

How Could a Good God Allow Suffering?

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Two Problems

Suffering caused by:

1. Moral evil (that people do to one another)
2. Natural evil (natural disasters etc)

Two Viewpoints

1. A spectator analysing the problem
2. A person participating in deep suffering

The Logical Problem of Evil

1. God is omniscient (that is, all-knowing)
2. God is omnipotent (that is, all-powerful)
3. God is perfectly good
4. Evil and suffering exists

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Generally accepted as solving the logical problem of evil

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God is not limited by a lack of power or ability.

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A greater good (protection from polio) overrides the lesser duty of avoiding inflicting pain

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Yes... but:

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

(Psalm 130:3)

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Before the beginning of time, Jesus looked at you, looked at the Cross, and decided that it was worth it

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I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. (Rom 8:18)

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Plate tectonics allows mountains but also earthquakes

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Not: “Can we be good without *believing* in God”, but “Can we be good without God”

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The Problem of Goodness

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1. If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist
2. Objective moral values do exist
3. Therefore God exists

Dawkins' Response

Dawkins cannot deny the first premise, so he has to deny the second:

The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil, no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference

Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden*, 1995

The Atheist's Problem

In order to complain about “the evils of religion”, or even to ask the question “How Could a Good God Allow Suffering?” the atheist has to acknowledge that good and evil exist, and therefore that God exists.

Final Thought

Why didn't God create a world with people who have free will but also with no evil and no suffering?

This is what God is doing.

But perhaps the only way to do so is to create people with free will, allow them to fall, and then redeem all those who chose to be redeemed.