless you go to the dentist, you are going to suffer terribly," or "if you go to the dentist, you are going to feel wonderful." And if the order of nature is God's creation, he does indeed often provide us with such

threats and promises—not by whispering in our ears but by providing inductive evidence. There is plenty of inductive evidence that unattended cuts and sores will lead to pain; that eating and drinking will lead to pleasure. Still, men do not always respond to threats and promises or take the trouble to notice inductive evidence (e.g., statistics showing the correlation between smoking and cancer). A creator could have made men so that they naturally took more account of inductive evidence. But to do so would be to impose character. It would be to make men, apart from any choice of theirs, rational and strong-willed.

Many mental evils too are caused by things going wrong in a man's life or in the life of his fellows and often serve as a spur to a man to put things right, either to put right the cause of the particular mental evil or to put similar things right. A man's feeling of frustration at the failure of his plans spurs him either to fulfill those plans despite their initial failure or to curtail his ambitions. A man's sadness at the failure of the plans of his child will incline him to help the child more in the future. A man's grief at the absence of a loved one inclines him to do whatever will get the loved one back. As with physical pain, the spur inclines a man to do what is right but does so without imposing a character—without, say, making a man responsive to duty, or strong-willed.

Physical and mental evils may serve as spurs to long-term cooperative research leading to improvement of the universe. A feeling of sympathy for the actual and prospective suffering of many from tuberculosis or cancer leads to acquisition of knowledge and provision of cure for future sufferers. Cooperative and long-term research and cure is a very good thing, the kind of thing toward which men need a spur. A man's suffering is never in vain if it leads through sympathy to the work of others which eventually provides a long-term cure. True, there could be sympathy without a sufferer for whom the sympathy is felt. Yet in a world made by a creator, there cannot be sympathy on the large scale without a sufferer, for whom the sympathy is felt, unless the creator planned for creatures generally to be deceived about the feelings of their fellows; and that, we have claimed, would be morally wrong.

So generally many evils have a biological and psychological utility in producing spurs to right action without imposition of character, a goal which it is hard to conceive of being realized in any other way. This point provides a reason for the rejection of (*P*4). There are other kinds of reason which have been adduced reasons for rejecting (*P*4)—e.g., that a creator could be justified in bringing about evil as a punishment—but I have no space to discuss these now. I will, however, in passing, mention briefly one reason why a creator might make a world in which certain mental evils were tied to things going wrong. Mental suffering and anguish are a man's proper tribute to losses and failures, and a world in which men were immunized from such reactions to things going wrong would be a worse world than ours. By showing proper feelings a man shows his respect for himself and others. Thus a man who feels no grief at the death of his child or the seduction of his wife is rightly branded by us as insensitive, for he has failed to pay the proper tribute of feeling to others, to show in his feeling how much he values them, and thereby failed to value them properly—for valuing them properly involves having proper reactions of feeling to their loss. Again, only a world in which men feel sympathy for losses experienced by their friends, is a world in which love has full meaning.

So, I have argued, there seem to be kinds of justification for the evils which exist in the world, available to the theodicist. Although a good creator might have very different kinds of justification for producing, or allowing others to produce, various different evils, there is a central thread running through the kind of theodicy which I have made my theodicist put forward. This is that it is a good thing that a creator should make a half-finished universe and create immature creatures, who are humanly free agents, to inhabit it; and that he should allow them to exercise some choice over what kind of creatures they are to become and what sort of universe is to be (while at the same time giving them a slight push in the direction of doing what is right); and that the creatures should have power to affect not only the development of the inanimate universe but the well-being and moral character of their fellows, and that there should be oppor-

tunities for creatures to develop noble characters and do especially noble actions. My theodicist has argued that if a creator is to make a universe of this kind, then evils of various kinds may inevitably—at any rate temporarily—belong to such a universe; and that it is not a morally bad thing to create such a universe despite the evils.

THE QUANTITY OF EVIL

Now a morally sensitive antitheodicist might well in principle accept some of the above arguments. He may agree that in principle it is not wrong to create humanly free agents, despite the possible evils which might result, or to create pains as biological warnings. But where the crunch comes, it seems to me, is in the amount of evil which exists in our world. The antitheodicist says, all right, it would not be wrong to create men able to harm each other, but it would be wrong to create men able to put each other in Belsen. It would not be wrong to create backaches and headaches, even severe ones, as biological warnings, but not the long severe incurable pain of some diseases. In reply the theodicist must argue that a creator who allowed men to do little evil would be a creator who gave them little responsibility; and a creator who gave them only coughs and colds, and not cancer and cholera would be a creator who treated men as children instead of giving them real encouragement to subdue the world. The argument must go on with regard to particular cases. The antitheodicist must sketch in detail and show his adversary the horrors of particular wars and diseases. The theodicist in reply must sketch in detail and show his adversary the good which such disasters make possible. He must show to his opponent men working together for good, men helping each other to overcome disease and famine; the heroism of men who choose the good in spite of temptation, who help others not merely by giving them food but who teach them right and wrong, give them something to live for and something to die for. A world in which this is possible can only be a world in which there is much evil as well as great good. Interfere to stop the evil and you cut off the good.

Like all moral arguments this one can be settled only by each party pointing to the consequences of his opponent's moral position and trying to show that his opponent is committed to implausible consequences. They must try, too, to show that each other's moral principles do or do not fit well with other moral principles which each accepts. The exhibition of consequences is a long process, and it takes time to convince an opponent even if he is prepared to be rational, more time than is available in this paper. All that I claim to have *shown* here is that there is no *easy proof* of incompatibility between the existence of evils of the kinds we find around us and the existence of God. Yet my sympathies for the outcome of any more detailed argument are probably apparent, and indeed I may have said enough to convince some readers as to what that outcome would be.

My sympathies lie, of course, with the theodicist. The theodicist's God is a god who thinks the higher goods so worthwhile that he is prepared to ask a lot of man in the way of enduring evil. Creatures determining in cooperation their own character and future, and that of the universe in which they live, coming in the process to show charity, forgiveness, faith, and self-sacrifice is such a worthwhile thing that a creator would not be unjustified in making or permitting a certain amount of evil in order that they should be realized. No doubt a good creator would put a limit on the amount of evil in the world and perhaps an end to the struggle with it after a number of years. But if he allowed creatures to struggle with evil, he would allow them a real struggle with a real enemy, not a parlor game. The antitheodicist's mistake lies in extrapolating too quickly from *our* duties when faced with evil to the duties of a creator, while ignoring the enormous differences in the circumstances of each. Each of us at one time can make the existing universe better or worse only in a few particulars. A creator can choose the kind of universe and the kind of creatures there are to be. It seldom becomes us in our ignorance and weakness to do anything more than remove the evident evils—war, disease, and famine. We seldom have the power or the knowledge or the right to use such evils to forward deeper and longer-term goods. To make an analogy, the duty of the weak and igno-

rant is to eliminate cowpox and not to spread it, while the doctor has a duty to spread it (under carefully controlled conditions). But a creator who made or permitted his creatures to suffer much evil and asked them to suffer more is a very demanding creator, one with high ideals who expects a lot. For myself I can say that I would not be too happy to worship a creator who expected too little of his creatures. Nevertheless such a God does ask a lot of creatures. A theodicist is in a better position to defend a theodicy such as I have outlined if he is prepared also to make the further additional claim—that God knowing the worthwhileness of the conquest of evil and the perfecting of the universe by men, shared with them this task by subjecting himself as man to the evil in the world. A creator is more justified in creating or permitting evils to be overcome by his creatures if he is prepared to share with them the burden of the suffering and effort.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Has Swinburne successfully met the challenges thrown to him by Russell? Given the free-will defense, can you agree with Swinburne that an all-powerful and all-good God could allow the evil that exists? Why or why not?
2. Evaluate Swinburne's arguments for the existence of passive evil. How cogent are they? What would someone like Russell say in reply?
3. The free-will defense only works if human beings are truly free. The question is, "Are we free, or are we determined by antecedent causes and the laws of nature?" Many philosophers believe that we are totally determined. Keep this issue in mind when you turn to the subject of free will and determinism in Part V.