

READING GUIDE FOR "GOD AND EVIL"

Some words you may need to look up: *ken* (p. 5), *felicity* (p. 6), *automaton* (p. 10). An event that you may need to look up: Auschwitz (p. 7).

The argument on p. 2 is relatively simple, but if it helps, you can substitute *God* for "an all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly good being." That gives us this:

- P1. There exist evils that God would have no good reason to permit.
- P2. God would not permit an evil unless he had a good reason to permit it.
- C. Therefore, God does not exist.

We can also re-write the argument this way (which uses modus tollens):

- P1. If God exists, then there will not be pointless evil and suffering in the world.
- P2. There is pointless evil and suffering in the world.
- C. Therefore, God does not exist.

In the modus tollens version of the argument, the debate is over whether premise 2 is true. (In version of the argument on p. 2, the debate is over whether premise 1 is true.)

At the very bottom of p. 2, Rowe refers to an "outweighing good." First, a *good*, in this context (and that term will be used a lot in this article), is a *good event* or *good outcome*. An *outweighing good* is a good that, on balance, outweighs some evil. For instance, say I'm wearing a tuxedo and I see a child drowning in a pool. There's no time to get out of the tuxedo, so I just jump into the pool to save the child with it on. In that case, saving the child's life is a good that *outweighs* getting the tuxedo wet. Rowe has another example in his book *Philosophy of Religion*. (The example is from Leibniz, a philosopher and mathematician who lived from 1646 to 1716.)

Gottfried Leibniz gives the example of a general who knows that in order to achieve the good of saving the town from being destroyed by an attacking army he must order his men to defend the town, with the result that some of his men will suffer and die. The good of saving the women and children of the town outweighs the evil of the suffering and death of a few of the town's defenders. Although he could have prevented their

suffering and death by ordering a hasty retreat of his forces, the general cannot do so without losing the good of saving the town and its inhabitants. It certainly does not count against the general's goodness that he permits the evil to occur in order to achieve the good which outweighs it. Perhaps, then, some evils in our world are connected to goods which outweigh them in such a way that even God cannot achieve the goods in question without permitting the evils to occur that are connected to those goods. (2007, p. 116)

In the passage explaining the theist's first response, Rowe refers to a "justifying good" (the last two words on p. 4) and then at the top of the next page "God-justifying goods." *Goods* is being used here in the same way as explained above, and by "God-justifying" we mean a good that "justifies God in permitting any of these horrendous evils" (which is at the beginning of the passage).

Section 2.2 is about the *free will theodicy*. As Rowe says at the beginning of this section, there are different theodicies and he is just going to focus on this one. A *theodicy* is a defense of God when objections or doubts about his existence (or goodness or omnipotence) are made based on the amount of evil and suffering in the world. Returning to the reading, the *free will theodicy* "explain[s] all of the evils in the world as due either directly to evil acts of human free will or to divine punishment for evil acts of human free will" (p. 10).