Is God Evil? Examining Christianity's Greatest Flaw

Govindha Chadalavada
Western Reserve Academy, Ohio, USA

Abstract

In today's world, one may be quick to assume that views of Atheists and Agnostics are starting to become well respected, but this is not necessarily the case. According to a 2022 Pew Research Survey, 49% of Protestants and 37% of Catholics still believe that it is necessary to believe in God to be moral and have good values. There seems to be this notion that non-believers of a Christian god are illogical and know that they are wrong, but refuse to believe so. However, in this paper, I delineate the problem of evil, an issue that I find with Christian theology. It is important to note that I believe Christianity is an unfalsifiable religion but there is reason for serious doubt found through the problem of evil. I will discuss the problem of evil through the lens of determinism, free will, and moral relativism.

1. The Argument

The most common argument used against the Christian god, and arguably the most valid, relates to the problem of evil. The argument suggests that if God is considered omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient, then there is no justification for the evil and suffering that exists in this world. Before getting into the depths of the argument, it is important to understand where these qualities of God come from. Omnibenevolence is shown in Psalm 145:9, stating "The Lord is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works;" omnipotence is proven in Psalm 115:3, which says "He [God] does whatever he pleases;" and omniscience in shown in 1 John 3:20, when John states, "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things" (NKJV Bible). If these premises are not true, the faith would lose the essence of what has made it so widespread for a multitude of reasons. For example, if God is not all-knowing, then humanity cannot fully trust God's judgement, and God begins to be seen as similar to humans. Similarly, if God is not all-loving, the value of God's grace and heaven would be greatly diminished.

The problem of evil suggests that God cannot logically exist under Christianity's conditions, due to the existence of evil in the world. To show the validity of this argument, I will first show that evil actually exists. Then, I will show that God is allowing evil to exist and that there is no positive ulterior motive for Him to do so. Then, I will make the valid

conclusion that the Christian God cannot logically exist under the given circumstances we live in.

2. Subjective Morality

A common response to the problem of evil from believers goes along the lines of, "When one says that something is wrong, they are transporting themselves into a world where ethics are objective, which is impossible without God." This argument is not sound even under the lens of moral relativism however, as the actions that many Atheists call "evil" are also evil from a Christian viewpoint. For example, the murder of an innocent infant is considered objectively bad in Christianity, but it is not stopped by God. This concept can be applied to any of the many sins that are listed in the bible. Since there are so many acts that are considered atrocities under a Christian framework, the question of moral relativism is irrelevant to the problem of evil.

3. Humans Understand God

Another common response from Christian Apologists argues that there is no way to know why evil exists because there is no way to fully understand God. This argument is much trickier, because it uses the premise that God is omnipotent and can counter any sentiment against Christianity. While believing that we cannot understand evil because God works in mysterious ways is unfalsifiable, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (NKJV Bible 1 Corinthians 14.33). Furthermore, if humans cannot understand God on such a fundamental level, then the very basis of faith in Christianity is dismantled, because God could be working in ways that are too confusing for humans to understand. Thus, any possible interpretation of God's will could not be accurate, and even God's words would not be able to be taken at face value. There would be no use in the Bible, nor any religious document.

4. Free Will

The best counter to the problem of evil in my opinion focuses on the concept of free will. According to many Christians, God allows for evil in the world since our world has free will. This idea suggests that God considers free will to be what is omnibenevolent, meaning that there may be some downsides to free will, but they are still permissible, because free will is what is most omnibenevolent.

First, most Christians support the idea that one is unable to sin in heaven yet still has free will. There are already certain choices people cannot make (no one can fly or teleport), and since the idea of a sinless world with free will is possible, why would God not make our universe this way and instead make atrocities such as genocide or enslavement possible? Some apologists argue God made Earth this way because life on Earth gives people time to choose if they want to live eternity with or without God, but this idea of "choice" is very misleading. A "choice" involves knowing that both options are viable, and the "choice" in this circumstance comes with the presupposition that every human knows God exists in their heart, which I know is not the case for me.

Second, I find it hard to believe that humans even have much free will when there is such a strong correlation between past experiences and actions. As neuroscientist David Eagleman states, "Our actions are guided by an intricate interplay of genetic predispositions, neural wiring, and environmental stimuli. What we perceive as free will is often the result of unconscious processes driven by these factors. While we believe we are in control of our choices, much of what we decide is influenced by elements beyond our conscious awareness" (Eagleman). Although some may subscribe to compatibilism, the view that both determinism and free will can coexist, I argue they also affect our options. The very nature of determinism is that the past, something outside of your control, determines your decision, which would entail that you had no control over said decision, since you have no control over the past. Moreover, much of one's beliefs are pre-determined before their birth, through geography. If a boy is born in Egypt, he will most likely be a Muslim. If he is born in India, he will most likely be Hindu. If he is born in Israel, he will most likely be Jewish. If being a non-Christian disqualifies the boy from entering heaven, this is an outcome that he will not be able to choose to avoid.

Finally, there are numerous accounts in the bible of miracles from God, such as when the sun stood still for Joshua, which seem to suggest God can and does meddle in human affairs. (NKJV Bible 10.12) It seems entirely possible that an omnipotent god could in some way stop egregious acts, without fully negating free will. Philosopher J.L. Mackie states, "If God has made men such that in their free choices, they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good?" (Mackie 201, 1955).

5. Suffering Caused by God

There is also evil that is unrelated to free will. For example, according to Ritchie and Rosado (2022), 40 to 50 thousand people die every year from natural disasters, a phenomenon that is impossible for humans to will into existence. It is shown from

Numbers 16:30-34 that God sends these natural disasters to judge humans for their sins (NKJV Bible). Many proponents of Christianity argue that these natural disasters came to be because humans brought sin to the sinless world. However, many infants die each year due to natural disasters, and most of these infants did not sin. Many sinless infants also die due to horrendous diseases, such as cancer. Many try to justify the death of infants by saying these infants will be given a place in heaven, but this concept does not take away the fact that God caused unnecessary suffering. Would a Christian consider it to be moral if I were to destroy another's house, but then fully pay for the damages? Why is different logic used for God? Many reply, "God gave you life, so God can take it away." However, most Christians would still consider destroying the house morally reprehensible even if I built the house. Others point out that the infant could have become a deeply immoral person or converted to another religion, but both
of these people still exist in our world. So, why does God only kill some of these infants that will enter a dark path? Moreover, would it not be more logical for God to allow these infants to play out their free will?
It also is not apparent why this suffering that is the result of original sin is still taking place after the New Testament, as under the new covenant, the reigning concept is forgiveness. People no longer need to be killed or punished for the sins they commit, yet natural disasters and diseases seem to be an exception to this rule.

6. Morality of God

The argument that God can judge humans by the sin they commit assumes that God is an objective judge of moral actions. At first glance, this concept makes complete sense because of God's omniscience, but after deeper examination, a problem arises. What exactly is it that makes God the judge of whether an action is objectively good or bad? Some may try to cite God's omniscience, but this implies that God knows moral truths that are external to him, which means moral truths exist external to God. This suggests that there are limits to God's authority, which directly contradicts the omnipresence of God that is seen in Psalm 139 (Wierenga). If something is good simply because God demands it, anything God says becomes arbitrary and subjective.
This argument, first coined in Plato's Euthyphro, is called the Euthyphro Dilemma. In the dialogue, Euthyphro says, "the pious is what all the gods love, and the opposite, what all the gods hate, is the impious." This argument is often criticized for creating a binary for the existence of objective morality. Many say that objective good is not a result of God's commands but is instead reflected in the very nature of God. However, this does not disprove the dilemma in any way. What is it about God's nature that makes it good? Either

God's nature is good because God says it is, or it is good because it conforms to something external. So, how can a God without objective morality cause human suffering in the name of goodness?

7. Conclusion

It is important to emphasize that this omnipotent and omniscient god knew the amount of temptation to sin, along with the effects that would have on humanity when he created it. He knew how much suffering humanity would endure; he knew how many people would be killed in his name; and he knew and still knows that he could end all of it at any point in time. Yet, he not only allows but causes such disgusting acts of evil and suffering. Therefore, the evidence points towards a conclusion without this Christian God.

While Theists bring up good talking points, there is not enough evidence to show that the Christian god would create a world like this. As Christopher Hitchens said in a 2008 debate, "It's not just the problem of suffering, it's the problem of undeserved suffering. There's nothing more, in a way, I think, revolting than the sight of the innocent and the defenseless being harmed. And I think that's an argument that would make it very, very difficult to argue that there's a divine plan" (Hitchens, 2008). Either my understanding of morality and free will is absurdly incorrect, or the Christian god does not exist.

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